

# Living *the* Dream

BY SETH JONES

The work may be strenuous, but many superintendents realize that there's no other place they'd rather be

---

---

“I’m happy where I am,” was Daniel McCann’s answer. Honest, to the point and an opinion shared by many of his colleagues. ¶ McCann, superintendent at San Antonio CC, was one of the 661 respondents to a January 2013 *Golfdom* survey. One of the questions we asked: “If you could be the superintendent at any course in the world, what course would you choose?” Respondents could type in any course they wished.

The most popular answer?  
“Right where I am.”

What are the qualities of a job that make superintendents love their position? How much of “living the dream” is about attitude? And how can superintendents get their staffs to feel that love?

We asked some of those respondents, and this is what we learned.

## Reader responses

Sam Crowe, CGCS at the Reserve at Keowee in Sunset, S.C., scoffed at the idea of chasing after a course that others perceived as being more prestigious.

“This is a great place to work. Some people are driven by getting to a top-50 course, or hosting

a Major. I give them credit. But I’m most interested in being someplace where I’m appreciated, and where I have an effect on the success of the



Sam Crowe

course,” he says. “Everyone has their own criteria. Mine is more simple: I just want to be valued.”  
Steve Southard, CGCS, golf operations manager for the city of Loveland, Colo., oversees 45 holes of golf and as many as 40 employees during peak season. He arrived to Colorado via Michigan seven years ago. His experience with a struggling economy in Michigan colors his answer when it comes to what he looks for in a superintendent job.

---

---

Continued on page 22



“Here in California, nine months of the year it’s beautiful. Some people are stuck in offices,” Kappelman says. “I haven’t met a superintendent who doesn’t love their job. I think as a whole, we know how lucky we are.”





Continued from page 20

"Coming from Michigan, it's financial stability. The reality is there are a lot of showy golf courses. But that might not be the job you want. It's best to have a place where the job is steady," Southard says.

San Antonio CC's McCann echoes those sentiments.

"The financial status of the club is important. There are lots of places to work, but to find a place that is not only finan-



Daniel McCann

cially stable, but also has the means to improve the property?" McCann asks aloud. "If you don't have that, you're constantly working with one hand tied behind your back."

## Attitude is everything

Perhaps many of the superintendents who responded to our survey saying they would stay put are just a glass-half-full group of folks. But that positive thinking actually does have a lot to do with job satisfaction.

David Phipps, the Northwest field staff representative for GCSAA, says his previous gig as the superintendent for Stone Creek GC in Oregon City, Ore., was his

dream job... until another dream job came along. He looks back at his time at Stone



David Phipps

Creek now and realizes that the job was what he made of it. "Building and maintaining a golf course? That's as good as it gets," he says. "Every job has its trials. Stone Creek wasn't perfect, but it was as good as I made it. You can have a rotten day at the golf course, the next day is ten times better. You can't let the bad days get in your head. It's always about being positive."

It literally is about being positive, says Barbara Jaurequi, MS, a nationally certified master addiction counselor, executive coach and author of the book "A.C.E.S. — Adult-Child Entitlement Syndrome."

"You could never overestimate the value in having an attitude of gratitude. Being grateful is the antidote to negativity and resentment," Jaurequi says. "I've seen scores of people who have had really rough starts in life. They learned that being unhappy doesn't help with anything."

Jaurequi suggests to those who aren't happy with their jobs that they take a self-assessment, and try to view their own position objectively.

"Ask yourself how many negative remarks you made in a day. How many positive? Once the assessment is done, ask yourself: 'Is this working?'" she says. "That person will figure out that being negative is not working to their advantage."

Wayne Kappelman, superintendent at Sharp Park GC in San Francisco and winner of *Golfdom's* 2013 Herb Graffis Businessperson of the Year award, says the nature of a superintendent's work necessitates a positive attitude.

"For superintendents, we deal with the vagaries of weather, of raccoons, of a van-

dal — you never know! If you don't come to work with a positive attitude, it can be quite defeating," Kappelman says. "Our work is quite temporary. You have to do it over and over again. You get it mowed,



Wayne Kappelman

set up, looking good, then you have to do it all over again the next day. Without the right attitude, our work can resemble the (Greek) myth of Sisyphus: banished to Hades with the punishment of rolling a rock up a mountain day after day."

## Dealing with rough days

Being forced to roll a rock up a hill in Hades 24/7 sounds pretty brutal. But to some, it just sounds like fly-mowing bunker edges last Tuesday.

The truth is, people are wired differently, and that affects the way they look at their jobs. Some people are enjoying their dream jobs while others are Mr. Sisyphus.

Count Stanly Moles, superintendent at Indianwood G&CC, Indiantown, Fla., as another superintendent living the dream. "I am just a happy person and look for the silver lining in everything that happens," he says. "It's not always easy, and I sometimes have to stop, collect my thoughts and see what part of the elephant I want to eat that day."

When asked what course he would work at if he could choose any in the world, he selected Billy Casper Golf-managed Indianwood G&CC. He was one of the survey respondents who answered our question with a verbatim, "Right where I am."

Moles says when the pressures of work get to be too much, "wind therapy" — some alone time on his motorcycle — solves all his ills. For his crew, he promotes a positive attitude the old fashioned way.

Continued on page 24

## Greener pastures

Of the 661 respondents to our survey, a whopping 73 respondents said they would stay right where they are. Here are the next five dream courses.

33	AUGUSTA NATIONAL
22	PEBBLE BEACH
16	CYPRESS POINT
7	THE OLD COURSE AT ST. ANDREWS
6	PINEHURST NO. 2



Barbara Jaurequi



Stanly Moles

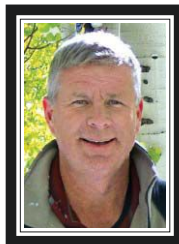
Continued from page 22

"Everyone — even me — likes to hear an 'at-a-boy!' at work. As I go through my day and meet with the crew as they're on the course doing their job, I stop and tell them how much the golfers and I appreciate the fine work they're doing," Moles says. "Of course, occasionally bringing in donuts or ordering pizza for lunch helps!"

But what is a superintendent to do when his crew doesn't respond to positive reinforcement? Both Jaurequi and Southard say that some people just can't be changed to see the good in their jobs.

"You can try and coach them, inform them about the good things. But some people you can't change. And then you share their experience with another team," Southard says, making an effort to tread lightly. "That might not be what you

want to hear in your magazine, but sometimes that's the best thing you can do for everyone."



Steve Southard

it often means they're miserable in life," Jaurequi says.

## Satisfied to stay

Regardless of how satisfying crew members find their jobs, we must admit we were happy to see so many of *Golfdom's* readers were, well... happy.

It seems that many superintendents are

## Could this be "the one"?

Have you thought about the long-term future of you and this course? Could you say "I do" to these greens? Take our survey and find out if your course is a dream come true, or if you need to start seeing other courses.

	YES	NO
1. Do more than 50% of the members know your name?	+6	+0
2. Does your mechanic think he could do your job better than you?	+0	+7
3. Are you using a manual irrigation system?	+0	+12
4. Do you have to post green speeds daily?	+0	+4
5. Look at your mowers. Are they more than four colors?	+0	+7
6. Do most of your golfers envy the cross-town rival?	+0	+5
7. Do you get along with the other department heads?	+4	+0
8. Could your office easily be mistaken for a shed?	+0	+3
9. Are there more items in the break room fridge than in the chemical shed?	+0	+14
10. Does your office have a nice view?	+2	+0
A. Does that view include the pool?	+5	+0
11. Does your course get more visitors than the Texas State Fair?	+0	+7
12. Is your Greens Committee Chair in your office more than you?	+0	+6
13. Do you work more than 60 hours a week in the peak season?	+0	+10
14. Do you spend more time maintaining ski slopes than fairways?	+0	+5
15. Does the course dog prefer the company of the assistant?	+0	+3

## SCALE:

100 to 80 — Congrats, you've found your dream course!

79 to 60 — Give it some time... courses can change, you know.

59 to 0 — We're sorry to say, this is a broken relationship.

Special thanks to Charles Soper and Carey Bailey at Fieldstone Golf Club for their help with our survey!

## Survey outtakes

Any time we leave a survey question with a fill-in-the-blank answer, we get back some fun responses. Here are a few of our favorite outside-the-box answers:

"A GOVERNMENT-OWNED COURSE WITH 100-PERCENT JOB SECURITY SO I'M NOT TWISTING IN THE WIND OVER NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND THEIR SILLY AGENDAS."

"A 9-HOLE ISLAND JOB, WHERE THERE IS BERMUDA ALL AROUND, HAMMOCKS AND A BEER AT THE END OF THE DAY."

"TOO OLD TO EVEN CARE ABOUT THAT ANYMORE. JUST TRYING TO GET TO RETIREMENT AND GO FISHING."

"A COURSE WITH AN UNLIMITED BUDGET AND NO GOLFERS."

"I WIN THE LOTTERY. . . MY OWN COURSE, MY OWN RULES!"

"IT WOULD BE A BALLPARK. . . FENWAY PARK IN BOSTON."

"I WANT TO BE A ROCK RADIO PROGRAMMER."

"WILLIE NELSON'S GOLF COURSE."

"BUSHWOOD COUNTRY CLUB."

like our new friend Daniel McCann: fully aware that the place that he works is truly special.

"There are always going to be those things that can get you down. But then I remember that I have the best office. I know people who sit behind a desk all day, staring at a computer. I can always go out and ride the golf course," McCann says enthusiastically. "I'll never look at leaving unless I'm bored... but there's so much to do! Maybe that's just my personality — maybe I'm never satisfied — but there's so much to do here before I could ever consider leaving."

Perhaps it's never being satisfied... or maybe it's always being satisfied. 