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Various valves and splices can be identified by different colors and cover sizes.

different types of wire splices: power, common, communication and control. Power wire can be of different voltages; 120 volt, 220 volt and 480 volts. Each of these various valves or splices can be identified with a combination of different color valve box

covers sizes. For example, a valve box color scheme for a golf course irrigation system may look like the above image.

There are a couple of things you do need to be careful with valve box color coding. First, if you are using an effluent water

source regulation may require that all of the valve boxes that have water flowing through what they are covering be purple. Second, not all valve box manufacturers make a variety of valve box cover colors and I would rather see a consistent manufacturer than a different color. Some courses have painted their valve box covers, but you will find that the paint does not adhere very well and wears off relatively quickly.

Regardless, color coding is a great way to quickly determine what a valve box contains when you have a break and need to shut the valve off quickly they save time. When you have a broken wire, the color coding will save you invaluable time in determining what wires you need to be concerned with based on where the sprinkler is not working.

As you go through your irrigation system think of other ways that color coding might be able to help. If you are designing a new system, keep these color-coding suggestions in mind. **GCI**

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# STOPPED IN MY TRACKS

Assistant superintendent Nate Jordan gives a no-holds-barred account of his recent battle with depression, and offers hope to his industry colleagues who are lost in the same darkness.

”My *m i n d* and body weren’t working right, something was



**A**s assistant golf course superintendents we have all learned invaluable agronomic knowledge and techniques from our industry mentors. On the other hand, I think it is safe to say that they have also taught us many life lessons. In 2007, the superintendent I was working for shared this with me. He said, "Nate...there are three things that are important in life: your health, your family's health, and the third thing can be whatever you choose, but without the first two you can't have the third."

That statement never had more meaning to me than in the spring of 2011.

After a three-month period of unemployment I was scheduled to start my new position in Ohio as assistant superintendent. There was something missing though; I wasn't excited about it. I was scared, fearful, and doubtful of my skills, knowledge and ability. How was this possible? I earned this position after several months of interviewing, and just came from working as an assistant for three years at a high-end club in Colorado. My mind and body weren't working right, something was wrong, yet I didn't know what the problem was. After experiencing the emotional symptoms described above, as well as extreme fatigue and occasional headaches, I scheduled an appointment with my family doctor. In the brief, 15-minute appointment I had with the doctor I shared with him my problems and he referred me to a psychologist.

After several sessions with the psycholo-

gist it seemed like I was improving, but with 20/20 hindsight I wasn't. By this time I was several weeks in to my new job. Each day was a struggle. Just having the energy to get out of bed in the morning was a challenge. While at work I found it difficult to concentrate, remember and comprehend new information. Even routine tasks that we've all completed around the golf course maintenance facility were cumbersome. Day after day, I came home feeling defeated and empty. My emotions were running frantically and I had uncontrollable thoughts. Those thoughts were mostly negative and consisted of things such as, "I'll never reach my goals, how did I make it this far, and I'm not as good as I used to be." On the outside I looked perfectly normal, but on the inside I was a mess, and that is what made it so challenging.

My condition worsened so badly that I couldn't complete my work and took a leave of absence of several weeks. During my time off I spent three days in the psychiatric ward of the hospital. Prior to this I had never even spent a minute in the hospital, let alone for a condition where I was suffering from extreme mental pain, not physical. Upon admittance I was among a varied crowd of people and received various looks and comments such as, "You don't look like you belong here." One patient even asked me, "Are you a doctor here?" While my appearance and story differed greatly from those around me, guess what, I did belong there. We were all experiencing some form of mental illness and

**WRONG,** yet I didn't know what the problem was."

“My emotions were running frantically and I had uncontrollable thoughts. Those thoughts were mostly negative and consisted of things such as, ‘I’ll never reach my goals, how did I make it this far, and I’m not as good as I used to be.’”

needed treatment. Throughout the day we had group sessions which served as a support network during our time of hardship and struggle. One by one, we were called in to meet with the psychiatrist. Finally, it was my turn to meet with the doctor. He reviewed the notes which I had shared with the nurse and then we began to converse further. By the time I left his office I received the diagnosis of major depression and anxiety.

That afternoon I was prescribed an anti-depressant and a second medication to reduce the anxiety I was experiencing. This was one of the most comforting times of life; I finally had an answer and treatment was underway. The remaining two days of my stay consisted of individual and group sessions which served as a time for learning about the illness I was experiencing. Like any illness there are symptoms, and the feelings I was experiencing were merely symptoms of the disease and didn’t define me as a person. I still had all of the skills and potential as I did before. The staff of the Mayo Clinic defines depression as: “A medical illness that involves the mind and body. Also called major depression, major depressive disorder and clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave.

Depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day

activities, and depression may make you feel as if life isn’t worth living. More than just a bout of the blues, depression isn’t a weakness, nor is it something that you can simply “snap out” of. Depression is a chronic illness that usually requires long-term treatment, like diabetes or high blood pressure. But don’t get discouraged. Most people with depression feel better with medication, psychological counseling or other treatment.” Upon discharge from the hospital I had several prescriptions in hand,

“Knowledge is **POWER**, and just like being able to recognize the onset of a turfgrass disease, the sooner it can be treated the more favorable the outcomes.”



Jordan

follow-up appointments with the doctor scheduled, and was instructed that it would be a while before I could return to work.

After arriving at home from the hospital I was welcomed by my family who was grateful for the treatment I received as my personal time of suffering was as equally difficult for them to endure too. One thing was clear. The road to full recovery was going to take time. Anti-depressants

take weeks to begin working, and not everyone responds the same to each medication. It may take several attempts by the doctor to arrive at one that helps achieve the desired results. During the time I was at home, away from work, I began keeping a list of all of the tasks I completed throughout the day. It didn’t matter how simple of a job it was, it went on the list. From just waking up at a reasonable hour, to taking a shower, and brushing my teeth, it went on the list. Because each task required so much effort it was quite fulfilling for me to review the list at the end of the day.

After about two weeks I met with my employer to set-up a modified work schedule as prescribed by my doctor. Thankful for the flexibility and understanding I received, I was able to resume my job working limited hours and days each week. Beyond that, the job tasks which I became responsible for were ones that didn’t require extensive thought or accuracy. My mind was still racing with thoughts and

my ability to focus was limited. Henceforth, working the limited hours, and getting through the day was another stepping stone to my recovery. This continued for about a month and then I was permitted by my doctor to begin working 8-hour days, four days a week. This was an increase from my 6-hour shifts. Once again, during a time of hardship these small gains felt like a victory at the Masters! As the summer

continued and the days got hotter my health continued to improve. It was ideal timing that my doctor gave me the release to work full days, without restrictions, when he did, because all hands were needed on deck for afternoon syringing of the greens. By about the middle of the summer I was feeling more like myself and my mind and body began to function like I remembered. I began to regain the passion and interest I always had for my career, my mind no longer felt like it was filled with cob webs, and my emotions were more stable. It was easier to get up in the morning, I began socializing with friends and family more easily, and life finally felt worth living again.

While this story of my struggle with a mental illness may sound amazingly similar to one told by someone you know or love, I felt it was important to share it with my industry colleagues who could potentially experience a similar situation. Knowledge is power, and just like being able to recognize the onset of a turfgrass disease, the sooner it can be treated the more favorable the outcomes. Nearly a year after I began feeling the symptoms of an illness that turned out to be the most difficult time of my life thus far, I can confidently say I’m back to feeling 100 percent health and have grown and matured in ways I never imagined.

I encourage you to contact me ([ntjordan@gmail.com](mailto:ntjordan@gmail.com)) with any questions you may have concerning my personal experience with depression, and I would be delighted to offer support to any one of you who may be going through a similar situation. With the help of trained professionals, friends, family, and colleagues this disease is one that can be beat and I am here to help. **GCI**

*Nate Jordan is an assistant superintendent at Kennsington Golf Club, Canfield, Ohio, and a frequent GCI contributor.*

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**Count on it.**



**Monroe Miller** is a retired golf course superintendent. He spent 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. Miller can be reached at [groots@charter.net](mailto:groots@charter.net).

## “TOP SHOPS” AWARDS

Visiting golf course maintenance facilities around my state is one of the pleasures of my part-time job as the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association’s ambassador. I’d seen many as a superintendent, but I missed far more than I visited. While many have since been remodeled or rebuilt, they are as interesting and varied as the superintendents who work out of them.

Regardless of what these wonderful buildings are called – turf care centers maintenance facilities and green section HQ, for example – they will always be golf course shops to me. That name fits best. CPAs, law firms and doctors have offices. We have shops.

One of my favorite places during my career was the golf course shop. It was always a hub of activity, especially in the summer. Shops are happy places where summer crews get to know each other, work together and even form lifelong friendships. On rare occasions, couples who marry first met in a golf course shop.

Superintendents find golf course shops appealing because they are full of things we like, such as hand tools, machinery, power tools, work benches and other things people outside our profession envy us for. Handy men drool when they walk through a typical golf course shop.

Golf course shops even smell good – the distinctive aromas of gasoline, diesel fuel, soil, wood and grass clippings. My three daughters, when they were young, enjoyed the shop smell. Now it’s grandkids who like it.

Shops take on the personality, oftentimes, of their superintendents. The building’s neatness (or lack thereof) reflects how tidy the superintendent is in all he does. Lunchrooms, locker rooms, the parts room and everything else will be as clean and organized as the boss demands.

And the little extras reflect shop

personality. In my case, we cleaned the lunchroom and restrooms every day, just like the Army demanded when I was a soldier. We cobbled up – at no cost – a stereo system, which led to enjoyable arguments about what music we were going to listen to each day – polka, country, classical, oldies, Rush, Mathews, even on occasion Omar’s Spanish-speaking station.

One of the nicest things I received when I retired was a key my successor gave me to the shop I’d designed, built and worked in for so many years. My little corner of the world stayed with me and I still love having access to it.

Regardless of what these wonderful buildings are called – turf care centers, maintenance facilities and green section HQ, for example – they will always be **golf course shops** to me.

It occurred to me recently that somebody – maybe GCI – should initiate annual golf course “Top Shop” awards to honor the best and most unique of these buildings. I see a contest arranged by obvious geography; the shop in Wisconsin will have different requirements than one in Florida. The competition could be graded on points accumulated for the workshop area, the lunchroom and locker rooms and other employee areas. We could judge the superintendent’s office, the equipment storage areas, and the repair parts storage organization. Carpentry work sections, irrigation control rooms, fuel storage and pesticide storage would receive attention. Neatness, organization, ambience and many other variables could be part of the judging criteria.

I would make past winners ineligible for the contest for at least five years; I would divide the contest into categories based on the golf course

budget; obviously a shop at a course with a million dollar budget will be likely to have a better chance at a great shop than a course with a budget one-fourth of that.

I would also create a category based on age. One of my favorite shops in Wisconsin is an older one built with wooden construction, but it is so unique and neat and well organized and functional that it would have to receive a high score. Innovation on the part of the golf course staff would also receive high consideration.

Our collective imaginations could determine other judging issues if we

wanted. Our judges could be drawn from manufacturers, service managers from distributors, golf course mechanics and equipment managers, and superintendents. Winners would receive the Golden Wrench Award and runners-up would be given the Silver Wrench Award. I know the wrench is an old-time symbol; I am open to suggestions here! Winners would be also be given a free trip for staff people to service school, and the course would be given a complete new set of Snap-On tools.

I have seen lots of changes in my 40 years in the industry, and one of the biggest changes has been a move from old barns and metal buildings and outdoor privies to well-designed golf course shops. Honoring those who have done an especially nice job deserve recognition.

Maybe Pat Jones will agree! **GCI**

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