

Tee & Green

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Tee To Green



Rockland
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President's Message

The Board That Never Rests



his is probably the first golf season in a long time that I haven't wished the days away because we're still fighting to get through the "dog days of summer." This year, I feel like the summer is flying by too quickly. I'm not even all that happy that NFL football has begun, because that's always been the signal that summer is coming to an end and the cold weather is fast approaching. This year, that's not a welcome thought. I do hope that with the fall-like temperatures we've had in July and August you've had more time to do the things you enjoy, including spending time with family and friends.

Speaking of Spending Time With Family and Friends...

I was extremely happy to see that many of you joined fellow Met members and their families at the Family Picnic at Bedford Village Memorial Park and the Scholarship & Parent/Child Tournament at Mosholu Golf Course. There is no better way to relax with your family (and maybe even gather a few turf tips in the process) while enjoying an event your kids will remember forever.

Whether your child is the one to break open the piñata or hit a great drive or putt, it will be the kind of experience they'll want to repeat year after year. These are the memories that last a lifetime.

Remember, our goal as an association and board is to provide the membership with well-rounded experiences, whether they be educational events in the winter; golf and networking during the season; social gatherings for the entire the family; or events like the Summer Social and Holiday Party, where you can join fellow members in enjoying some time away from the kids with your spouse or someone special.

We are always open to fresh new ideas for our educational and social events, so if you have any suggestions for an all-new venue or event, please reach out to the appropriate committee chairperson.

The Board at Work

The board is never at rest (even during the summer), and this year has been no different.



**Blake Halderman, CGCS
MetGCSA President**

For instance:

- The New York State BMP Committee has been extremely active in preparing for Phase 2 of the BMP initiative.
- The Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to deserving students heading off to college.
- The Website Committee, along with a tremendous amount of help from Matt Leverich and the Playbooks for Golf team, has launched a new website complete with our own Twitter handle (@metgcsa). Please be sure to follow us for the latest industry news and association happenings.
- Tournament Committee members are wrapping up the details for the final events of the season.
- The Social Committee is making arrangements for our Annual Meeting and Holiday Party.
- The Education Committee is lining up speakers for the Fall and Winter seminars.

Thinking of Joining the Board?

With all that the association has going on year-round, we could always use a helping hand. If you would like to be directly involved in the planning and execution of association events, please remember that it is never too early to start thinking about running for the Board of Directors or even joining a committee or hosting an event in 2015.

Our annual elections are fast approaching. They will be held at our November 4 Annual Business Meeting. Serving on the board enables you to be involved in all the decision-making that could shape our association and even the future of golf in our area. What's more, as a board member, you're privy to all the latest industry information, which can give you a leg up on the job and in the decisions you make on the course.

If interested in running for the board, please contact any one of the Nominating
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Feature

MetGCSA Supers— and Industry Experts—Speak Candidly About Employment Contracts

by Greg Wojcik



I've been in the industry more than 35 years as both a golf course superintendent and now a principal in Playbooks for Golf, and in that time, I've seen many changes—in equipment, technology, management techniques, and in the education and agronomic expertise required to do an increasingly demanding job. Despite these advances, few superintendents throughout the country are acknowledged as professionals worthy of an employment contract.

According to the 2013 GCSAA Compensation & Benefits Report completed by superintendent members, only 20 percent of the 3,322 who responded—a total of 665—have a written employment contract.

The Met survey results, which I gathered several months ago, appeared, at first glance, more encouraging: More than half of the respondents said they have contracts. But when you consider that only 36 of our 155 superintendent members responded, that statistic doesn't seem quite as encouraging.


So why are employment contracts still more the exception than the rule among golf course superintendents?

Problem #1: The most apparent, longstanding problem I see is that laypeople, i.e., green committee and board members, still don't fully understand what it is that superintendents do, much less comprehend the level of skill and the breadth and depth of knowledge required to manage a golf course operation.

We all have read or heard about the fantastic new contracts that pro athletes/managers/coaches obtain (most always through the negotiation by their agents and/or lawyers). Why? Because in professional sports, owners and boards almost always “get” what the coaches and athletes actually do. Many were former coaches or athletes themselves. What's more, the quality of these new hires' work can be easily judged by wins and losses and statistics. In other words, there is little mystery to what people in the sports arena do.

You can say the same about the golf facility's general manager. Members pretty much understand what's involved. General man-





"The most apparent, longstanding problem I see is that laypeople, i.e., green committee and board members, still don't fully understand what it is that superintendents do..."

agers are considered key players in the golf facility's profitability, while the superintendent's essential role in the club's viability often goes unrecognized.

Confirming this great divide in understanding, one industry executive noted, "The club member's general viewpoint about superintendents is that they are analogous to a head engineer. The GM is regarded as more of a CEO. Although these characterizations are changing," he said, "it's still the 'CEOs' who get the written employment agreements." In fact, according to Jim McLoughlin, principal of TMG Golf and former executive director to both the GCSAA and MetGCSA, about 75 percent of general managers countrywide are awarded employment contracts.

In the modern-day golf world, many green committee and board members will attempt to grasp what a superintendent does—and often erroneously believe they know the job better than the superintendent—as they Google everything from "effectiveness of calcium nitrate" to "growing Bermuda grass on Long Island." Unfortunately, even with this drilling for knowledge, a true understanding of the concerns, challenges, and constraints of the job eludes even the most well-intentioned committee member.

Those entrusted with the super's hire typically just use their intuition or thoughts from grillroom friends to rate and reward... or terminate.

"More and more superintendents find


themselves being told 'the club has decided to go in a different direction,'" said golf course industry search specialist Bruce Williams. "There are no assurances of employment beyond today," he added, "particularly when operating without a binding contract."

Concurring with Williams, Peter McCormick, TurfNet founder, former MetGCSA Class AF representative, and personal resource to many superintendents, pointed to "employment instability" as the single biggest threat to the golf course superintendent as a career—and as an industry.

"Underlying 'employment instability' is the flux of personnel over time on the employer side, particularly at private clubs," he explained. "The people who hire a superintendent and are privy to the conversations and resultant agreements and expectations—whether they are a general manager, club official, committee, or board member—very often aren't around five or ten years down the road. Unless those discussions and agreements are memorialized in a document agreed to by all parties—in effect, a contract," he noted, "it all becomes hearsay over time. And hearsay can lead to potential misunderstanding, disagreement and rancor," he cautioned.

Problem #2: I found that many Met area supers don't have a contract simply because they don't ask for one. Some fear a club's rejection. Others told me they're happy to operate without a contract.

One Met area superintendent who spoke



"It's understandable, then, that most new hires will quickly agree to a reasonable offer without any negotiation..."

to me anonymously, like the others I surveyed, was among the many who just didn't think to ask for an employment agreement: "The members who hired me are smart. If they really wanted me to have a contract, they would have offered it to me before I agreed to take the position," he said.

Unfortunately, in today's highly competitive job market, many newly hired superintendents are so pleased that they've been selected from the throngs of other applicants, that lobbying for a contract barely crosses their minds.

It's understandable, then, that most new hires will quickly agree to a reasonable offer without any negotiation, but many are also overly optimistic about their future with their club, assuming they will always be held in high esteem because, of course, they will always keep the course in top condition and will never make a mistake worthy of their dismissal.

"Everyone loved me at the interviews," said the same Met super, believing his honeymoon period would never end. Equally optimistic, another superintendent told me: "I feel if I continue to work hard and communicate effectively, I will be able to overcome any tenuous situations that may arise. In other words," he added, "if I get dismissed, it will be my fault."

Despite the club's seeming upper hand during the interview process, there's actually no better time to ask for a contract than at the time of hiring. It shouldn't jeopardize your situation, but rather enhance it by establishing you as a competent professional who, like other industry professionals, expects more than just a handshake when agreeing to accept the job.

So why and how should superintendents lobby for a contract?

A contract offers superintendents what I call "failure avoidance." It spells out exactly what the employer expects of you and what you can expect of the employer. As Williams noted, "If written properly, a contract stipulates the employment agreement and terms of employment." It also protects the superintendent from termination at the whim of an employer, indicating the process in which separation or termination could occur.

Unfortunately, some employers will perceive this as a reason to steer clear of contracts. As one club member admitted, "Employment contracts bring with them an obligation to deal fairly with the employee. In legal terms, this is called the 'covenant of good faith and fair dealing.' If the club ends

up treating an employee in a way that a judge or jury finds unfair," he continued, "the club may be legally responsible not only for violating the contract, but also for breaching their duty to act in good faith."

In my book, this is all the more reason to lobby for a contract.

"The truth is, when done well, contracts protect *both* the superintendent and the employer," said Williams, offering an overall talking point for superintendents planning to approach their club about securing an employment contract.

So just how do you go about selling the idea of an employment contract to your green committee and board? As the other industry experts and superintendents I spoke to will agree: It's all in how you market yourself and the mutually beneficial rewards of having a contract.

To start:

- **Approach the idea of a contract** when the course is at its best.
- **If you've been employed at your club** for a number of years, remind them of any and all of your noteworthy accomplishments, from money-saving measures and agronomic improvements to personal accomplishments, such as achieving certification.

Then go on to explain that a contract is useful in:

- **Defining expectations.** If your employer defines in a contract exactly what's expected of you, you'll spend less time second-guessing your employer's goals and more time accomplishing them. No guesswork; greater efficiency.

- **Protecting the club's most important asset, the golf course.** The last thing a club wants is to jeopardize the quality of course conditions by losing a superintendent in the throes of the season or just before a major club event. A contract can guard against inopportune resignations.

One club member I spoke to pointed to this very reason for offering a superintendent a written contract. "The contract can lock the employee into a specific term (for example, two years)," he said, "or require the employee to give the club enough notice to find a suitable replacement (for example, 90 days' notice). While a club can't force someone to keep working for them, an employee is likely to comply with the agreement's terms if there's a penalty within the contract for not doing so," he noted.

- **Ensuring consistency.** Procedures and expectations for ongoing and future projects can be easily specified in a contract. This leads not only to better planning, but also the added assurance that long-term projects can be carried out as defined even if the committee heading up a project changes.

- **Making compensation predictable.** Employment contracts define compensation and benefits, leaving little open to interpretation or negotiation more than once a year.

- **Building trust.** Clubs entrust the care and management of the golf course to you. You want to trust the club to treat you fairly and equitably. A contract lays the groundwork for that trust by defining everyone's responsibilities: your responsibilities to the club and the club's responsibilities to you.

As McCormick confirms, everyone works better in an environment that provides assurances. "Contracts minimize question marks and gray areas," he said, "and avoid issues of trust. Both parties know what to expect so they can get on with business without having to look over anyone's shoulder internally—which is energy misspent."

Be aware, however, of the harsh reality that many clubs are going to be looking after their interests more than yours. In fact, if you listen to one club member I spoke to, "The club can view an employment contract as a tool to maintain tighter control over an employee. If the contract specifies standards for the employee's performance (a detailed job description) and grounds for termination," he noted, "a club may have an easier time terminating an employee who doesn't live up to the club's standards." A perfect reason to have a lawyer review your contract before signing on the dotted line!

What should I include in a contract?

When you get the go-ahead on the contract, your next step is to be sure that it covers all the bases. Here's a basic checklist based on one generated some years ago by GCSAA's career development department along with lessons learned and a few cautionary tales from member superintendents—and area club members themselves—who have been through the process, or have chosen not to.

The contract should define:

1. **Your responsibilities/performance parameters.** Be sure to spell out your duties in detail. "I feel contracts offer peace of mind to both sides by setting expectation levels," says one superintendent.

Peter McCormick cautions, however, that establishing performance parameters can be tricky. "Out on the golf course," he explained, "performance in terms of playability and aesthetics becomes very personal, subjective, and not easily quantifiable. The only way to reduce subjectivity," he continued, "is if there is a document of agreed-upon maintenance standards in place. This should be

separate from (but appended to) an employment contract so it can be revised as needed and agreed. The document of maintenance standards can also serve as the basis of a job description, which can be either integral or appended to an employment contract," he added.

One club member I spoke to cited what he perceived to be a serious drawback to detailing duties and expectations: "By 'binding' both the club and the superintendent to specific roles and responsibilities, a contract limits everyone's flexibility," he said. "This may pose a problem down the road if the club decides it doesn't like the contract terms or wants to terminate it early. That can't happen without the superintendent agreeing to new terms to the contract."

Moral of this story: Carefully review the responsibilities and performance parameters you agree to put in writing.

2. **The chain of command.** "I think it's good to have something in writing that identifies not only what is expected of the employee, but also who, specifically, the superintendent is responsible to," said another survey participant, explaining, "The club's governance changes over time. Board members come and go, and at some clubs, general managers come and go even faster. It's important that new personnel understand the chain of command."

Rule of thumb: The fewer people you report to, the better. Work to keep it to only one!

3. **The length of your contract.** It's always best to lobby for a multi-year contract or, better, one that automatically renews at the end of each year. Without a definitive end point, it seems both parties are less apt to think about making changes.

"The truth is, when done well, contracts protect both the superintendent and the employer."



As one superintendent with a short-term contract lamented: "I had a contract at a previous club, and it didn't seem to work in my favor. It always felt like a ticking clock that eventually would stop, prompting the club to take something away from me. When I started, for example, I had full family medical benefits provided by the club. When my second contract was up, they took that opportunity to force me to contribute to my benefits package," he continued. "And the small raise they gave me barely covered the new expense. If I had no contract, it wouldn't have given them a definitive time to make this move on me."

4. Salary and performance reviews. Note what your compensation is, when it is payable (weekly, biweekly, or monthly), and when you can expect to be evaluated for a raise. More than half the survey respondents receive annual performance evaluations. Be sure to define a performance review schedule in your contract.

"With a contract, you're assured some sort of financial growth," said one survey participant, adding what he perceived as a downside: "But along with that assurance is the pressure to live up to—or exceed—expectations, year after year."

For most of the superintendents I surveyed, having a contract that offered financial security seemed to far outweigh any performance concerns. One of the most favorable stories I heard relating to contracts and compensation came from Peter McCormick. He shared a conversation he had once had with a superintendent—a past MetGCSA president, in fact—who had worked for 10 years or so without a contract at a club that had not lived up to verbal promises of future salary advancement made when he was hired.

Peter explained: "The superintendent looked around casually as jobs came up but was happy where he was, even though underpaid relative to others in the area. He had a frank conversation with his green chairman, who went to the board on the superintendent's behalf. The end result was a 10-year contract with a significant salary increase and retirement contributions," continued Peter. "Relieved of anxiety about his future and the feeling that he wasn't being properly compensated, he was able to move forward reenergized and with a renewed focus and sense of purpose."

Good for both him and the club. This is another example of how contracts can work in everyone's favor!

5. Bonus compensation. You might consider building in a bonus for such things as becoming certified or maintaining your certification, meeting or exceeding your budget goals, managing a major enhancement pro-

ject, hosting tournaments, bringing in new members, or any other practice you feel goes above and beyond your everyday job function.

One survey respondent noted receiving a bonus for seeing the club's new irrigation system installation through to completion, on time and on budget. "The club gave me \$25,000 and my assistant \$5,000," he said. "They recognized that successfully managing a project of that size required many extra hours and superior organizational skills."

Kudos to that club!

6. Professional memberships and educational seminars. Don't hesitate to push for funding and time off to attend both professional and educational industry events. Explain how maintaining professional affiliations and attending local, regional, and national conferences, field days, and seminars are essential to staying abreast of industry trends and practices.

7. Insurance. Define your medical, dental, life, and disability insurance coverage. This assures coverage for the length of your contract.

As one club member noted, "If the contract promises the superintendent health benefits, you can't decide to stop paying for those benefits as a way to save money. The only way to change the terms of the contract is to renegotiate them."

A perfect example of why a contract is worth pursuing.

8. Retirement contributions. It's a good idea to include in your contract regular contributions to a 401K or other retirement vehicle.

9. Vacation. On average, superintendents receive two to four weeks' paid vacation annually. Some reported receiving significantly more time, particularly during the winter months.

Be sure to specify not only the amount of vacation time you want, but also when you would like to take it. If you want a weekend off in the summer with your family and can agree on that arrangement, put it in writing.

10. Housing/housing allowance. Include maintenance, utilities, taxes, assessments, and related upkeep.

11. Meals. Provide for a meal allowance. At least one meal a day is standard during the months of a facility's restaurant operation. A number of the supers surveyed are allowed any number of meals, as long as they're on the job.

12. Vehicle allowance. Most clubs provide a vehicle or an allowance to purchase one. Be sure to specify whether gas, insurance, and maintenance costs are included, as well as how often the vehicle will be replaced.

It's a good idea to include in your contract regular contributions to a 401K or other retirement vehicle.



13. Facility privileges. Note any and all club privileges you, your family, and guests might be entitled to. If you're entitled to use the pool, golf, or play tennis, note this, along with any fees that you are exempt from paying as an employee using the facility.

14. Severance. Surprisingly, a number of superintendents surveyed did not have a severance package and longed for a reasonable separation agreement. Others were hoping to improve the package they currently have. Most who commented on their package understandably wanted their severance pay to grow along with their tenure.

"My severance is three months' salary," noted one superintendent who would like to negotiate for more. "I have been here for eight years and would like one month for every year of service, not to exceed 12 months," he said.

There are a number of ways to handle severance. Among the most common is to pay all the annual salary that would have been earned from the actual date of termination and/or, as this superintendent noted, one month's pay for each year of service.

15. Conditions of contract termination. It's important to spell out how, when, and why your contract—or your employment—can be terminated. One Met super surveyed stressed giving careful thought to the timing of a termination: "I would strongly encourage any superintendent who has club housing and a family in the town's school system to build in a termination notification on or

before June 30. This way," he said, "you have two full months to find new housing and a new school system for your children. This was a big issue for me, and the club did agree to the new notification clause."

16. Indemnification. Including this type of clause in your contract will protect you from claims, lawsuits, fines, etc., that you might incur as an employee of the facility. One superintendent surveyed felt it was more important to have some way to protect himself against "the bad decisions the club ends up making." While still another commented that, no matter what protection this or any of the other contract clauses might offer, his club would always have the upper hand: "If it came to a dispute between the club and me, their 200 attorneys would squish me like a bug," he said. "Basically, my contract is a piece of paper that says my benefits in writing."

Keep in mind, as with any legally binding document, you should always have an attorney look at it—and preferably one who knows the profession—to ensure you're properly protected and that the contract complies with federal and state laws.

"Contracts are worthwhile only if the language is properly written, and the only way to do that is to have a lawyer look at it," concurred one of the survey participants who, like many of the respondents, made sure to seek legal counsel.

Keep in Mind . . .

If you're among the many superintendents seriously thinking of pursuing an employment agreement, remember that you should first be sure your track record qualifies you for a binding contract and then be fair about what you're asking for. If you shoot for the moon, you're likely to turn off an otherwise receptive group.

If lobbying for a contract seems like more trouble than it's worth, keep in mind that once you've reached a mutually acceptable agreement with your employer, you can go to work every day confident about your job and undistracted by issues that may cause you to question your future employment. In the work world, there are few feelings better than that.

Greg Wojick, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is a principal in Playbooks for Golf, offering the Playbooks Coverage System software, golf course field guides, search services, and career development.

Employment Contracts: An In-the-Know Barrister's View

After urging superintendents in our accompanying article to seek legal counsel when drawing up an employment contract, we took the liberty of contacting Attorney Philip M. Halpern, an area lawyer who graciously works pro bono with area golf professionals and superintendents (a number of our members among them) to guide them in crafting just-the-right employment contract, as well as counseling them on other legal issues.

An attorney for the past 34 years with Collier, Halpern, Newberg, Nolletti & Bock in White Plains, NY, Halpern is pleased to give back to an industry that he felt gave so much to him.

"When golf professionals and superintendents want to pay me for my services," he says, "I tell them they can repay me by calling and thanking George Lewis, the former Leewood Golf Club professional who gave me an opportunity few people have. I worked with him from fifth grade until I finished law school," adds Halpern, who 34 years later is still indebted to Lewis's guidance.

Though Halpern is quick to point out that there is "no magic entitlement to a contract," he does admit that "having a contract is better than not." And who should know better? In addition to working the golf shop side of the business, Halpern has been an active member of the Westchester Country Club, serving nine years on the club's board, completing a term as club president and a term as chairman. In addition, for the past several years, he has served on the Green Committee. "I worked with Joe Alonzi, the board, and the Green Committee to change the greens from *Poa* to bent," he says proudly.

So Why Are Contracts Necessary?

Halpern offers two basic reasons, and neither, as you might have expected, relate to benefits and compensation. Instead, Halpern believes contracts are necessary to ensure that the superintendent and his or her family is protected—and provided for—should the worst happen. "A contract is no different than insurance," says Halpern. "With both, you're just trying to cover the risks."

Reason #1: "I call it the three Ds," says Halpern:

1. Death
2. Disability
3. Disagreement

"Contracts are less about articulating benefits—labor laws cover that," says Halpern. "Superintendents need to be sure they're protected, but also that their families are provided for should they become disabled or die, for instance," he adds.

"Disagreement should be covered as well," Halpern continues. "If you commit an offense of moral turpitude, you should probably get nothing upon termination. If, however, you are terminated because 'the club is going in a different direction,' then perhaps some severance is in order and should be agreed on in advance."

Reason #2: Changing position materially. "If a superintendent is changing jobs and has to relocate himself and his family . . . new home, new schools for the kids . . . then he is changing position materially and needs a contract," says Halpern, emphasizing that superintendents who give up everything they had to take a new position need to be sure they're amply covered should things not work out.

"Superintendents should worry less about what they're getting for compensation," says Halpern, "and more about providing for the unknown: What happens if . . . ? Guys come to me," he continues, "not because they didn't get their salary. They come because of the bad things that can happen."

An Astounding Truth

"If there's one thing that astounds me," says Halpern, "it's that superintendents in the Met area don't band together and insist that clubs provide a standard employment agreement. These agreements," he says, "should offer similar basic rights, and clubs should be made aware of these expectations, perhaps, through an association's executive director who could actually visit clubs to educate them."

Many superintendents, according to Halpern, sell themselves short. "They have the attitude that they're fortunate to have the job," he says. "The reality," says Halpern, "is that what they do is a specialty and a huge responsibility that requires long hours and a good deal of technical knowledge and expertise."

"In the end," he says with conviction, "a golf course is only as good as the superintendent a club hires."

Note: You can reach Attorney Philip M. Halpern by phone or email: 914-684-6800 or phalpern@chnnb.com.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Golf and Educational Events

Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier PLUS

The Poa Annual Tournament

Monday, September 22
Rockland Country Club
Sparkill, NY
Host: Matt Ceplo, CGCS

Met Area Team Championship

Monday, September 29
Philadelphia Country Club
Gladwyne, PA
Host: Mike McNulty

Annual Assistants Championship

Tuesday, October 7
Redding Country Club
Redding, CT
Assistant Hosts: Greg Rotter and
Evan Bradstreet
Superintendent Host: Brett Chapin

Nine and Dine Event

Wednesday, October 15
Silvermine Golf Club
Norwalk, CT
Host: Larry Pakkala, CGCS

Annual Fall Meeting & Elections

Tuesday, November 4
Rye Grill & Bar
Rye, NY

Educational Events

Turf & Grounds Exposition

Wednesday–Friday, November 12–14
Rochester Riverside Convention Center
Rochester, NY

The Turf & Grounds Exposition offers an excellent opportunity to network while remaining current on the latest research and trends in turfgrass management. As always, the expo will feature key speakers from all segments of the green industry, as well as a comprehensive trade show with more than 100 exhibitors.

For further information, call the show office at 800-873-8873 or 518-783-1229, or visit the website at www.nysta.org.

MetGCSA/CAGCS Fall Educational Seminar

Wednesday, December 3
The Patterson Club, Fairfield, CT
Host: Jason Meersman

39th Annual New Jersey Green Expo Turf and Landscape Conference

Tuesday–Thursday, December 9–11
Trump Taj Mahal Resort Casino
Atlantic City, NY

The New Jersey Green Exp offers a comprehensive educational program providing cutting-edge applications and tactics to guarantee green industry professionals' success on the job. Offering one of the largest trade shows in the tri-state area, the expo also provides attendees with the opportunity to view the latest and greatest products and services on the market.

For further information, call 973-812-6467 or visit www.njturfgrass.org.

MetGCSA Winter Seminar

Wednesday, January 14, 2015
Westchester Country Club
Rye, NY
Host: David Dudones, CGCS

18th Annual New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show

Monday–Thursday, January 26–29, 2015
Rhode Island Convention Center
Providence, RI

For the 18th consecutive year, the conference and show provides turfgrass professionals from all areas of the industry the opportunity to see the newest products, supplies, services, and equipment available while joining turfgrass professionals for informative educational sessions, pesticide recertification credits, and endless networking opportunities.

For further details, call 401-841-5490 or visit www.NERTF.org or TurfShow.com.

A New Era of Online Services From the MetGCSA

MetGCSA.org . . . Same name, new-and-improved website with a whole host of new online services and up-to-the-minute association news and industry links to just about anything you want—or need—to know! Learn the ins and outs of the site next issue from the developers themselves: Playbooks for Golf. In the meantime, log on. We're confident you'll be pleased with what you see!

2014 Scholarship Recipients Named at the Mosholu Parent/Child Scholarship Tournament

by Glen Dube, CGCS, MetGCSA Scholarship Chairman



Centennial Super Glen Dube competes in the Parent/Child Scholarship Tourney with his son, Jake.

weather and beautiful sunset. After dinner was served and the prizes from the golf event were distributed, scholarship awards were presented to 10 deserving recipients, who were either MetGCSA members' children or a member themselves.

In addition to maintaining stellar GPAs, these students are all very involved in their communities and participate in numerous extracurricular activities. It's amazing how they can get it all done and still

maintain exceptional grades.

Please join me in congratulating this year's scholarship recipients—and their proud parents:

• **David Carlone**, son of Leslie and John Carlone, superintendent of Meadow Brook Club, is a senior at Hofstra University studying film.

• **Courtney Cook**, daughter of Lisa and Mike Cook of The Care of Trees, is a junior at the University of Delaware studying communications.

• **Amanda Gross**, daughter of Elizabeth and Doug George, superintendent of Waccabuc Country Club, will be a senior at Northeastern University studying civil and environmental engineering.

• **Samual Kerr**, son of Betsy and Dave Kerr, superintendent of Ridgewood Country Club, will be a senior at Liberty University majoring in special education, with a special interest in working with autistic children.

• **Teddy Norman**, is a member of the MetGCSA, working as an assistant at Concord Country Club in Concord, MA. He is a senior at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Stockbridge School of Agriculture.

The 2014 Scholarship Awards Ceremony was held on August 5 as part of the third Annual Scholarship & Parent/Child Tournament at Mosholu Golf Course. One of America's premier First Tee golf courses, this was the perfect venue for our members and their children to get out and enjoy playing the game that is such a large part of their parents' livelihood.

Our gracious host, Dave Moffett, who is in his third season at Mosholu, had the course in great shape. And the nine-hole, 2,300-yard par 32 course proved to be the perfect setting for kids and adults of all golfing abilities.

Nearly 40 participants (parent/child teams) played in a nine-hole shotgun and were divided into two divisions. One division was for children 12 and over, the other for kids 12 and under. The tournament was free to members and, by all accounts, was a great success. Of course, the superb weather didn't hurt!

The Scholarship Award Winners

After golf, everyone reconvened at the clubhouse for a delicious buffet dinner on the patio overlooking the ninth hole, offering the perfect opportunity to enjoy the great



- **Sarah Perlee**, daughter of Lorah and Bill Perlee, superintendent of The Apawamis Club, is in her sophomore year at The University of Vermont majoring in animal science.

- **Austin Renzetti**, son of Angela and Steve Renzetti, owner of Pinnacle Turf, will be a freshman at Norwich University studying civil engineering.

- **Mary Sylvester**, daughter of Julie and Dave Sylvester, sales representative for Bayer Environmental Science, is pursuing her graduate degree in geography from Central Connecticut State University.

- **Jane Sylvester**, daughter of Julie and Dave Sylvester, sales representative for Bayer Environmental Science, is in her senior year at Michigan State University studying music education and performance.

- **Christopher Wojick**, son of Tee to Green Managing Editor Pandora Wojick and Greg Wojick, principal, Playbooks for Golf, will be a freshman at the University of Connecticut, pursuing a bachelor's in plant science and landscape design.

In addition to congratulating our recipients, I'd like to recognize those past boards who had the foresight to initiate our Scholarship Fund, which has enabled us to assist in the ever-increasing college costs thanks to our Annual Bill Caputi Scholarship Raffle, the 50/50s at our monthly meetings, and last but not least, a portion of our dues. Finally, a special thank you needs to go out to the entire Scholarship Committee for their hard work in reviewing and awarding each scholarship.

Please remember to support our scholarship raffle. It is the major income-generator for our Scholarship Fund!



New Members

Please join us in welcoming the following new MetGCSA members:

- **Eric Bresky**, Class AF, of Winfield Solutions
- **Keith Kubik**, Class AF, of Grass Roots, Inc.

Members on the Move

- **Bill Cygan** is a new superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club.

- **Michael Aube** is the new superintendent at Osiris Country Club in Walden, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Sunningdale Country Club in Scarsdale, NY.

Newly Certified

Congratulations to **Peter J. Rappoccio** of Concord Country Club in Concord, MA, for completing the coursework required to become a certified golf course superintendent (CGCS) with GCSAA.

Retired

Dominick Monteleone retired this past April. He was an assistant superintendent at Ardsley Country Club in Ardsley-on-Hudson, NY, for more than 20 years and a MetGCSA member since 1983. We wish you all the best in your retirement, Dom!

In Sympathy

We would like to offer our sincere condolences to **Bob DeMarco**, superintendent at the Powelton Club. Bob's mother, Sally DeMarco, passed away July 15 at her home in Lagrangeville, NY. She was 91. Memorial donations may be made to either St. Joachim-St. John Church, 2 Oak Street, Beacon, NY 12508 or St. Joseph's Church, 15 North Avenue, Millbrook, NY 12545.

At the Mosholu Parent/Child Golf Event, MetGCSA scholarship winners receive their well-deserved awards (left to right): Lorah and Bill Perlee with their daughter, Sarah; Christopher Wojick with his parents, Pandora and Greg Wojick; Samuel Kerr, son of David Kerr, with his grandfather; Teddy Norman, an assistant at Concord Country Club and MetGCSA member; Mike Cook accepting the award for his daughter, Courtney; Dave Sylvester accepting the award for his daughter, Jane; and Austin Renzetti with his parents, Angela and Steve Renzetti.

President's Message continued from page 1

Committee Co-Chairs: Matt Ceplo (Rockland Country Club), Mike Maffei (Back O'Beyond), or Peter Rappoccio (Silver Spring Country Club).

Rounds 4 Research Thank You's

I also want to be sure to thank all of you, once again, who supported the 2014 Rounds 4 Research auction that has now closed. Your contributions were significant in raising funds for the MetGCSA, which will be used to offset costs associated with the New York Best Management Practices initiative and a host of other programs associated with education, scholarships, advocacy, and agronomic research throughout the Met area.

With your help, the MetGCSA raised more than \$10,000 in 2014 with a two-year total of close to \$24,000 to be distributed among these worthy causes. For those of you who donated rounds, we can't thank you enough for your contributions, and for those who missed out on this great opportunity to support the MetGCSA, we hope you'll consider joining all of us next year!

New GCSAA Delegate on Board

I want thank to our past president, Bob Nielsen, for his nine years as our GCSAA Delegate, serving as an important link between our chapter and our national organization. This year, board member Brett Chapin, superintendent of Redding Country Club, will assume the role of GCSAA Delegate, representing our association in Lawrence, KS, October 14-16. We work closely with GCSAA as they, like the MetGCSA, are continually working on our behalf to promote the golf course superintendent and the golf industry worldwide.

If you have any concerns, comments, or questions for the leaders at headquarters, I would urge you to reach out to Brett sometime before he takes off for Kansas.

I am also proud to announce that the MetGCSA has nominated John O'Keefe of Preakness Hills Country Club for the office of president on the 2015 GCSAA Board of Directors. John has been a longtime Met member and past president, and we all wish him well as he enters his final two (but extremely important) years on the board. Please show your support for John by attending the GCSAA Annual Meeting during the Golf Industry Show, where he will officially be voted in. I'm sure you will all join me in wishing John the best of luck and in offering thanks for his many years of dedicated service.

Blake Halderman, CGCS
President

Frolicking Good Fun at the Family Picnic

On July 28, more than 60 MetGCSA members and their families convened at Bedford Village Memorial Park for our annual Family Picnic. It was a great afternoon with family and friends, and a perfect opportunity to compare midseason notes with fellow superintendents.

The kids had a great time on the playground and in the bouncy house, and as usual, the highlight of the afternoon was demolishing the piñata!

Many thanks go out to Bob Nielsen for providing the grill and arranging the food. We hope to see you all out there again next summer!



Jim & Renee Pavonetti



Michele & Kevin Collins & Eve Gentile



Mike Warantz, Joe Stahl, Matt Ceplo, & Dana Drugo



Samantha & Daniel Rogers



Kevin Collins & Greg & Loren Gutter



Megan Baggott & Bob Wolverton



Scenes From a Midsummer Night's Social

Though the raindrops kept Summer Social goes off the beach and inside club, we were still able to enjoy the early evening views of the Sound and torch-lit shore from the lovely clubhouse building at the Orienta Beach Club in Mamaroneck, NY, a great find for a MetGCSA social event.

As the sun set, the lobster bake buffet began, highlighted by sizable whole lobsters, corn, and a selection of gourmet accompaniments, followed by an all-too-tempting array of desserts.

After the meal, members gathered around a welcoming bar area. Some danced, others simply kicked back and enjoyed the company of fellow Met members.

Many thanks to Orienta member David Conrad of Plant Food Company for making it possible for us to hold our event at the club. And a special thank you to Orienta's general manager, Mark Sheehan, for all his efforts in making this an event to remember.

Photos courtesy of Megan Baggott.

Rock on at Rockland: Host to Upcoming Triple Header Event

by Chip Lafferty

Once a contributor, always a contributor. Few words could more aptly describe Matt Ceplo, who has graciously volunteered to host our annual triple-header event—the Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier *PLUS* the Poa Annual Tournament—on September 22 at Rockland Country Club, where he has been superintendent for the past 18 years.

A great supporter of our association and industry, Matt has hosted several other MetGCSA meetings over the past decade and served on the MetGCSA board of directors for 20 years, moving his way through the chairs to become our association's president in 2007 and 2008. Matt is still actively involved in the Met, currently serving on both the *Tee to Green's* Editorial Committee and Nominating Committee.

In the interest of promoting ongoing research designed to help area superintendents find environmentally safe controls for a variety of turfgrass pests and problems, Matt has also devoted his time to the efforts of the Tri-State Turf Research Foundation. Currently president, he has served on the Tri-State board for the past six years.

Just as passionate about our environment as contributing to our industry, Matt has instituted a number of environmentally friendly programs and practices on the golf course during his tenure at Rockland.

Among his proudest achievements was guiding the club to meet criteria necessary to become a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, subscribing wholeheartedly to the Audubon approach to course management. "Our members think our environmental successes are terrific," says Matt, "and they support all of our efforts 100 percent."

An advocate of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Matt worked to transform about 20 acres of property into native plant areas, avoiding pesticide or water use in those areas. "We've also put up some bluebird houses," says Matt, "and I organize an annual bird-watching event where people come and observe 40 to 50 species of birds." Also noteworthy is the club's involvement with the surrounding community: "We invite the Biology Department from St. Thomas Aquinas College to come and take

water samples to use in their classrooms. We also invite local Girl Scout and Cub Scout groups to come and catch butterflies and learn about our wildflowers," says Matt, whose efforts have earned him numerous environmental awards, not the least of which was the 2012 Arthur P. Weber MGA Club Environmental Leaders in Golf Award and the 2013 GCSAA President's Award for Environmental Stewardship.

Rockland From the Ground Up

Rockland's course has the signature of not one, but three architects, starting with Robert White, who was responsible for the 18-hole course's initial design and construction in 1929. Thirty-six years later, in 1965, Alfred Tull and Robert Trent Jones Sr. added their personal touches.

In Matt's tenure, the course has undergone another series of enhancements. Beginning in 1995, he has guided the club in rebuilding all of its bunkers, tee complexes, and three of its greens, while updating and expanding the club's irrigation system, which they have since replaced with an all-new system.

The improvement projects don't stop there. Recently the club has carried out a variety of landscaping projects, renovated the clubhouse and surrounding grounds, and completed a tree relocation and removal program. Though one of the first of its kind in the area, it apparently wasn't a hard sell.

"Members feared hitting tree roots and getting injured," says Matt, "so all I had to do was explain that if they wanted to get rid of tree roots, they had to get rid of the trees!"

Most recently, Matt and his staff completed a continuous cart path system, which Matt calls a home run. "Now," he says, "if we get a lot of rain, members can still take out carts without affecting the golf course."

Matt, Past and Present

With Matt's devotion to the industry so clear, it's no surprise that he was long immersed in the business. His parents owned a public, 18-hole golf course—the Afton Golf Club—near Binghamton, NY, which is where Matt first learned to love the game and the profession.

Following a track you might expect, Matt



Matt Ceplo, CGCS

pursued formal industry training, receiving an Associate's from SUNY-Delhi in Horticulture in 1979. Once out of school, he went on to hone his skills as an assistant at Ridgewood Country Club in New Jersey, under then superintendent and long-time industry veteran Ed Walsh.

It took only four years under Ed's watchful eye for Matt to get his first crack at a superintendent's position at Westchester Hills Country Club. Matt remembers his time at Westchester Hills fondly. "I played much more golf back then," he says, explaining that it was a time in his career when he and his wife of 29 years, Jasmine, had no kids, and he could play until dark on most nights.

"I play nowhere near the amount I used to," says Matt who, at one time, sported a four handicap. Having kids changes priorities.

Matt and Jasmine's two "kids" are now all grown up: Allison is 26, and Megan, 22. Both have graduated college and have occupations in their fields of study. Allison is working in the City for a fashion design firm called Ruun, and Megan is working for a flavor and fragrance company called Takasago, where she puts her pastry degree to work testing and creating flavorful snacks.

Matt shares how blessed he and Jasmine feel to have his girls finished with college and employed in an industry related to their studies. "Finding jobs in their fields of study is really fulfilling—for them and us!" Matt and Jasmine aren't quite empty nesters yet—one daughter still lives at home—but when the right opportunity arises, watch out, because Matt's game will return to the pre-family four handicap in no time!

Be sure to get your game ready for what is bound to be a great day of golf, camaraderie, and bit of revelry as we celebrate another long season in the books.

Chip Lafferty, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.

The Nine and Dine Goes to Silvermine

by Scott Niven, CGCS

Back by popular demand is the MetGCSA's now-annual Nine and Dine Event to be held this year on October 15 at Silvermine Golf Club in Norwalk, CT. Our superintendent host, Larry Pakkala, is no stranger to hosting Met events, having held many of the Met's golf meetings and social events at Woodway Country Club, where he worked for 25 years before retiring—as it turned out temporarily—from superintendentdom. Some of the most memorable events Larry hosted were the Met's Family Picnics, which were held at Woodway's picturesque beach club.

Larry is looking forward to a pleasant end-of-season event at Silvermine with fellow members.

Career Track

After leaving Woodway in 2008, Larry thought he would finish off his career in the golf business with a sales position at Plant Food Company, Inc. It was no surprise that Larry excelled as a sales rep, significantly increasing Plant Food's market share in the Met area. But five years later, opportunity knocked again when the superintendent position opened at the Silvermine Golf Club.

With his longtime close friend and head golf pro Stuart Waack already at Silvermine, Larry didn't think twice about returning to the profession he enjoyed so much. Larry and Silvermine have been a match made in heaven. He immediately brought the golf course conditions up to the level of private clubs in Fairfield County, prompting members to say "they never imagined their golf course could be so good!" They especially like what Larry has done with the greens, which always roll smooth and true and are plenty quick for the sloping contours, adding to the challenge of this enjoyable track.

Born to a golfing family in Pittsburgh, PA, Larry earned an associate's in landscape architecture and then took a position at Philadelphia Country Club, where his brother, DJ, was superintendent at the time. During his tenure there, Larry completed the turfgrass management program at Penn State University.

On the road to Woodway, Larry also gained valuable experience as the assistant

superintendent at the prestigious Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, PA, and then as superintendent at Bermuda's Mid Ocean Club. Though he regarded Mid Ocean as a valuable learning experience, after four years there, he was ready to leave island life behind. He returned to the States in 1981 and took the superintendent's job at St. Andrew's Golf Club in Hastings-on-the-Hudson, NY, his last stop before Woodway and the beginning of his 33-year-and-counting association with the MetGCSA.

Giving Back

Larry was not just a member of the turfgrass industry, he was an active participant and contributor. He served as the Met's president, spending 11 years on the board and chairing or sitting on just about every committee. He's currently serving on the Long Range Planning and Steering and Awards committees.

"There is no question the MetGCSA is one of the finest chapters in the country," says Larry. "I've been grateful for the opportunity to serve the association, and I'm pleased to see it excel."

Larry's contributions extend well beyond the Met. He was the founding president of the Tri-State Turf Research Foundation in 1991 and served on the first GCSAA committee responsible for establishing the GCSAA Foundation.

Larry was also among the first to become involved in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP), which offers golf courses a well-respected vehicle for validating and publicizing their environmental efforts. In 1993, Woodway was one of the first 25 clubs in the country to become a certified cooperative sanctuary.

It's work like this that earned Larry the prestigious Sherwood A. Moore Award, which honors superintendents who have contributed to "advancing the professional image, status, and reputation of the golf course superintendent."

What to Expect

If you've never played Silvermine, don't be fooled by the scorecard, which makes the course appear on the short side. Though it's a par 70 from the men's tees and measures just



Larry Pakkala, CGCS

5,900 yards, the course's narrow, tree-lined fairways and small, challenging greens, make scoring difficult. You will find that it plays as tough as courses measuring much longer.

Silvermine also has another nine-hole executive course that is geared more for children, novice players, older players, or for just working on your short game.

Larry has enjoyed his new golf club so much that he decided to make it his summer home, purchasing a nice house just off the 13th hole. Larry and his wife, Carole, automatically became club members, which changed his title from just superintendent to superintendent/member.

Lately it's been hard to tell which title he has been working harder on when, at times, he plays five rounds in one week!

Rivalling golf as one of Larry's favorite pastimes is spending time with Carole during the summer months soaking up the sun and visiting with the many friendly members of the club they joined several years ago, the Sprite Island Yacht Club, located just off the coast of Norwalk. With his mind never too far-removed from turf, it didn't take Larry long to size up the club's landscaping and then join the board so he could take it upon himself to develop the grounds into a beautiful island paradise.

Larry and Carole have two daughters, who live nearby. Christina, 38, and Lauren, 33. Christina lives in Norwalk with her husband of 10 years and son, Lucas. She is a marketing supervisor for Nielson. Lauren lives in Wilton, CT, and is engaged to be married in September 2015. She's a speech pathologist with the Darien School system.

When you join fellow Met members at Silvermine for the October Nine and Dine, you're guaranteed a wonderful time as you experience some great hospitality on this very well-maintained little gem tucked up in Northern Norwalk. Hope to see you there!

Scott Niven, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is property manager of The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT.

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