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## GOOD THINGS FOR THOSE WHO HELP

Interesting things happen when you give your time to your local superintendents association. During the past few years, I've been fortunate enough to experience the benefits firsthand. As a class C (assistant) representative of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, I'm fortunate to be involved with an organization that has a track record of being progressive and supportive of assistant superintendents.

First and foremost are the amazing networking opportunities afforded to me. Each month, I participate in the MAGCS board of directors meetings and sit with our superintendent board members, commercial representative and executive director, who are willing to give their time and share their experiences.

I'm sure good timing was a factor in my position as the association's class C representative, but I also believe people help create their own luck. I saw value in the class C committee's work, and when our former committee leader, John Ekstrom, asked me to participate, I was happy to help. During the time I was a committee member, I helped out with everything I could.

During the past 12 months, our group has been asked to help with the setup of a

research field day. We interviewed and wrote articles profiling the superintendents who hosted monthly meetings for On Course, the MAGCS publication. Every year we help moderate the educational sessions at the Illinois Professional Turf Conference – an opportunity many volunteers use to become more comfortable with public speaking.

Finally, and perhaps the most gratifying, was working with Habitat for Humanity where we laid sod during a snow storm last December and completed the landscaping this past spring. For a more detailed account of that experience, read Matt Breeden's column in the April issue of GCI on page 10.

While I believe each of these experiences has benefited me personally, that's not my only motivation. I see value in these efforts for different reasons. Some of these opportunities have a more personal gain than others, which certainly makes the decision to help easier. Interviewing and writing an article, for example, is something I jump at the opportunity to do. First of all, you get to tour a property you may not have otherwise had the chance to visit. Secondly, you get to meet new people – networking is one of the biggest benefits of volunteering.

I realize some may scoff that I enjoy set-

ting up tables for a field day or moderating a regional educational seminar, but those are the times when you find out who's in it for the right reasons. Are you volunteering to help out or because it's convenient and might get your name out in the market more?

For me, the less glamorous opportunities are the times when you can best express your gratitude to your association and its leaders for all it does for you. How about the golf outings each month? I bet you've had fun at a few of those. What about the local educational opportunities? It's better than traveling a few hours for a seminar, isn't it? How about activity at the national level? If you ever question what the people at the GCSAA do for you, give them a call the next time you're stumped by just about anything related to our industry. There's a toll-free number. Ask, because someone will be willing to help you.

I'm not trying to make myself out to be a martyr of my association, nor am I trying to make the MAGCS or the GCSAA sound perfect, but think about it. Next time volunteering crosses your mind, do it. Chances are the benefits will be even greater than you thought they'd be.

For me, one of those surprises came this past September when, thanks to the generosity of the MAGCS board of directors, I attended a leadership academy at the GCSAA headquarters. This wasn't only an opportunity to visit the association and hear from great speakers, but another great networking opportunity. I thank those of you who were there with me as an attendee, staff member, sponsor or speaker for a terrific experience.

Volunteering is a gratifying experience. It's not always glamorous (think sod on a Saturday in December), but I bet you'll have fun. You'll enjoy the experience, and you'll be a better person for it. I understand that sometimes you may have to sacrifice time away from something else. You may need to skip a night at the gym or miss watching college football for a day, but that's how you know it's important – when you prioritize giving your time to an association that has already given to you. **GCI**

