

Problem-solver extraordinaire

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

Ever wonder why you're in this business? Ever tried putting it into words? Mike Schiller has wondered. He's been able to put his thoughts to words—and rather well, at that.

"Being a Cubs fan and going down to Wrigley Field as a kid, I always watched what the groundskeepers were doing," Schiller remembers. "If you don't mind work and like to be outside, it's a great business. We're kind of urban farmers planting things for future generations. And it's like an addiction. Once it gets in your blood, you can't get rid of it.

"We're not going to get rich, but we're leaving greenspace for future generations."

Schiller—assistant superintendent of parks and planning for Schaumburg, Ill.—likes to solve problems. And with a park system of 100 acres spread over 26 square miles, he runs into plenty of them.

"This business is not static," he observes. "You never know what you're going to do from day to day, or what problems you're going to run into. I like to consider myself a good problem solver. When somebody tells me I can't do something, I

like to find a way to do it. And I like to find new and better ways to do things." It helps that Schiller is blessed with capable employees, "people who can do almost anything." The expertise on hand runs even into the winter months.

"Snow is a top priority in the winter," Schiller notes, "especially at our community centers. I've never seen a crew that does a better job of keeping

sidewalks and parking lots clean and safe."

Schiller's supervisor is Dan Otto, superintendent of parks and planning. Jeff Richards is in charge of landscape construction crews and the horticulture crew, while John Gerker heads up the mowing and trimming crews, and coordinates special events maintenance tasks.

Schaumburg's parks include 40 baseball infields, 13 soccer fields and 60 playground sites. Seven new baseball infields and four new soccer fields are due in 1996. "I kind of watch over the playgrounds," he notes. "Special events are also a high priority. We take care of all the recreation staff's needs."

"We mow about 200+ acres a week. We mow athletic fields two times a week, but the main fields are mowed once a day," says Schiller, who has two associate degrees from Hartford College in Palatine, Ill., and served in the U.S. Air Force where he did much the same as he does today.

The Schaumburg parks department uses 15- and 16-foot gang mowers for productivity's sake, because many areas—including ballfields—are large.

"We also do broadleaf weed control, but we can't afford to do much disease control or anything," says Schiller. "It always seems as though one of our guys is out seeding somewhere. We oversee with new grasses and let them grow through it. Then, we try to keep the grass healthy and growing so it can tolerate all the use."

Some of Schiller's recommendations that have worked over the past year:

PROBLEM AREAS: "With 105 sites over 26 square miles, it's hard to see everything. We hope other people will be our eyes. You listen to the public and your recreation staff all the time. You try to serve their needs. If something's not right, people will tell you."

GEESE: "We just bought a puppy—Lucy—and found she's the best way to keep geese away. Each goose leaves behind a quarter-pound (of 'dirt') a day and you can't clean it up because it's greasy and gooky and dirties up athletic fields. The dog won't



Schaumburg's Mike Schiller uses four-day work weeks to keep his employees more productive.

GCSAA announces officer nominees for 1996

Bruce R. Williams has been nominated for the presidency of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The association's 1996 election of officers and directors is scheduled for Saturday, February 10, during its annual meeting at the GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando, Fla.

Williams is superintendent at Bob O' Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., and is currently serving as vice president of GCSAA.

The nominee for vice president is Paul S. McGinnis, CGCS, of Union Hills Country Club in Sun City, Ariz.

Nominees for secretary/treasurer are Dave Fearis, CGCS, of Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, Mo.; and George Renault III, CGCS, of Burning Tree Club in Bethesda, Md.

Six candidates are up for election to two director posts: Paul A. Dermott, CGCS, of Oakdale Golf & Country Club in Downsview, Ontario, Canada; Ken Mangum, CGCS, of Atlanta Athletic Club in Duluth, Ga.; Samuel Snyder VII,

CGCS, of Hercules Country Club, Wilmington, Del.; Robert J. Tillema, CGCS, of Sherwood Forest Golf Club, Sanger, Calif.; Michael Wallace, CGCS, of Hop Meadow Country Club in Simsbury, Conn.; and R. Scott Woodhead, CGCS, of Valley View Golf Club, Bozeman, Mont.

Georgia Turfgrass Foundation earns golf industry support

The Georgia Turfgrass Foundation Trust reports contributions from the state's golf industry associations surpassed \$15,000 for 1995.

"GTFT is truly coming into it's own, with meaningful research and projects that the industry is supporting," says Mark Hoban, GTFT president. For information on tax-deductible donations to GTFT, call GTFT at (404) 975-4123.

Golf course project serves as training ground

Delhi College Golf Course recently added a back nine to its golf course in Delhi, N.Y., and the New York State Turfgrass Association used the project as the focal point for its 10th Annual Golf Course Design and Construction Seminar.

The course construction has served as a training ground for students in Delhi's turf/golf course operations; horticulture; landscape contracting; and landscape architectural technology programs.

According to Dominic Morales, profes-

sor and plant science program director at Delhi College, more than 20 green industry companies have donated equipment, supplies and services in excess of \$200,000 to help finance the project.

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Schiller, left, and Eric McMann make over a pitcher's mound with Flexiclay.

hurt the geese, but the geese take flight when they see her."

MORALE: "This summer, the toughest thing was keeping the staff healthy because it was so hot. Went through several hundred gallons of Gatorade. And we let the crews take more frequent breaks, as long as they got the job done."

PRODUCTIVITY: "Our mowing guys are more productive when they can work longer hours on a jobsite, so we're on a four-day work week, 10 hours a day."

PITCHER'S MOUNDS: "We're using a polymer/clay combination called Flexiclay. It holds up well in wetness. Our Eric McMann will rebuild the pitcher's mound in the fall. He says that it takes him one hour to add the Flexiclay and it saves him 50 hours the next summer. It's only \$11 a bag, so it's well worth it." **LM**