



CHIPS & PUTTS

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Why 18 Holes?

The links at St. Andrews occupy a narrow strip of land along the sea. As early as the 15th century, golfers at St. Andrews established a customary route through the undulating terrain, playing to holes whose locations were dictated by topography. The course that emerged featured eleven holes, laid out end to end from the clubhouse to the far end of the property. One played the holes out, turned around, and played the holes in, for a total of 22 holes. In 1764, several of the holes were deemed too short, and were therefore combined. The number was thereby reduced from 11 to nine, so that a complete round of the links comprised 18 holes.



Eric Reed, Golf Course Superintendent Valley Country Club

Eric Reed is completing his sixth season as golf course superintendent at Valley Country Club. Valley is a Par 71, A.W. Tillinghast design built in the late 1920's. The course was originally a nine hole layout built in 1909. Ron Forse and Jim Nagle completed a bunker restoration and three green reconstruction projects in the fall of 1998/spring of 1999. Although it only plays to a length of 6,100 yards, the undulating course places a premium on a golfer's short game. Valley hosts 18,000 rounds per year, weather permitting.

Eric is a 1990 graduate of the Penn State University Turfgrass Certificate Program, and a 1987 degree holder of The University of Akron's Business Management Program. Prior to arriving at Valley, he had garnered his golf course experience at Firestone Country Club, and Aronimink Golf Club.

Four years with a sheisty construction company in Ohio renewed his exuberant return to golf course maintenance at Valley. Dave Tetlak is completing his second season as Eric's able assistant. A peak crew of eleven maintain the greens and grounds.

In his spare time, Eric enjoys more work and fatherhood. Joined in life by Becky, his wife of ten years, they are the proud parents of Madison, 6, Megan, 4, and Bryce, 1.



President's Message.....

A big thank you goes out to all who were in attendance at the July meeting at Fox Hill C.C. The amount of questions submitted prior to the meeting was very low: one. However, this discussion went very well. As soon as you start talking turf with a group of turfers, it is hard to stop them.

The Pattersons were in attendance, Jack and Rick, and another crowd favorite Fran Berdine. It was great to see them all again. Rumor has it they will be at the clambake this year. Next month we will be at Valley Country Club. I'm sure Eric will have the course in its usual terrific condition.

By the time this issue hits the street, the clambake will have been a success. Thanks to all the supporters at this annual event. Thank you to Keith Snyder and staff for being our gracious host. We have Great Bear locked in to host another monthly meeting in the near future.

We will all be getting our GCSAA Conference and Trade Show brochures in the mail very soon. This year's conference is in beautiful San Diego, California. Get your applications in as soon as possible in order to obtain the classes for which you desire.

Thank you to all members who have been supporting the Association this year. It has been a difficult year for all of us. Your support and participation has made this year much easier to get through.

See you at the meetings!

Ron Garrison, CGCS

From the Editor's Desk.....

Well, I think we can almost say that we have this one under our belts. I never thought I would say this, but given a choice of one of the previous two seasons, I think I would take a drought over this soaker of a year. Actually, having a weekend off in June or August because there is nothing you can do while it's raining would be a difficult thing to give up, though. This year left us defenseless against the weather. One of my members wants to sue the company that installed the course drainage system some eight years ago because of how poorly it performed this year. The membership feels that the course should be as dry as popcorn flatulence after a 2-inch rain. It's difficult to convey that it would also mean that we would be brown and crusty after a mere 2 weeks of dry weather. I'd say "let it snow", but I'm afraid of what that season has yet to bring!

Eric Reed



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What is an H-2B Visa Program?

Michael T. Glah, President
International Personnel Resources, Inc.

The H-2B visa establishes a means for U.S. non-agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of domestic workers, to employ temporary nonimmigrant foreign workers. H-2B eligibility requires that the job and the employer's need for the foreign worker be of a temporary nature, such as seasonal employment. The H-2B visa is ideally tailored to meet the needs of the green industry in the Northeastern United States where the typical seasonal employment period requires less than eleven months. Turnover amongst this foreign labor force is traditionally extremely low, stabilizing the seasonal labor force. The individuals will typically return year after year, significantly reducing retraining costs.

The H-2B Visa Program:

- Permits U.S. employees to hire seasonal foreign workers
- There must be a lack of willing qualified U.S. workers available for the positions
- Is for seasonal employment
- Is restricted to non-agricultural work
- Involves three U.S. government state and federal agencies and applications
- Applications are by job title and rate of pay and may have multiple employees
- Application submission requires 120 calendar days before workers are needed.
- Certification is issued to the employer, not the worker
- Certification is not transferable from one employer to another or between employees
- Re-certification of the employer is required annually
- An employer must file for its H-2B certification—multiple employers cannot jointly file
- H-2B employees must return home annually to have their H-2B visas re-issued
- Housing and transportation are not required
- Hourly rates paid to foreign workers must be competitive to local labor rates

What government agencies are involved and what is their role?

Department of Labor (DOL)

- Reviews the applying company's application form, the ETA 750

- Determines the "prevailing wage" for each job category petitioned
- Issues "advertising instructions" for the number and type of positions requested
- Approves or denies the request for Alien Employment Certification

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) (Formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Services of I.N.S.)

- Reviews the DOL application and certification
- Reviews the BCIS application form, the I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker
- Performs criminal background checks on all foreign nationals identified in Form I-129
- Approves or denies the Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker

Department of State

- Operates United States Embassies worldwide
- Performs additional criminal background checks, fingerprints, photographs, and interviews all foreign nationals petitioning an H-2B visa
- Issues the H-2B visas

What is an H-2B Agent and what are the benefits of using one?

An Agent is a subcontractor and is not required to be an immigration attorney. An Agent will perform from the most basic services, filing the required applications for an employer to be certified to participate in the H-2B program, to the most comprehensive, performing ongoing human resources employment support services. An employer may use the following as a checklist to determine the level of support services an Agent is quoting in their proposal.

1. Basic Agent Representation

- Interviews client to acquire information for application procedures
- Accurately complete, for client signature, government application forms
- Timely file required documents with U.S. government agencies
- Place recruitment advertisements and track and report results to the DOL
- Ongoing communication with all levels of U.S. govt. agencies involved in application

2. Embassy Representation

- On-site representation at appointed U.S. Embassy

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interview with Embassy

- On-site assistance in foreign country to fill out H-2B personnel's visa applications
- Experienced staff in foreign country available to resolve challenges with Embassy

3. Recruitment

- Utilizing client referrals or other databases, provide on-site candidate screening in foreign country

4. Employment Support Services

- Translation services
 - ⇒ Offered on site or via telephone, translation assistance with employee orientation, policies and procedures, and performance related meetings
- Acquire for H-2B personnel International Drivers' Licenses (IDL)
- Travel Planning
 - ⇒ Coordinates chartered bus services
 - ⇒ Negotiate group airfare discounts
- Housing and Transportation Assistance
 - ⇒ While housing is not required of employer, Agent can coordinate with local Latino community service organizations to acquire housing and transportation.
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
 - ⇒ Accompany 1st year personnel to local SSA office for Social Security numbers
- Replacement Workers
 - ⇒ Including recruitment, embassy representation, travel coordination, and orientation
- Banking and Financial Planning

- ⇒ Assist 1st year personnel to establish bank accounts and gain access to low fee money transfer procedures to families at home
- ⇒ Assist personnel to access credit card companies to establish credit in the U.S.

In my twelve years of experience with the H-2B Program, both managing it for my own company and now as an H-2B Agent, I am convinced that a successful H-2B Program requires a comprehensive commitment to both its administrative and personnel management issues. The H-2B is not a once and done solution. Just like all labor management objectives, the H-2B program takes ongoing management commitment in order to increase its efficiencies and, therein, its successes. A comprehensive, "turn-key", H-2B Agent service providing all of the above-described services, still requires significant management commitment for a successful outcome. Having said that, I believe that the H-2B visa program is the best available solution to the labor crisis experienced by U.S. seasonal employers in the green industry.

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Happy to be H2B

By Eric Reed

I am in my first season employing four H2B employees. While I am continually presented with new challenges, I have found my experience thus far to be very positive. If any of you are considering going H2B, I would like to share some of my experiences with you in an attempt to make your transition easier. There are numerous companies offering H2B employment services. I spoke with Ken Flisek, Superintendent at Nevillewood in Pittsburgh, and followed his recommendation in using a management company out of North Carolina.

The H2B program requires a four to five month lead-time on your part to complete the entire hiring process. I was all set to go last November when my Board of Directors requested a presentation of my employment plans at the December Board Meeting. While I garnered complete support from the Board, the delay in getting my application going cost me over a month in the spring. This entire process requires a great amount of patience on your part, so prepare yourself. The earlier you can get the ball rolling, the better off you will be come spring.

The initial application involves laying out every aspect of the job. This application will be used to advertise your position, and also to establish an employment contract with your H2B employees. You will be required to supply a complete job description, pay rates, work schedules, housing and transportation, and any other costs or requirements for the prospective employees. You are legally required to offer the positions at your current starting rate. Step two involves advertising the positions locally. By law, you must demonstrate that there is not enough local interest to support your employment needs. The biggest benefit of applying early can be seen in this phase of the application. The management company will place an advertisement in your local paper offering the positions. My ad was published in January offering employment in March. I had fourteen respondents. Ken Flisek, on the other hand, has his ad out by Thanksgiving, and his local response is next to nil. You are required to interview all local applicants, and they must accept the position or sign a paper stating that they are not interested in the position. It was obvious that my fourteen applicants received information about the positions from a State employment agency. Of the fourteen, ten showed up for the interview, and only one had worked within the prior three months. I did my best to make these positions out to be as physical and as menial as possible, and I could not get one person to turn it down. I know you are thinking, "Problem solved, what more could I want?" But if you remember the scenario for collecting unemployment, you must be actively looking for work in order to keep collecting. So when that 5-5, 350 pound guy says he likes physical work, you're not thinking, "Maybe he's just allergic to broccoli." I dejectedly called the management company to tell them that I would be forced to hire locally and ultimately continue my 13% employment success rate. This is where you hear trumpets in the background. Your only legal requirement is to interview the local applicants. The government agencies will rarely investigate the matter any further. The management company submitted two names from the list of ten that we would be interested in hiring, and our appli-

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cation was on its way to the state for certification. We hired one of the two on the list in the early spring because of how long the application was taking, and after discharging him, he let us know that he was a sleep-deprived, Bipolar patient exhibiting schizophrenic tendencies, all because his parents included him in their Grateful Dead groupie lives as an infant. This point in the process is where the time stands still. The state will approve your certification and then notify the management company of how many visas you have been granted. Once your visas are approved, you will have your employees within two weeks. H2B workers are only permitted in this country for the duration of the employment contract which you have set up for them. Our employees are contracted through Thanksgiving and then their visas will expire.

As far as housing goes, you are required to secure housing for them prior to their arrival. They will pay for all their housing costs. We looked for an apartment that was within walking distance from the grocery store, Laundromat, etc. I have been told that these guys typically sleep up to eight people in a bedroom in Mexico, so do not feel that you must find them a palace. They will be more interested in saving money. We have an arrangement with the landlord where the club pays him monthly, and then we use a payroll deduction to collect the rent and utilities from the employees. The utilities are in the club's name, and the bill is sent to the club. Most of the furniture was donated by friends. As for transportation, we have an employee who graciously drives them to and from work every day. They pay him monthly for gas.

The work ethic is as advertised. I was unsure how the rest of the staff would take to the new employees, but their work ethic gained them immediate respect. The anxiety over what type of people you will be getting is unnecessary. Most of these guys are married and have four to five children. They are extremely polite and well mannered. We have to prod them to get in line ahead of anyone for lunch. The only weakness you will have to deal with is that they have no understanding of the game of golf. This will require some patience from your membership. They have been very easy to train, and they pick things up very fast. We requested a bilingual employee since no one on our staff speaks Spanish. While we would have managed without him, life has been a lot easier having him around. The H2B coordinator from our management company is bilingual and she will gladly assist you or them with any problems.

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A message from your golf course superintendent and GCSAA



(Continued from page 6)

The H2B employees come to this country for one reason, and that is to make money. They will work every hour that you offer them. We schedule them to work seven days a week, and their only complaint thus far has been that we only work mornings on the weekend. Weekends off to the rest of the staff was not a hard sell. I was a little nervous at the beginning because these guys have relatives working all over the country, and they will talk to each other on what everyone is making. The farm workers will be blazing out of the gate, but once your employees discover that they are making much more per hour and that their work is steadier, they will be content.

This year has been challenging because of the budget restraints and the poor weather. We have cut our work week to 36 hours and tried to limit any overtime. After starting the year working 50 hours a week, the boys have been a little frustrated by the cuts. I approached some of our members, and with my chairman's permission, we have lined up side jobs for

the guys to do after work and on the weekends. My goal there is to try to help these guys make as much money as they can so that they will want to return to us next year, and we won't have to start over with a new group of employees. This has gone over very well and the members have been very happy.

I lost one of my employees this week. We took him to the hospital complaining of chest pains, and although they found nothing after numerous tests, the experience frightened him, and he has decided to return to Mexico. We found out that he has a history of heart trouble in his family. When we applied for our H2B workers, the management company recommended that we get extra visas in case a situation like this occurred. The consulate is closed next week, but we will have a new employee within 7-10 days.

The H2B program has presented new challenges for us, and I am sure unique situations will continue to occur. But it is so refreshing to have people that

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POCONO ROUNDUP

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE POCONO
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Congratulations!



Congratulations and Best Wishes go out to Charlie Koennecker and his wife Karen on the birth of their son, Andrew. Andrew was born on August 29.

Fox Hill Golf Results

Winners:

First Flight

1st: Steve Chirip, Chris Collins
2nd: Jim Carville, John Sequi

Second Flight

1st: Tom Weinert, Joe Sellers

Longest Drive: Rich Sweeney

(Continued from page 7)

you can depend on everyday, people that actually want to be there with you. Cost-wise, I pay \$3,000 annually for the management company to do all my paperwork, and to transport the employees to us. Four employees will work approximately 6,000 hours in a year, so the fee works out to be about \$.50 per hour per worker. Keep that in mind when you meet those companies that charge a per hour worked fee.

Great Bear Golf & C.C. Golf Results

Winners:

First Place Team:

Gary Phillips, Sr., Garry Phillips, Jr.
Pete Trojanski, Jim Gurzler

Second Place Team:

Duane Schell, Tony Barletta
Tim Rice, Ron Batoni

Longest Drive: Ryan Fogel

Closest to Pin: Bert Zajac, 10' 1-1/2"



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