

# Tee To Green

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# Tee To Green



Cover: Fenway Golf Club

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# President's Message

## Out With the Old, in With the New!

Now, as the outgoing president of the MetGCSA, I've been reflecting on the advice a past president shared on the makings of a successful presidency. He attacked the President's Message first: "Don't just talk about the weather!" he said emphatically. Ok, I thought. Sounds easy enough—until something like the drought of 2022 and the 2023 season brings rain on 18 of 22 weekends during the golf season. Is there anyone who looks at weather apps more in a year than a golf course superintendent? I doubt it! But I do agree, save the weather topic for extreme conditions.

His second piece of advice: "If any association president tries to do everything without relying on the help of others, it will be impossible to accomplish the goals that were set at the start of their presidency. Your current board is responsive, attentive, and wants to represent the association," he emphasized. I can't agree more. You all have made my time on the board exciting and productive.

Without a doubt, our current board will continue to work on behalf of the membership to provide sound education and networking opportunities, to support clubs in the area with a focus on filling open job positions with qualified individuals from within our association, to provide support on pertinent legislative action, such as current neonic issues in the tri-state area, and so much more. I appreciate all of your hard work and dedication.

Now I'd like to take a moment to welcome Vice President Mike Brunelle as our incoming president. Mike has been working behind the scenes to ensure our association's smooth operation and is eager to guide our chapter in its continued success.

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### Beyond the Board

I would also like to shine a light on several others who have been a notable support to the MetGCSA:



**Brett Chapin**  
*MetGCSA President*

First, Mike McCall, our executive director, has been and continues to be a great leader of our association. Mike represents us locally and nationally at such events as National Golf Day, Lobby Day, and with our sister associations in the Met area. Mike's commitment to the association and his desire to see the association grow has made him the perfect fit for our chapter. Thank you, Mike, for your tremendous support!

Susan O'Dowd, our executive secretary, continues to manage the day-to-day operations of the association at the highest level possible. Susan does so much behind the scenes that quite often goes unnoticed, but I can assure you, it is greatly appreciated. Thank you for all you do for the association.

Pandora Wojick, our *Tee to Green* editor, manages one of the best association publications in the country. The content is always timely and professional. Managing the ever-changing needs for articles and event results, Pandora has it down to a science. Thank you for your continued hard work.

It has been a pleasure representing the membership, and I look forward to the next two years as past president. Our association is strong, and with the individuals we have running it, it can only continue to be one of the most highly respected chapters in the industry.

**Brett Chapin**  
*MetGCSA President*

## Brae Burn's Blake Halderman Receives MetGCSA's Prestigious SAM Award

by Bob Nielsen, CGCS



Congratulations to Blake Halderman of Brae Burn Country Club for being selected as this year's recipient of the Sherwood A. Moore (SAM) Award, the MetGCSA's most prestigious honor. Blake, the 20th recipient of this distinguished award, is being recognized for his exceptional dedication to advancing the image, status, and reputation of golf course superintendents.

Blake's journey into the golf industry reflects a born leader with a commitment to environmental, managerial, and professional ideals. Born in Hughesville, PA, Blake's family moved when Blake was 12 to Hillsborough, NH, where his parents secured jobs at a GTE/Sylvania factory. Blake's upbringing instilled a strong work ethic as his family struggled financially. "There were times when my father had to shoot a deer to put food on the table," Blake recalls.

### An Early Leader

During high school in Hillsborough, Blake's leadership qualities began to emerge. He was elected class president in both his freshman and junior years. As a sports enthusiast, he excelled in basketball, baseball, and soccer, ultimately becoming the captain of all three teams in his senior year.

Always industrious, Blake took a job at the age of 14, cleaning the GTE/Sylvania factory where his parents worked. His first job ended when he broke his shoulder on his dirt bike and was in a half-body cast for weeks. This put him out of commission for the summer, but in the fall, Blake wasted no time in finding another job, this time pumping gas at a local station.

Blake's next job was the one that lured him into the turfgrass management industry: a position on the crew of the nearby nine-hole Angus Lea Golf Course, owned at the time by Scott Niven's dad, Russ, and, later, by Scott's brother, Curt. For most of Blake's tenure there, the crew consisted of three workers: Blake, Toby Alves (Russ's

grandson), and Blake's good friend, Mitchel Wilkens. Blake's first leadership test came when the existing crew leader went on to college, leaving Blake and his two coworkers to fend for themselves.

"I remember all of us just looking at each other that first morning, wondering who was going to make the day's schedule," says Blake. They didn't wonder for long. Blake took the initiative and approached Russ Niven to ask what he wanted them to do for the day.

"Russ looked at me and said, 'That is exactly what I was waiting for. I wanted to see who was going to step up and take charge of the crew,'" Blake recalls. "It was exciting for me to see, firsthand, just how closely management skills are tied to producing a beautiful golf course."

Blake was hooked. "Between my interest in sports, my love of the outdoors, and my passion for managing people and processes, I felt I'd found a perfect career in golf course management," Blake says.

## College and Turf

Encouraged by mentors like Scott Niven, Blake enrolled in the turf program at the University of Rhode Island. During his college years, he continued his involvement in sports while also working. He joined the football and golf teams and worked at the school's athletic fieldhouse—as a supervisor, of course! He also joined a fraternity on campus where he lived for two years, serving as vice president.

During the summers, Blake continued to work at Angus Lea until his sophomore year when he interned with Scott Niven at The Stanwich Club. Blake then took an internship at Muirfield Village Golf Club, home of "The Memorial Tournament" in Dublin, OH, sharing the experience with fellow URI classmate and best friend, Centennial Superintendent Glen Dube.

In May 1995, after graduating with a degree in turf management and a minor in business, Blake was somewhat torn between living in the Duxbury, MA, area and the

Met area. Kristen, his high-school sweetheart and now, wife, reminded him where he always felt the best courses were. So he interviewed with Larry Pakkala, former superintendent at Woodway Country Club in Darien, CT. Blake spent two-and-a-half years working with Larry, who he regards as an incomparable mentor and friend.

In reflecting on his experience at Stanwich and Woodway, Blake offers high praise for both Scott and Larry.

"I know there are a lot of great superintendents in the area, but I couldn't have asked for better mentors, both professionally and personally," Blake says. "They've not only shown me the ins and outs of golf course management, but also the value of being part of our great association. They understood—and demonstrated to me—just how important it is to provide guidance and support to those who work for us and for all of us to work together to ensure our profession continues to be strong for the next generation."

## On to the MetGCSA

Taking Larry's advice, Blake applied to be a Class C representative of the MetGCSA under President John O'Keefe. He held the position for two years. "It wasn't just Larry and Scott who took an interest in young assistants," Blake says continuing, "Bob Alonzi offered to pick me up and take me to get my pesticide license for the State of Connecticut. The guys who were active in the association seemed to look out for the new guys, and that has meant a lot to me."

Blake left Woodway in October of 1997 for his first superintendent's position at Minisceongo Golf Club in Pomona, NY, where he stayed for three years. Eager to expand his resume, Blake accepted the superintendent's position at Trump National in Briarcliff—at that time a course grow-in.

"I couldn't turn down the opportunity to be part of the experience of building an entire golf course from scratch and working with Jim and Tommy Fazio, one of the most highly regarded father-and-son design teams," Blake says. "And spending many days

with Mr. Trump was an interesting experience, as well," Blake says with a smile.

After just a year-and-a-half of construction, the course opened for play on July 28, 2002. Blake was then ready to make a move but didn't want to take any job that came along. "My goal was to do the grow-in and get my GCSAA certification as soon as possible so my resume would be ready for the perfect fit for me and my family," says Blake.

In October 2004, Blake found that perfect fit when he was awarded the superintendent's position at Brae Burn Country Club, where he remains to this day.

"I could not ask for a better membership and staff to work with," says Blake of the position he's held for the past 19 years. "The membership has supported many projects over the years that have continually enhanced the playability of the course. My staff has certainly been key to my success. They understand we are here to make the golf course as pleasurable as we can for our current members and as inviting as possible to prospective members. It makes me proud to know we are all in this together."

Blake's positive impact at Brae Burn extends far beyond the course. A total of 12 assistants who worked with Blake have moved on to superintendent jobs—a testament to his skills as both a superintendent and mentor.

## A Career of Industry Involvement

Immediately after accepting the position at Brae Burn in 2004, Blake was elected to the MetGCSA Board of Directors. His first task was to chair the Tournament Committee. In addition to getting great sites for the tournaments, Blake and Allied Nutrient's Andy Drohen restored the Met Team Championship to the status it now is—the best regional golf tournament in the country. Through their combined efforts and dedication, it is now a must-attend event for area associations and normally draws a waiting list.



Blake has also chaired six other Met committees: the Scholarship & Research, Bylaws, Club Relations, Government Relations, Awards, and Long-Range Planning & Steering. He also served on the Advertising and Website Committee. He served on the Environmental Committee, which was formed to help promote the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for NYS Golf Courses, and was awarded the Friend of the Green Industry Award from the New York State Turfgrass Association for his efforts in helping publish those BMPs.

Blake was elected treasurer in 2009 after only five years on the board and then went on to become vice president in 2010. Notes Blake, “I believe that if you have aspirations of leading the association one day, it pays to be as well-rounded as possible. That means serving on a variety of our committees, understanding the finances, getting to know the lawmakers in the area, and engaging in, at least on a small scale, some speaking engagements so you’re at ease with speaking before the membership at meetings and educational events.

Blake was elected the 31st president of the MetGCSA in 2012. During his tenure as president, he continued to push forward on the BMPs. With the help of Life member Mike Cook, the MetGCSA logo was changed to its present format from a somewhat outdated logo. “It needed to be updated and enhanced,” says Blake. Another change made during Blake’s tenure that he is proud of is the development of the LifeAAF category of membership. “With a lot of guys leaving their jobs for other careers in the industry, we needed a way for them to continue their membership and stay involved with the association.”

Blake was also the MetGCSA representative to the Tri-State Board from 2010 – present. Upon becoming the past president of the Met, Blake was elected treasurer of the Tri-State board. He was elected vice president in 2016 and then served as the president for two years from 2020–2022. He has also served as vice president and president of the NY Golf Course Foundation for



*Family trip to visit Mickey!*

a two-year and three-year term respectively, ending January 2023. He continues to serve on both boards.

Blake’s involvement in the industry spans well beyond the local to the national level. He served on the task group for the Chapter Affiliation Agreement in 2015 and has served on the Certification Committee. He has also been a Grassroots Ambassador since 2015.

“I feel my time on various boards has greatly benefited my skills as a golf course superintendent,” Blake says. “Being actively involved has helped me keep my finger on the pulse of association and industry news and trends. Board service keeps you ‘in-the-know.’ The contacts you make both on the board and through other associations are invaluable!”

### **The Real Secret to Success**

Blake is quick to add that his industry involvement and accomplishments would

not have been possible without the love and support of his family—specifically, his wife of 25 years, Kristen, and their children, Emma and Bea. Emma is a sports programming coordinator at NBC Sports, with a focus on golf—a job most fitting, Blake notes, for someone as into sports as Emma is. Bea is attending the University of Vermont and is majoring in Jazz studies. She is a member of the UVM Pep Band and numerous ensembles.

“What can I say?” Blake asks. “I’m enjoying a career in a profession I love, I’m married to my high-school sweetheart, and we have two wonderful and successful children. Can’t get any better than that!”

*Bob Nielsen, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is a former SAM Award recipient and superintendent of Bedford Golf & Tennis in Bedford, NY.*

# A Good Time Was Had by All at the 2023 MetGCSA Summer Social!





# 2023 Chapter Delegates Meeting Offers Insight Into GCSAA Initiatives

by Brett Chapin

October 24 and 25, I joined 85 other chapter delegates at the Chapter Delegates Meeting held in Kansas City, MO, and at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, KS, where we discussed initiatives, gained insight into GCSAA's plans for moving the association forward, and met candidates for the 2024 GCSAA Board. With just a day-and-a-half to get through GCSAA's jam-packed agenda, the delegates event covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time.

On the first day, GCSAA President Kevin P. Breen reflected on his two years at the helm of the association and shared the positive direction GCSAA is headed in. CEO Rhett Evans spoke about GCSAA's "Relentless Focus" on serving its members and meeting the challenges they face. He also gave delegates an update on GCSAA's solid financial standing and continued membership growth, which is now more than 20,000. Delegates were encouraged to not only share information with peers in their chapters, but also to be leaders through engagement, such as serving as Grassroots Ambassadors and completing their Facility BMP manual.

Other key initiatives:

### Rounds 4 Research

Delegates were also asked to encourage participation in Rounds 4 Research. After a record-setting year in 2023, the goals and strategies for 2024 were shared, including new ways to promote the program through state/regional golf associations and working with local PGA sections.

### GCSAA Advocacy Efforts

Chava McKeel, director of government affairs, gave an update on GCSAA's advocacy efforts on the key issues impacting the golf industry, including recent changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), labor

programs, and the OSHA Heat Stress Standard. She also discussed the importance of the Grassroots Ambassador Program and recognized ambassadors who were there and their recent engagement with members of Congress. She reminded delegates that there is no longer a restriction on the number of ambassadors per congressional district, and she encouraged all of us to consider becoming ambassadors. She also shared the importance of building strategic partnerships, completing facility BMPs, and donating to the GCSAAPAC.

### Preview of the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show and GCSAA Golf Championships

The day wrapped up with a preview of the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show and GCSAA Golf Championships coming to Phoenix in January. Ed Several, chief marketing officer, gave an overview of the week, including the Interactive Facility Tours and the new Sustainability Showcase. He shared that both sales of exhibit space and registrations are running ahead of the 2023 numbers. Ed Several has been instrumental in organizing the 2024 Nor'easter Event to be held January 31. Details coming soon on this popular event.

### The Importance of Facility BMPs

On day two, we all were welcomed to GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence and provided with updates on various programs and initiatives. Mark Johnson, director of environmental programs, stressed the need for Facility BMP Manuals and how they are essential in showcasing superintendents' commitment to sustainability. It was nice to see that the effort the MetGCSA has put forth was pointed out as an example of how to assist courses with this important BMP process.

### Increased Focus on First Green

Next, Leann Cooper, senior manager, First Green and workforce development, gave an overview of the GCSAA's increased focus on First Green and other programs that introduce individuals to the golf industry to help combat the labor challenges so many facilities face.

This is a new position at GCSAA for Leann, and we look forward to her assistance as the Met brings First Green programs to the area. Redding Country Club is scheduled to host a First Green Field Trip on April 23. Volunteers are needed; it's a great opportunity to see firsthand what goes into hosting a Field Trip.

### Centennial Committee Plans

We all also received an update from the Centennial Committee, which will help steer the celebration of GCSAA's 100th anniversary in 2026.

### Candidate Meet and Greet

Once the business portion of the meeting was over, we had the opportunity to listen to presentations from candidates running for national office. After the presentations, we were able to meet and greet the candidates in small breakout sessions. The meeting wrapped up with the chance for delegates to hear from and interact with candidates for the 2024 GCSAA Board of Directors. Candidate breakout sessions concluded activities. The delegates were provided ample time to interact and ask questions of the candidates. Those running for the GCSAA Board in 2024 are:

#### *For President*

Jeff L. White, CGCS, Indian Hills Country Club, Mission Hills, KS



# Member News

## **For Vice President**

T.A. Barker, CGCS, Fore Lakes Golf Course, Salt Lake City, UT

## **For Secretary/Treasurer**

- Paul L. Carter, CGCS, Bear Trace at Harrison Bay, Harrison, TN
- Douglas D. Dykstra, CGCS, White Mountain Country Club, Pinetop, AZ

## **For Director**

- Gregory Jones, CGCS, MG, Champions Run, Omaha, NE
- Ryan Kraushofer, CGCS, Westminster National Golf Course, Westminster, MD
- Christopher Reverie, Allentown Municipal Golf Course, Allentown, PA
- Marc E. Weston, CGCS, Indian Hill Country Club, Newington, CT

There are two open director positions for two-year terms. The terms of Dykstra and Weston are expiring. If Dykstra is not elected to the Secretary/Treasurer position, he will need to run from the floor for an open director position to remain on the board. If Carter is elected to the Secretary/Treasurer position, then a third person will need to be elected to fulfill the one remaining on his term.

Kevin P. Breen, CGCS, will serve on the board for one year as immediate past president. Mark F. Jordan, CGCS, retires from the board after service the last year as immediate past president.

The Annual Meeting and Election will take place 8-10 a.m. on February 1 in Phoenix as part of the 2024 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show.

*In addition to serving as the MetGCSA's chapter delegate, Brett Chapin is now the MetGCSA's past president and golf course superintendent at Redding Country Club in Redding, CT.*

## **New Members**

Please join us in welcoming the following new MetGCSA members—all Class C employees from Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, NY:

- **Tyler Gagne**
- **Greg Goldman**
- **Sean Tillman**
- **Brian Viveros**
- **Connor Warren**

## **Members on the Move**

**Pat Callahan** is now an assistant superintendent at Fenway Golf Club in Scarsdale, NY. Previous position: assistant superintendent at Silvermine Golf Club in Norwalk, CT.

**Brad Green** is now an assistant superintendent at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT. Previous position: assistant superintendent at Round Hill Club in Greenwich, CT.

**Jarad Luknicki** is now a Class AF at BASF. Previous position: assistant superintendent at Metropolis Country Club in White Plains, NY.

## **New Baby**

**Evan Weymouth**, superintendent at Patriot Hills Golf Club, and his wife, Sally, welcomed their daughter, Ariana, on July 30, 7 lbs. 11 oz., and 20 inches. Congratulations!

## **Our Condolences**

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of **Bill Affinito**, Northeast Representative for PBI Gordon. Bill passed away unexpectedly on October 23 at the age of 56 at his home in N. Attleboro, MA. Bill grew up in New Haven, CT, and after completing a degree in Economics, he moved to Nantucket, MA, where he accepted a position in golf course management at Miacomet Golf Course, expanding the course from 9 to 18 holes. He

then continued work in the industry with PBI Gordon in 2005, winning numerous awards. Dedicated to his work, he had recently attended UMass at Amherst to receive his certification in invasive plant management.

Bill will be missed by all who knew and worked with him.

Bill's family will create a Student-Athlete Scholarship Fund in Bill's honor to help an inner-city student-athlete continue his/her educational and athletic dreams.

If you would like to donate in William "Bill" Affinito's honor, you may send your donation to Robert Affinito c/o Clancy-Palumbo Funeral Home, 43 Kirkham Ave., East Haven CT 06512.

Our condolences to MetGCSA Executive Director **Mike McCall** on the passing of his father, Jack R. McCall, on November 2 at his home in Pittsburgh, PA. He was 86.

Those interested in helping to commemorate Jack McCall's life can make a donation in his memory to UPMC Family Hospice, an organization that was instrumental in providing the highest standard of care during his final days.

It is with our sincerest sympathy that we share the news of LA member **Mike Reeb**'s passing on November 23 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. He was a MetGCSA member since 1983 and superintendent of Country Club of New Canaan until he retired in 2015.

A celebration of his life is planned for April 2024 in Chester, Vermont. Details will be shared in the upcoming months.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you to donate to a cause incredibly near and dear to Mike's heart. In support of research for the fight against childhood cancer, donations can be made in memory of "Michael Reeb" at <https://www.alexslimonade.org/contribute/>.

# Tamarack's Jeff Scott Pulled Out All the Stops for Poa Annual Fundraiser

by Chip Lafferty

On July 31, MetGCSA members had the pleasure of contesting this year's Poa Fundraiser, Met Area Team Championship Qualifier, and Met Team Championship at Tamarack Country Club in Greenwich, CT. Players were able to enjoy a beautiful day to close out the typically hot, humid month of July. (See Sidebar on page 9 for golf results from the day's event.)

Host Superintendent Jeff Scott and his team presented Tamarack in top condition, despite the excessive rain, heat, and humidity that preceded the event.

This was the fourth MetGCSA event that Tamarack and Superintendent Jeff Scott have hosted, so it is safe to say that this club is no stranger to sharing their facility with our association. Many thanks to Jeff and Tamarack for their generosity in once again hosting a Met event.

Those who joined us for this event were able to experience the second phase of their long-standing restoration work which involved rebuilding the putting green and first tee area as a template for the main thrust of work on the course. After Labor Day, the club began work with world-renowned architect Brain Schneider to rebuild all bunkers and green complexes, as well as add forward tees while rebuilding a few others. This project will undoubtedly preserve "The Rack's" original Charles Banks design while, at the same time, modernizing various aspects of the course to accommodate today's longer hitters and faster green speeds.

## Tamarack's Beginnings

Originally organized as the Port Chester Country Club in 1909, Tamarack was then a nine-hole course, and in 1925 became an 18-hole course, located on the present site of the Port Chester, New York High School. Sheep, rather than equipment groomed fairways, and membership dues were just \$25 per year. That soon changed.

In 1928, when the town wanted to purchase the club's land for a new-and-im-

proved high school, the club picked up and moved to its current site, opening in 1929 as the 18-hole Tamarack Country Club, named after the many Tamarack trees indigenous to the area.

Golf Course Architect Charles "Steam Shovel" Banks—the first to use machinery (the steam shovel, of course) to construct golf courses—designed the 6,800-yard golf course in 1929, incorporating some of the game's finer strategic-quality holes, such as Biarritz, Redan, and Plateau, to name several. Fortunately, the club's renovations didn't stray far from Banks' characteristic design features, making the course one of the finest and most rewarding to play in the country.

## The Route to Tamarack

When Jeff entered college in the mid-'70s, a career in turfgrass management wasn't first and foremost on his mind. "I started out at South Hampton College in Long Island as a Marine Biology major," he explains, "but after a few semesters, I decided to make a change that I'll never regret."

Jeff took a hiatus from college, spending a few winters on the slopes in Vermont and Colorado. Returning a year later to his Pawling, NY, hometown, he accepted a job with a local landscaper. At the suggestion of friends from Pawling who worked at Fairview Country Club, Jeff was introduced to Bob Alonzi, the super at the time.

The rest is history. Jeff worked from 1978 to 1981 for Bob, and then headed off to the UMass Turf School. While completing his two-year degree, he interned at Baltimore Country Club, returning in 1984 to Fairview. After a year there, he furthered his experience under another Alonzi, working for a short time with Joe, who was then Fenway Golf Club's superintendent.

In November of '85, Jeff secured his first superintendent's job at Knickerbocker Country Club in Tenafly, NJ. Then he returned to New York in 1988 as superintendent at The Apawamis Club, where Jeff was known for causing more than a few yips



Jeff Scott, CGCS

in fellow superintendents' putting strokes with the crazy speeds he produced on those undulating greens. Nine years later—in February of '97, to be exact—he accepted his current position at Tamarack.

"With the membership's commitment to ongoing improvement, my work at Tamarack has been both interesting and challenging," says Jeff, adding, "And I can't say enough about the club's support over the years through more projects than I can list!"

## Jeff Off-Duty

Jeff is an avid skier and cyclist, and he enjoys spending most winters on the slopes, chasing the powder, or simply relaxing with his wife, Maggie. Jeff's children are all adults now and off on their own, but they still enjoy an occasional family get-together.

Please take a moment to thank Jeff and Tamarack. After all, not everyone is willing to host an event in late July, let alone one in the midst of one of the hottest, most humid summers on record! Many thanks, Jeff, for a super event!

*Chip Lafferty, co-chair of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.*



## Recognizing the Big Wins in the Poa Annual Fundraiser

by *Bill Cygan*

At this year's triple-header event, golfers kicked off the competition with a stunning view of the course at Tamarack as they made their way to the back terrace for a delicious breakfast.

Jeff took special note to thank his talented staff for their hard work in making the course play firm and fast for the event.

In addition to the Poa Annual, there were the MetGCSA Individual Championship and the qualifier for the Met Area Team Championship held on October 10. (See results for that event on page 11.)

Here's a look at who made it into the Winner's Circle for the Tamarack events:

## Poa Annual Tourney Results

### Gross Individual

- #1 Jason Meersman, *The Patterson Club*
- #2 Dave Peterson, *Silvermine Golf Club*

### Net individual

- #1 Jim Schell, *Oak Hills Park GC*
- #2 Mike Ford, *The Blind Brook Club*

### Net Team Best Ball

- #1 Geoff Meyerson, *guest*  
Ryan Post, *guest*
- #2 Jim Schell, *Oak Hills Park GC*  
Ryan Segrue, *Shorehaven GC*

### Closest to the Pin

- #3 Ryan Hartmann, *Haworth CC* 2'10"
- #7 Chris Steffen 7'7"  
*Candlewood Lake Club*
- #12 Brian Gjelsvick, *Noble Turf* 2'4"
- #15 J.R. LaPan, *CC of Darien* 7'3"

### Longest Drive

Tyler Gagne, *Metropolis CC*

The proceeds from the Poa Annual Tournament were donated to NYSTA in support of turfgrass research. This makes the donations from our tournament and Tee Sponsors all the more meaningful.

On behalf of the MetGCSA and Tournament Committee, we would like to thank our Tee Sponsors and everyone who came out for the Poa Fundraiser. We would also like to thank PGA Pro Ryan Kalista and his staff for running the tournament and, of course, Golf Course Superintendent Jeff Scott and his team for delivering outstanding course conditions.

*Bill Cygan, co-chair of the Tournament Committee, is superintendent at Silver Spring Country Club in Ridgefield, CT.*



# Rob Alonzi and Fenway Hosted Top-Notch Invitational

by Chip Lafferty

On October 5, Rob Alonzi welcomed Invitational-goers to compete at the newly renovated Fenway Golf Club. As every year, the Invitational champions are honored by having their club's name engraved on the legendary trophy for all to see. Claiming this year's honor was the team from Shorehaven Golf Club. Be sure to check out the sidebar on page 11 for the full results.

Fenway is a historic track with many referring to the Tillinghast design as baby Winged Foot, or Winged Foot without the length. Either way, it is one of the finest golf courses in our area and is recognized as a top 100 classic course.

If you hadn't played Fenway in a while, this time you were able to experience Architect Gil Hanse's numerous course updates: "As part of a master plan update," explains Rob, "we've expanded greens, lengthened some holes; rebuilt tees, adding forward tees; and we've changed fairway contour lines and added fairway drainage."

No rest for the weary, the plan also includes rebuilding creek walls (an ongoing project) and finally, last year, renovating all the bunkers, which included all-new drainage, Better Billy Bunkers, new sand, and sodding all bunker and green surrounds.

"The renovation work has been well received by the membership, giving the course a fresh look and improved bunker consistency," says Rob.

## Early Beginnings

Exposed to the turf industry, as Rob says, since he was "knee-high to a grasshopper," it was no surprise that he ended up in turfgrass management—even after a short detour into the world of accounting, when he thought he could break family tradition and pursue a career in business. He had enrolled in Iona College's business school as an accounting major, and only after a bit of soul searching, decided to transfer to UMass and return to his roots, completing a B.S. in plant and soil science.

From a young age, Rob had spent a good deal of time with his father, Bob, at work, learning early on what goes into maintaining some of the finest courses in the area, but when it came time to intern or begin his career as an assistant, instead of pursuing a position with his dad at Winged Foot or his Uncle Joe at Westchester, Rob decided to broaden his horizons.

"I wanted to learn how other turf managers did it," says Rob. "I felt it was important for my education and development."

Rob interned for two summers at Caves Valley in Maryland in 1993-94, working for then Super Bruce Cadenelli. "We might only get four to eight golfers a day playing the course at Caves," Rob remembers. "But Bruce taught me whether you did 2 or 200 rounds a day, it was important to have the course in pristine condition . . . always.

After graduation in '95, Rob returned to the Met section and continued his indoctrination into the business working as first assistant with then Super Steve Renzetti at Wykagyl Country Club in New Rochelle, NY. Rob's two years spent at Wykagyl were another piece of the puzzle he needed to succeed as a future superintendent.

"With Steve," recalls Rob, "I was involved for the first time in managing the crew and communicating with the staff and management. I also got some great tournament experience, prepping for the LPGA JAL Classic, which was held there every year."

Remaining in the Met area, Rob went to work for Jeff Scott in 1998 at Tamarack Country Club in Greenwich, CT. "Working for Jeff really got me ready for my first superintendent's position," says Rob. "I improved my ability to communicate and gained a good amount of construction experience.

In January 2001, Rob landed his first superintendent's position at St. Andrews Golf Club in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. "St. Andrews is a golf club. There's no tennis, no pool, only golf," says Rob, pointing out that though the membership was supportive, expectations were high. Charged with rais-



Rob Alonzi

ing the level of playing conditions at the club, Rob rose to the challenge, leading a number of projects in his seven-year tenure to enhance both the course's conditioning and architecture.

In May of 2008, Rob came full circle and went to work for his father, Bob, at Fenway Golf Club, an A.W. Tillinghast gem in Scarsdale, NY. When Bob retired, Rob succeeded him as superintendent.

"It's been busy but exciting to be a part of bringing the course to a new level," says Rob. In his 15 years as superintendent at Fenway, Rob has nothing but high praise for his staff, green committee, and the membership as a whole. "They're a great group of people to work with and for, which makes it easy to go to work every day."

## A Committed Member

Continuing to follow in his family's footsteps, Rob has been a more-than-active participant in association business. In 2020, after 15 years of service on the MetGCSA Board of Directors, Rob assumed the reigns as the Met's 35th president. Rob was first appointed to the Met board in 2006 by then President Will Heintz and quickly got his feet wet as co-chair of the Communications Committee and then advertising manager of the *Tee to Green*. His next charge was to chair the Education Committee before assuming his Executive Board positions.

Rob joined the Executive Board eight years ago, climbing the rungs from secretary, treasurer, vice president, and president to his final role as past president. Like his predecessors, Rob was prepared to tackle



## Shorehaven Team Claims 2023 Invitational Trophy

by Steve Wickstrom

association and industry issues, but was not prepared for the challenges that laid ahead of him as our world battled the Covid pandemic. The role of president is challenging under normal circumstances, but the Covid era took it to a new level of difficulty with chapter and industry events cancelled or pushed to impersonal Zoom meetings. Somehow, we all made it through, and Rob successfully navigated all the obstacles that were thrown our way. With normalcy restored, Rob welcomed his latest role as immediate past president, which has recently come to an end. Committed to “giving back,” he will no doubt continue to help the organization in any way he can.

### Breaking Family Tradition

While working at Caves Valley, Rob met his wife of 24 years, Ann Marie, at The Rusty Scupper, a restaurant/bar located in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. After Rob graduated from UMass and began his career at Wykagyl, Ann Marie found a job and relocated to New York. They married in 1999 and have two great kids, Nicholas, 21, and Sarah, 18.

Both engaging in studies outside the world of turf, Nick is a junior at Northeastern University, studying finance/international business. And Sarah, pondering a psychology major, is in her freshman year at Iona University in New York. Ann Marie recently opened an office in Greenwich, CT, where she is a massage therapist. Lucky Rob!

*Chip Lafferty, co-chair of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.*

The MetGCSA Invitational is an eagerly anticipated event held annually at premier venues across the Metropolitan New York area. This year’s event, held at Fenway Golf Club, was as outstanding as any Invitational in the past. Hosted by Superintendent Rob Alonzi, this event brings together golf course superintendents, as well as club professionals, general managers, and green chairs from various golf clubs across the area. This adds a unique perspective to the discussions and helps foster collaboration among the different entities involved in golf course operations.

What’s more, it serves as a great platform for superintendents to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and discuss best practices in course maintenance and management.

### Prize-Winning Results

The following are the prize winners for this year’s event:

#### Net Team Winners

- 55 Shorehaven Golf Club  
*Ryan Segrue, Jack Feinstein, Scott Feinstein, and Damon Vance*
- 56 Pleasantville Country Club  
*Ed Kaufman, Mike DeCicco, Dennis Capossela, and Oliver Therrin*

#### Gross Team Winner

64 Knickerbocker Country Club  
*Kyle Hillegass, Bill Hook, Adam Cook, and Doojin Chung*

#### Individual Gross Winner

67 Bill Hook, Golf Professional  
*Knickerbocker CC*

#### Closest to the Pin

Paul Ponath, Club Professional  
*Paramount CC*  
Lizzy Blomgren, Golf Professional  
*Mosholu GC*  
Craig Stevenson, All Participants  
*GlenArbor GC*

#### Longest Drive

Ryan Segrue, Superintendent  
*Shorehaven GC*  
Drew Nevin, Club Official  
*Meadow Brook Club*  
David Vazquez, Club Official  
*Canoe Brook CC*

Many thanks to Superintendent Rob Alonzi, General Manager Chris Murray, and Golf Professional Tyler Jaramillo for welcoming us to Fenway and providing an unforgettable day for our annual event.

*Steve Wickstrom, Tournament Committee co-chair, is superintendent at Burning Tree Country Club in Greenwich, CT.*




*The Shorehaven team strikes a pose with the Invitational trophy. Left to right: Scott Feinstein, Damon Vance, Ryan Segrue, Jack Feinstein.*

## Scorecard

## Upcoming Events

# Nine & Dining Results at Redding

by JR LaPan

 On September 19, Superintendent Brett Chapin and his team welcomed MetGCSA members to Redding Country Club in Redding, CT. The golf course was in remarkable condition, which made for an enjoyable and challenging game of golf.

Congratulations to those named below who led the Nine & Dine.

### Gross Winners

- 1st Marc Weston, *Indian Hill CC*  
Matt Quinn, *Indian Hill CC*  
Luke Knutson, *Rockville Links*  
Kevin Collins, *Ocean Organics*
- 2nd Rob Dorsch, *Richter Park GC*  
Dave Lippman, *Westchester Turf Supply*  
Gil Perez, *Dunning Industries*  
Brett Chapin, *Redding CC*
- 3rd Austin Sevcik, *Westchester CC*  
Tyler Sandefur, *Westchester CC*  
Andrew Jacobs, *Westchester CC*  
Tyler Kwalek, *GC of Purchase*

### Closest to the Pin

- #4 Dave Lippman, *Westchester Turf Supply*  
#8 Blake Halderman, *Brae Burn CC*

### Longest Drive

Mike Drowne, *Wee Burn CC*

On behalf of the MetGCSA, we would like to thank all of those who participated in the event. A big thank you to PGA Pro Mike Argentine and his staff, the clubhouse staff, and, of course, Golf Course Superintendent Brett Chapin and his team for dedicating their time to organize this first-class tournament.

*JR LaPan, a member of the Tournament Committee, is superintendent at The Country Club of Darien in Darien, CT.*

# Not-to-Be Missed Chapter and Industry Events

## 2024 GCSAA Golf Championships

*Saturday – Monday, January 27 – 29*

Chandler, AZ and Scottsdale, AZ

The GCSAA Golf Championships offer four different events over three days. Whether you're a casual golfer looking for a good time or an intense competitor hoping to be crowned National Champion, the GCSAA Golf Championships offer something for everyone, across three spectacular venues: Camel-back Golf Club, Talking Stick Resort, and Whirlwind Golf Club. Play one day or all three. The choice is yours.

## 2024 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show

*Monday – Thursday, January 29 – February 1*

Phoenix Convention Center  
Phoenix, AZ

Don't miss this year's GCSAA Golf Industry Show and Education Conference with an incomparable lineup of seminars and educational sessions, as well as one of the industry's most comprehensive trade shows, which opens Wednesday, January 31. Be sure to catch the February 1 Annual Meeting to weigh in on who will lead our national association.

For details on the conference's educational offerings and trade show, log onto [www.golfindustryshow.com](http://www.golfindustryshow.com).

## MetGCSA Events

### MetGCSA Holiday Party

*Thursday, December 14*

Emma's Ale House

White Plains, NY

Join your fellow members and friends from 2 – 5 p.m. for our annual holiday celebration! Enjoy the open bar and great food at Emma's!

A special thank you to our Title Sponsor, Heritage Professional Products Group.

### MetGCSA Winter Seminar

*Tuesday, January 10, 2024*

Westchester Country Club

Rye, NY

Host: David Dudones

## Industry Events

### 2023 GREEN EXPO Turf & Landscape Conference

*Tuesday – Thursday, December 7 – 9*

Borgata Hotel & Casino

Atlantic City, NJ

The New Jersey Green Expo offers a comprehensive educational program providing cutting-edge applications and tactics to guarantee green industry professionals' success on the job.

For further information, call 973-812-6467 or visit [www.njturfgrass.org](http://www.njturfgrass.org).

### 2024 New England Regional Turfgrass Foundation Conference & Show

*Tuesday – Thursday, March 5 – 7, 2024*

Providence Rhode Island Convention Center

Providence, RI

In its 26th year, the conference and show will provide turfgrass professionals from all areas of the industry the opportunity to see the newest products, supplies, services, and equipment available while offering a host of informative educational sessions, pesticide recertification credits, and endless networking opportunities.

Watch for details on [www.NERTF.org](http://www.NERTF.org), or call 401-848-0004 for further information.



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