

UW Extension Has Positive Influence on Wisconsin Golf Courses



By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

A childhood on a Wisconsin dairy farm in the 1950s and 1960s made me a rich man, rich with sweet memories of a thousand different everyday things. Few are sweeter than those that came from belonging to our neighborhood 4-H club, the Ideal Hilltoppers. Our one-room grade school was named the Ideal School and we certainly had lots of hills in that driftless area of Wisconsin. It was a very descriptive name!

The 4-H clubs and 4-H programs promoted agricultural education in rural areas like ours through crop, livestock and home-ec projects, record keeping and reports, demonstrations, local and county fairs and untold other ways. Participation in 4-H was my first conscious exposure to the activities of the Extension Service. The county had a 4-H agent in the Extension office at the county seat. Judges at community and county fairs frequently were faculty from the College of Agriculture and School of Home Economics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Publications we made use of were Extension publications.

Nearly everyone involved in production agriculture, in one way or another, took advantage of education and advice from county agents. Not much has changed; golf course superintendents of today all across Wisconsin receive valuable help from University Extension – from conferences, articles in the Grass Roots, phone calls to faculty in Madison or visits from them, to our Summer Field Day. Where would we be without Extension?

The vision and foresight of Congress in the middle 1800s and early 1900s gave us legislation that continues today to help us do a better job of managing our golf courses. The Morrill Land-Grant College Act was proposed by Sen. Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, passed by Congress and signed by President Lincoln in 1862. From that act we now have the UW-Madison CALS. In 1887 William H. Hatch of Missouri introduced the legislation that Congress passed and the president signed that created our system of Agricultural Experiment Stations. The O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility is part of that system of stations in Wisconsin.

And on a warm spring day in Washington D.C. – May 8, 1914 – President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act, legislation that created the Cooperative Extension Service. It didn't create much of a stir back then, but it certainly has had an enormous impact on our country in the subsequent 90

years.

The purpose of Smith-Lever was “to aid in diffusing among the people of the U.S. useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same.”

Realistically and practically speaking, the idea of Extension was to help people help themselves by taking (“extending”) the land grant universities to the people. It is still working today, as we know from first-hand experience, and philosophically fits like a glove with our Wisconsin Idea.

A question I sometimes hear is, “why do they call it *Cooperative Extension Service*?” The easy and obvious answer is because of the cooperation among the U.S. Department of Agriculture (federal), the land grant universities (state), and the individual counties

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that help support the county Extension agents.

A positive of all Extension programs is that they are all voluntary. Anyone who wants to take part in these programs may, but no one has to take part. Talk about the all-American attitude!

Extension, as we have experienced it, draws upon research-based knowledge and information. In my youth most Extension programs served rural people. Today the opposite is true – most Extension programs touch people in urban areas of the country, a reflection of the changes we have experienced in the last forty or fifty years. And this ability to change with the changing times is what has kept University Extension in front of golf course management in Wisconsin.

University Extension is organized somewhat similar to the University itself, with a chancellor, deans and

associate deans. Professors, in CALS at least, have their time divided into areas of responsibility – research, teaching and extension. Some are assigned no extension time; others are full-time extension (Rossi at Cornell, e.g.).

At any rate, the ability for us to put to use the good research and science coming out of the Wisconsin campus is due largely to our Extension scientists. The “Extension Workers Creed” shown here illustrates the deep feeling and commitment these people have for their work. John Stier has a framed copy hanging in his office on campus.

Please, think about how often our lives and work are affected in positive ways by this great group of educators. ♣

EXTENSION WORKERS CREED

- I BELIEVE** in people and their hopes, their aspirations, and their faith; in their right to make their own plans and arrive at their own decisions; in their ability and power to enlarge their lives and plan for the happiness of those they love.
- I BELIEVE** that education, of which extension work is an essential part, is basic in stimulating individual initiative, self-determination, and leadership, that these are the keys to democracy and that people, when given facts they understand, will act not only in their self-interest but also in the interest of society.
- I BELIEVE** that education is a lifelong process and the greatest university is the home; that my success as a teacher is proportional to those qualities of mind and spirit that give me welcome entrance to the homes of the families I serve.
- I BELIEVE** in intellectual freedom to search for and present the truth without bias and with courteous tolerance toward the views of others.
- I BELIEVE** that the Extension Service is a link between the people and the ever-changing discoveries in the laboratories.
- I BELIEVE** in the public institutions of which I am a part.
- I BELIEVE** in my own work and in the opportunity I have to make my life useful to mankind.

Because **I BELIEVE** these things, I am an extension worker.