

Jim

By Jake Schneider, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Jim has been a summer seasonal employee on our staff for the past three seasons, and we're all hoping that he will be back for many more. Granted he only works about four hours per week, but he has become an indispensable component of our crew. Everyday, he comes to work with an ear-to-ear grin, and with rare exception, this grin stays on his face during his time on the course. It's safe to say that Jim is a morale booster to all who pay attention.

When he's at work, he wants to work, and he does so at 100 miles-per-hour. As much as he tried talking me into letting him chip brush during his first summer here, that hasn't happened, and his specialties include helping mow the clubhouse lawn (his favorite job), changing water in the on-course coolers, weeding flower beds, and freshening the water/detergent in the ballwashers. On one occasion, he had to correct Angel, one of our full-time employees, on the proper procedure for changing said ballwasher water.

Overall, he's a man of few words with an impressive sweet tooth. Jim never goes into the field without the proper safety equipment (or his water jug), and he may actually have too much PPE on occasion. He's not always the best with names, but that leaves him in good company. On the weekends, he attends church. Working at Blackhawk is more

of a second job for him, and his primary job involves custodial work.

In many ways, Jim is the perfect employee; he is punctual, has a great attitude, and works hard. Plus, he never forgets to remind us to "clock me out". He is 50 years old but has the energy level of a man 20 years younger. Jim is also autistic.

The above is 100% true, and I can assure that it's meant to be neither a self-serving narrative on hiring "disabled" workers nor a pity party for Jim. Rather, it's meant to serve as a reminder for how lucky we are to work the jobs that we do and on how our attitudes can affect all of those around us. If given the opportunity, I have no doubt that Jim would happily work on the course for 40 hours/week, and in spite of the challenges, we should do our best to maintain that same attitude. Like Jim, let's not dwell in what we don't have in our lives, bank accounts, or maintenance budgets but instead embrace what we do have. Pardon the pun, but the grass isn't always greener on the otherside.

After getting over the shock that maintaining a golf course is, in fact, a decent-paying, legitimate career, I'm surprised by the amount of people who think that it's a really cool job. I may not have agreed with that assertion from July 7-August 7 of this past year, but for the most part, I see where they are coming


from. We get paid to work on properties that many with the so-called "desirable" jobs come to relax and to spend their leisure time. Although many of our days are neither relaxing nor leisurely, there are certain days when the weather is just right that it seems like a crime to get paid to do what we do. Rather than staring at a cubicle wall, we get to oversee picturesque landscapes.

Normally, I'm not one to set New Year's resolutions, but this year, I have resolved to be as happy with what I have in all aspects of life. Hopefully, you will do the same. This doesn't mean that I am or that you should be complacent. In fact, quite the opposite is true (I'm talking to you, elusive head superintendent job). Heck, after the hand that we were dealt last year, 2013 has to be better, right?

Prior to leaving on a family vacation to the Ozarks this summer, Jim typed a letter that was addressed to me and various other staff members. I will be hanging onto this letter for a long, long time. In this letter, he briefly details the trip and asks me to call his sister about having the days off to travel. His closing was as follows:

Lots of Love,
Jim

If only all of our employees felt that way about me...

Have a great year, and enjoy your job as much as Jim does. 



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