

Spring's arrival signals the start of the annual migration of turfgrass students to partake in golf course internships throughout the country. Many of these students are eager and enthusiastic to learn. Like spring, they bring a sense of renewal with them. The legacy of these internships is the mentoring that occurs between the golf course superintendents and the students.

However, the mentoring process has come under siege — more than any time I can ever remember. Time has become a factor in being a mentor, no matter what profession you're in. People just don't have a lot of time to mentor others.

For golf course superintendents, having the patience and taking the time to explain specific activities to interns during a busy season when time is a precious commodity is a task in itself. That said, superintendents can still make a tremendous impact on interns by taking the time to be mentors.

From a student's perspective, it's vital to have a good mentor.

The term mentor can be traced back to Homer's classic poem "The Odyssey." Odysseus, or sometimes known as Ulysses, was the king of Ithaca who went off to fight in the Trojan War (he is known for the Trojan horse trick). He entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor, who served as the teacher and overseer of Odysseus' son, Telemachus.

From this early beginning, a mentor was defined as a trusted counselor. Mentors are usually older and more experienced. They help students learn and progress through the profession. Mentoring is not done for personal gain.

So, what are some of the characteristics of a good mentor? In a column she wrote in 2008 entitled "Qualities of a Good Mentor," writer Ellen Kappel lists the five qualities of a good mentor. The column was about mentoring graduate students, but it could apply to any mentor, including superintendents. I'm sure you'll take something away from the list:

Take the Time to Mentor Someone

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



A GOOD MENTOR SHOWS WHERE OPPORTUNITIES LIE AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM

1. Mentors create opportunity and open doors. A good mentor also shows where opportunities lie and how to achieve them.

2. Mentors know students' strengths and abilities. A mentor doesn't set up a student to fail. A mentor challenges a student but doesn't assign tasks that a student can't handle. A good mentor knows the student better than the student knows himself or herself.

3. Mentors set good examples. Students watch their mentors' work habits, how they interact with people, and how they handle crisis situations.

4. Mentors want students to succeed, and they help students learn from the mentors' mistakes. Mentors aren't in competition with their students. They don't put up roadblocks to students' successes.

5. Mentors want students to get to the point where they're comfortable enough to work independently.

Those of you who have carved out successful careers in this industry probably had mentors — people who believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself. Our mentors' guidance and wisdom directed us along our career paths.

Often, we didn't realize until later the people who mentored us were our mentors.

One of the greatest gifts we can offer is our time. So as this golf season begins — and even when you find yourself busy — try to take the time to mentor someone.

Take the time to impact someone's career path personally and professionally.

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