

I'll have what Steve Mona's having. I want whatever it is that causes Mona to be so exuberant about life. If you've ever spent any time with Mona, the 48-year-old CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), you've had to notice how upbeat he always is. The guy prizes life like diehard golfers do their Saturday-morning tee times.

Mona is not an imposing physical figure and he doesn't light up a room like the midday sun when he walks into it. Mona's gleam is more subtle, but its presence can't be denied.

So what makes Mona tick? It's simple, really. Mona subscribes to the my-body-is-my-temple-and-I-worship-it philosophy. What he puts in his body and how he treats it has everything to do with his zest for life.

For Mona, proper nutrition begins with what he puts down the ol' hatch. In the morning, he doesn't rise and shine and make a beeline to the coffee pot. He avoids the java and other caffeine-laced products like hazards on a golf course.

Mona also doesn't belly up to the hotel bar to sip a few cold ones after a dinner at an industry function. He has nothing against folks who do, but Mona would rather retire to his hotel room, catch a little SportsCenter on TV and be in rapid eye movement by 11. Oh yeah, he might sip some water, his drink of choice, before bed.

You won't catch Mona, who weighs a lean 160 pounds, grabbing a Snickers bar on the run. He runs like Jesse Owens from sweets. You might see him picking at a piece of cheesecake at a banquet, but he's probably plucking the strawberry from its top. Chances are Mona had the chicken or fish — less filling, tastes OK — for his entree at the same banquet. He doesn't think twice about passing on the more savory but less healthy prime rib.

There's also a chance Mona exercised before that banquet. When he's not on the road and is at home in Lawrence, Kan., exercise is routine. And Mona tries to work out when he can while on the road, which is 125 days a year.

Bottom line: When you look good and feel good, life in general tends to feel good. You don't need Dr. Phil to tell you that.

But it's not just his own life that Mona is blissful about living. He likes to please others and is as

Mona Has the Get-Up-And-Go

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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cordial as they come. Mona says his father, Frank, taught him to treat others — all others — with dignity. Frank Mona held a top position with a seasoning manufacturer near where the family lived in northern California when Steve was growing up. When Steve went to work with his dad, he watched how Frank treated the employees. Frank didn't care if they didn't have college degrees. He thought they deserved his honor.

Frank's actions left an impression on Steve. "If I ever get into a position like my dad's, that's the way I will treat people," Steve says he told himself.

He has. Rarely, if ever, do GCSAA members bash him. They may disagree with his decisions, but they do so with respect.

In November, Mona celebrated his 12th anniversary as the GCSAA's CEO. In case you're counting, 12 years is an eternity for a person to head a trade association. When Mona tells his peers about his length of office, they often offer a one-word response — "wow."

Here's something else that will make you say "wow" with a few exclamation points tacked on. Did you know Mona hasn't missed a day of work in those 12 years? He says it's easy to fight off a cold and go to work when you love what you do.

Mona is also wound less tight these days. You may recall that Mona fainted in 2002 during the GCSAA show in Orlando. He was diagnosed with a condition that restricts or stops blood flow between the heart and the brain. The episode made Mona realize that he had to slow down.

What will Mona be doing in another 12 years? He says he'd love to still be with the GCSAA. "I love what I'm doing, and right now I'm enjoying it as much as I ever have," Mona says.

Like I said, I want what Mona's having.

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