

November - December 2025  
VOLUME 56 NUMBER 5

# Tee To Green

Published by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association

*In this issue: Awards of Excellence*

 **MetGCSA**  
est 1959

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TEE TO GREEN is published bimonthly by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association  
49 Knollwood Road, Elmsford, NY 10523-2819  
914-347-4653, FAX: 914-347-3437, METGCSA.ORG  
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# Tee To Green



Cover: Tamarack Country Club

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# President's Message

## Moving Forward Together

# A

s we step into 2026, I am both honored and humbled to serve as president of the MetGCSA. I want to begin by thanking our board members, sponsors, and, most importantly, our membership. It is a privilege to lead this organization as we build on the momentum created by those who came before us—most recently Mike Brunelle—and continue strengthening one of the premier superintendent associations in the country.

As I sat down to write my first message, I briefly considered letting AI do the work. While technology certainly has its place, I was reminded how important the human element is—both in this message and in our profession. Just as we do on our golf courses, we must learn to embrace new tools that make us more efficient, while never losing the authenticity, relationships, and sound decision-making that define who we are. When used well, innovation gives us more time to show up—for our teams, our members, and each other.

### Leaving It Better Than We Found It

I have been fortunate throughout my career to learn from outstanding mentors, and one lesson has always stood out: *Leave things better than you found them for the next generation.* That mindset is deeply rooted in our profession. Whether it's improving a golf course, mentoring an assistant, or volunteering time to the association, superintendents tend to lean in rather than take the easy road. Serving on a committee or the Board of Directors is simply another way to give back, and I encourage every member to get involved at some point in their career.

Because of the work done by past leadership, our association is well positioned to represent the membership as trusted stewards of the land we manage. Alongside our allies, we remain engaged at the forefront of environmental challenges—weather extremes, agronomic pressures, and political considerations. These challenges are constant, but by working together, we can continue to advocate responsibly and leave a positive, lasting impact.



Bill Cygan  
MetGCSA President

### Education, Stewardship, and Community

Education remains a cornerstone of the MetGCSA. We are coming off an outstanding Fall Seminar at Fenway Golf Club, followed by our second Equipment Manager Seminar at Silver Spring Country Club. Both events reflected a shift toward a more interactive, hands-on approach, with course and facility tours that encouraged open discussion and shared learning. That momentum continues with our marquee Winter Seminar at Westchester Country Club on January 14. Education Chairs Joe Gikis and Scott Olson have assembled an excellent lineup, and longtime host Dave Dudones and Westchester Country Club always set the stage for a great event. We will also present Boomer Esiason with our coveted Reid Award and Mike Cook with our Distinguished Member Award. In addition, please join us at the GIS in Orlando, where GCSAA will honor long-tenured member superintendents Bob and Joe Alonzi with the Col. John Morley Award and Jim Pavonetti with the GCSAA President's Award for Environmental Stewardship.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on strengthening connections within our community—improving communication, fostering relationships, and creating opportunities to learn from and support one another. This is your association. The Board of Directors is here to serve the membership, and your passion, professionalism, and involvement are what make the MetGCSA the vital organization it is today.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly with ideas or feedback. Together, we can continue to move the association forward, leaving it stronger, more connected, and better prepared for the next generation.

Bill Cygan  
President

Feature

# From NFL MVP to MetGCSA John Reid Honoree: Celebrating Boomer Esiason

by Mike McCall, CGCS  
MetGCSA Executive Director





uring the winter of 1989, Boomer Esiason stood at the center of Riverfront Stadium moments after leading the Cincinnati Bengals to the AFC Championship. It was a career-defining triumph that showcased not only his extraordinary talent, but also his poise, leadership, and deep respect for the teammates around him. Years of grit, precision, and emotional investment had culminated in a moment that cemented his place in Cincinnati sports history.

Those same qualities have long extended beyond the football field. Through decades of charitable golf initiatives, Esiason has helped raise millions of dollars while bringing people together for causes close to his heart. His impact has not gone unnoticed by those who know him best.

"I started playing golf later in life, and I was very fortunate to have Boomer as a mentor to help me understand and appreciate the game the way it should be appreciated," said Gregg "Gio" Giannotti, Esiason's longtime radio partner on the *Boomer and Gio* show. "Respecting the golf course and taking care of it as a player was always at the top of the list. Boomer is a great radio partner but might even be a better best ball partner!"

Longtime friend and broadcasting colleague Jim Nantz has also often remarked that Esiason is "one of the most generous and philanthropic individuals I've ever known," adding that he is rightfully being recognized for his tireless work to help others and that he is proud to call him a friend.

A proud South Shore Long Island native, Esiason has also been a steadfast supporter of golf course superintendents and the essential work they do to sustain the game. His lifelong commitment to giving back—and to uplifting golf and those who care for it—makes him a most deserving recipient of the MetGCSA's John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award.

## A Quarterback Comes of Age

Norman Julius Esiason—known as "Boomer," a family nickname given long before football fame—was born in 1961 in West Islip, NY. He grew up like many Long



*All smiles at Boomer Esiason Foundation Golf Invitational at Glen Oaks Club.  
Photo: Mike Hill*

Island kids of that era: playing every sport imaginable, organizing neighborhood games, and learning teamwork the old-fashioned way.

By the time he reached the University of Maryland, his powerful left arm had become the stuff of campus legend. A gifted quarterback with exceptional field vision, Esiason led the Terrapins to an ACC championship during his senior year. His leadership, competitiveness, and charisma caught the attention of NFL scouts, and in 1984, he was selected in the second round of the NFL Draft by the Cincinnati Bengals.

Cincinnati proved to be a perfect fit. Esiason's quick decision-making and distinctive southpaw delivery made him one of the most dynamic quarterbacks of his era. In 1988, he led the Bengals to the Super Bowl and was named the NFL's Most Valuable Player. Fans still recall the electricity of those seasons—the no-huddle offense, the sideline confidence, and the unmistakable presence of a quarterback who could command a huddle or a stadium with equal ease.

## From the Field to the Fairways

After retiring from football, Esiason transitioned seamlessly into broadcasting, turning his on-field insight into a successful second career. His work on *The NFL Today* on CBS, Westwood One's *Monday Night Football*, and WFAN's morning show endeared him to a new generation of fans.

Dan Hicks, who called several games during Esiason's playing days with both the Bengals and the Jets, saw early on that his future extended far beyond the field. As Hicks has noted, as talented as Esiason was as a football player, it was clear he was des-

igned for big things after football. From broadcasting to his wide-ranging philanthropic interests, Hicks considers Esiason "an all-timer"—a sentiment echoed by colleagues and fans alike.

But golf was not part of his early life.

"Golf wasn't part of my upbringing the way it is for a lot of kids," Esiason said. "Especially being a lefty in the '60s—you didn't walk into a pro shop and find a wall of left-handed clubs. I played once at Timber Point when I was 15 or 16, and a few times at the University of Maryland, but I never took the game seriously back then."

That changed quickly in the NFL.

"If I wanted to hang out with the guys, I had to play golf on Tuesdays—our day off," he recalled. "From early September through October, Chris Collinsworth, Turk Schonert, Kenny Anderson—they were all very good golfers. I wanted to be part of it. But to do that, I had to lose a lot of money back then."

Those early days on Cincinnati's manicured fairways—often "slapping it all over the place," as Esiason puts it—proved formative. Golf, once a curiosity, quickly became a passion. The great courses in and around Cincinnati left a lasting impression, not only for their challenge and beauty, but for the camaraderie they fostered.

Hicks, who has since shared rounds with Esiason, jokes that Boomer was a great sport—even when subjected to a little playful "commentating" designed to rattle him. Though a natural athlete, Esiason found golf humbling in the best possible way. "My golf swing was nothing like my football arm," he joked. Over the years, he estimates he has taken only three lessons, all from respected

Metropolitan Section professionals: Jim McLean at Sleepy Hollow, Rick Hartman at Atlantic, and Daryl Kessner at Deepdale. “As long as I keep my handicap under 10,” he said with a grin, “I’m good.”

## Golf, Gratitude, and Giving Back

Golf soon became central to Esiason’s philanthropic work. The Boomer Esiason Foundation, founded after his son Gunnar was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, has raised hundreds of millions of dollars to support medical research, patient care, and awareness. Many of the foundation’s most successful fundraisers have been built around golf outings—events where Esiason’s love for the game and commitment to the cause intersect naturally.

Gunnar’s journey is one that Esiason speaks about with deep emotion and gratitude. “Gunnar is a miracle. He is personally my hero,” Esiason said. “But his son and daughter are our miracles. Thirty years ago, I was praying that something like this would be possible, and those prayers were answered. It took a lot of hard work, and a lot of really long days and nights, to get where we are today.”

Those who know Esiason well note that his respect for golf extends far beyond the tees and greens. He understands the discipline, preparation, and behind-the-scenes



*Boomer playing in his foundation’s Invitational at Glen Oaks Club.*

*Photo: Mike Hill*

labor required to maintain world-class playing conditions.

His friendship with longtime Glen Oaks superintendent Craig Currier deepened that appreciation.

As the host for Boomer’s annual charity golf event, Craig observed Boomer’s love for golf firsthand: “It goes well beyond playing the game,” said Craig. “He truly respects the work that goes into preparing a golf course and has always taken the time to ask me what is going on behind the scenes. His support for our profession is genuine, and this recognition is very well deserved.”

## A Lifetime of Respect for the Game

Esiason often describes golf as the one constant through every phase of his adult life—career highs, transitions, family challenges, and charitable missions.

“Golf is the one sport you can do forever,” he said. “It’s competitive, but it’s also calming. It’s social. It gets you outside. And it connects you with people you might never normally meet.”

That connection makes receiving the John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award especially meaningful. Reserved for individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary support for golf and the professionals who sus-

tain it, the honor resonates deeply with a man whose roots, friendships, and values trace back to Long Island’s South Shore.

“To be recognized by the MetGCSEA means a great deal to me,” Esiason said. “This is coming from the people who truly make the game what it is. Golf has given so much to me over the years, and if what I’ve given back is respect for the game and the people who care for it, then that means everything.”

As Boomer Esiason steps forward to accept the award at the Met’s January 14 Winter Seminar, there’s no doubt he will do so with the same authenticity that has defined every chapter of his life. From Riverfront Stadium to the broadcast booth, from charity galas to the fairways of the Metropolitan area, his journey has been shaped by leadership, generosity, and gratitude.

His legacy in football is secure. His impact in broadcasting continues to grow. And his legacy in golf—quiet, meaningful, and built over decades—is what the MetGCSEA celebrates: a lifetime of support for the game, its people, and the spirit of service that elevates both.

*Mike McCall is the executive director of the MetGCSEA and managing member of the McCall Management Group, LLC.*



*Boomer takes dead aim at his Celebrity Golf Outing at Due Process Stables.*

*Photo: Mike Hill*



*Thanking participants at Boomer Esiason Foundation Celebrity Golf Outing at Due Process Stables Golf Course.*

*Photo: Alex Ramos*

# Mike Cook Honored With Met's 2025 Distinguished Member Award

by Jim Pavonetti, CGCS

Established in 2020, the MetGCSA Distinguished Member Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and support to the association and its community. Few embody those qualities more fully than Michael Cook.

Over more than three decades, Mike's professionalism, service, and unwavering dedication have benefited countless superintendents and properties throughout the Met Area. There is truly no more deserving recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Member Award.

## Early Life and Education

Mike grew up in Yorktown Heights, NY, in the heart of Westchester County. His interest in the natural world led him to pursue studies in forestry and resource management. He earned an A.S. degree from SUNY Cobleskill in 1981, followed by a B.S. in Resource Management-Forestry from SUNY ESF in 1983.

## A Career Built on Stewardship

Mike began his professional career in 1984 with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as a pesticide inspector based in Stony Brook. A year later, he transferred to the New Paltz office, where he served until 1990. Working in Region 3, he was responsible for educating applicators and enforcing pesticide regulations for both commercial and residential operations—work that, as he jokes, helped him “make a lot of friends.”

In 1990, Mike joined the MetGCSA as he transitioned to the private sector with Alpine Tree Service, which became The Care of Trees in 1991 and later joined Davey Tree Experts in 2008. Over the next 32 years, Mike built a reputation as a trusted and respected sales arborist, managing large commercial accounts, including many golf courses throughout the region.

As the golf industry evolved in the 1990s—with increasing green speeds and the spread of anthracnose—growing environments became a focal point for success, particularly in the Northeast. Skilled arborists like Mike became integral partners in helping superintendents create healthier, more sustainable conditions on their courses.

In 2020, Mike embraced a new chapter in his career when he became vice president-supervisor of grounds at Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, NY, where he continues to lead with professionalism and purpose.

## Service to the MetGCSA

Mike's longstanding commitment to the MetGCSA includes serving as the AF Representative on the Board of Directors under presidents Earl Millett (1998–1999) and Bob Nielson (2011–2012). He has also served on the Scholarship Committee for more than 25 years.

I was new to the board during one of Mike's terms, and I can say firsthand that he was immensely helpful and engaged at every meeting. He contributed significantly to the association, including spearheading the update of the MetGCSA logo. If something needed to be done, Mike was a reliable “go-to” member of the group.

Mike credits his strong work ethic to his parents, whose example shaped his approach to his lifelong career in the Green Industry. He also acknowledges Bob Mullane of Alpine Tree Care as an important mentor. According to Mike, “Bob was someone who encouraged creative thinking and problem-solving.

“Serving has been an honor,” Mike reflects. “Giving back your time and knowledge helps keep organizations evolving and moving in a positive direction. Diverse backgrounds and perspectives drive meaningful conversations about policy and the association's future. Having my voice heard and appreciated has always meant a great deal.”



Mike Cook

## A Meaningful Recognition

For Mike, receiving the Distinguished Member Award is particularly meaningful. “It feels like a validation of tenure,” he says. “It's great that people notice and appreciate the work, volunteerism, fellowship, and friendships built over my 40 years in the Green Industry. I've always viewed involvement with the Met as a want to, not a have to. Others before me gave their time and effort, and I've always wanted to do the same.”

Each year, Mike challenges himself with a personal mantra: *Do three new things to reinvent yourself.* It's a philosophy that reflects his commitment to growth, and giving back to the MetGCSA has always been part of that journey.

“People listen with their eyes,” Mike explains. “Actions speak loudest. They see and evaluate what you are doing right in front of them. I always want to make sure that when people see me, I am an example of a professional, a leader, and a teammate.”

Please join us on January 14 as we honor Mike Cook when he receives the 2025 MetGCSA Distinguished Member Award at Westchester Country Club.

*Jim Pavonetti, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is golf course superintendent at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, CT.*

# Connected for a Century: Insights From the 2025 Chapter Delegates Meeting

by Brett Chapin

I had the pleasure of attending this year's Chapter Delegates Meeting, which was held October 27-28 in Lawrence, KS. All told, 88 delegates representing 90 chapters attended to discuss initiatives, what's being done to move the association forward, and finally to meet the candidates for the GCSAA board of directors.

The theme of the meeting was "Connected for a Century," which pointed to GCSAA's nearly 100 years of existence and its role in building a collaborative relationship between GCSAA and its chapters and members. GCSAA has made it a focus to demonstrate to the membership how they help us day in and day out. An example of this would be two representatives from GCSAA attending and speaking at our upcoming seminar this January.

## Day One: State of the Association and Key Initiatives

The first day, which started with an evening reception and dinner, included a state-of-the-association address from CEO Rhett Evans. Then GCSAA President T.A. Barker discussed key accomplishments and recapped the year, highlighting GCSAA's advocacy efforts and Best Management Practice (BMP) initiatives. He stressed that adopting BMPs works in tandem with advocacy to ensure members and facilities continue to have access to vital resources.

Day One wrapped up with information on the Centennial Celebration that will take place at the 2026 GIS in Orlando. Chapters are encouraged to include 100-themed activities during their events. Some examples given were 100-yard par-3 holes, 100 acts of kindness, and any other way to highlight the connection between GCSAA, chapters, and members. A lot of information was shared in a short amount of time, but it was made clear that GCSAA has a lot planned for 2026.

## Day Two: Leadership Development and Board Candidates

On Day Two, discussion centered on Rounds 4 Research, GCSAA's push toward Career Pathways, and the importance of membership recruitment and retention with breakout sessions to discuss programs and initiatives.

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. There was a lot of good communication between the delegates, and the group feels that GCSAA is doing well in representing local chapters.

## Candidates for the 2026 GCSAA Board of Directors

Those running for the GCSAA board in 2026 are:

### For President

Paul L. Carter, CGCS, Bear Trace at Harrison Bay, Harrison, TN

### For Vice President

Marc E. Weston, CGCS, Indian Hill Country Club, Newington, CT

### For Secretary/Treasurer

- Steven Hammon, CGCS, Traverse City Country Club, Traverse City, MI
- H. Scott Griffith, CGCS, University of Georgia Golf Course, Watkinsville, GA

### For Director

- Aaron Fankhauser, CGCS, The Club at Rolling Hills, Golden, CO
- Renee Geyer, CGCS, Canterwood Golf & Country Club, Belfair, WA
- Ryan Kraushofer, CGCS, Westminster National Golf Course, Westminster, MD



- Brandon Razo, CGCS, Panther Creek Country Club, Springfield, IL
- Brian Roth, CGCS, Oquirrh Hills Golf Course, Tooele, UT
- Matthew Rusch, The Thompson Golf Group, Queen Creek, AZ

There are two open director positions for two-year terms. The terms of Kraushofer and Roth are expiring. Both candidates running for the Secretary/Treasurer position are currently serving the first year of two-year director terms. As a result, the outcome of the Secretary/Treasurer election will create an additional one-year vacancy on the board, which will also need to be filled.

T.A. Barker, CGCS, will serve on the board for one year as immediate past president. Jeff White, CGCS, retires from the board after service the last year as immediate past president.

Jeff and T.A. have both been great supporters of the MetGCSA and will be missed on the board.

## Next Steps

The Annual Meeting and Election will take place 8 to 10:30 a.m. on February 5. If anyone would like to discuss the election, feel free to reach out to me at [bchapin@red-dingcc.com](mailto:bchapin@red-dingcc.com) or 203-885-3109.

*Brett Chapin, past president of the MetGCSA, is golf course superintendent at Redding Country Club in Redding, CT.*

# We Want You!

**Become a NYSTA Member Today!**

by Kevin Collins

For more than 75 years, the New York State Turfgrass Association (NYSTA) has been the state's leading voice for turfgrass education, advocacy, and environmental stewardship. Today, that work is more important than ever—and we need your involvement to keep it strong.

### Why Your Membership Matters Now

NYSTA is the only statewide organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the interests of golf course and green industry professionals. But declining membership threatens our ability to provide the education, representation, and leadership our industry relies on. To continue delivering these essential services, we are asking for your participation—and your financial support through membership.

### What Your Membership Makes Possible

#### Education that Saves You Money

NYSTA offers NYSDEC-accredited training through in-person conferences and nine winter webinars. Members can save up to \$540 annually on webinar registration while earning valuable DEC credits.

#### Advocacy that Protects Your Profession

Working with the New York State Green Industry Council, NYSTA represents your interests in Albany, ensuring fair regulation, sensible legislation, and a strong voice for turf professionals where decisions are made.

#### Stewardship that Sets Statewide Standards

NYSTA leads environmental initiatives, including funding and developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for New York State Golf Courses, which is now a national model. These efforts are supported by the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund and partnerships with Cornell University and industry leaders.

#### Programs that Build the Future

Our Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund advances research and education

statewide, while the NYSTA Apprenticeship Program—now in its third year—helps employers train and retain key staff at minimal cost.

### Join Us in Strengthening Our Industry

To sustain these critical programs, *we need every superintendent, assistant, and green industry professional to become a NYSTA member.* Your support directly strengthens our ability to protect the future of New York's turfgrass industry.

Membership options are simple and affordable:

- **\$280 Webinar Level:** Includes all nine NYSDEC-accredited webinars and full member benefits.
- **\$150 Individual Level:** For those who don't need DEC credits but want to support NYSTA's mission.

Please join today. You can scan the code below to make joining easier! Your membership is both participation and investment—and it directly fuels the work that benefits us all.

Thank you for your time, your support, and your commitment to the industry.

Kevin Collins, Treasurer  
New York State Turfgrass Association



# Earn Recognition for Your Environmental Efforts...

**Apply for the MGA Arthur P. Weber Environmental Leaders in Golf Award!**

by Mike McCall, CGCS  
MetGCSA Executive Director

Across the Metropolitan Golf Association's footprint, golf course superintendents and their clubs are quietly leading the way in environmental stewardship—protecting natural resources, improving habitats, and making thoughtful, sustainable decisions—while delivering exceptional playing conditions. The MGA Arthur P. Weber Environmental Leaders in Golf Award exists to recognize exactly this kind of work, and this year presents an ideal opportunity for more clubs to step forward and share their story.

The award honors an MGA member club that has demonstrated a commitment to environmental responsibility through golf course maintenance, construction, education, and research. The selection committee understands, however, that meaningful environmental progress does not always occur evenly across every category.

### Show Excellence in Focused Areas

For this award cycle, special attention will be given to applications that clearly excel in at least *three of the five award categories.* Strong, focused efforts can be more effective than trying to do everything at once. In some cases, three outstanding sections may be rated higher than an application that covers all five categories at an average level.

This flexibility is intentional and designed to encourage clubs of all sizes and resources to apply. Whether your facility has made notable strides in wildlife and habitat preservation, implemented a progressive integrated pest management program, improved water conservation practices, or invested in staff education, your efforts deserve consideration.

In presenting the award, the MGA seeks to identify, celebrate, and highlight clubs that exemplify environmental leadership in golf—clubs whose practices can serve as models for others. The selected club will *continued on page 16*

## MetGCSA Slides to Fifth Place in 44th Met Area Team Championship

by Andy Drohen

One year after capturing the title, the MetGCSA gathered at Tamarack Country Club hoping for a repeat performance. But in a packed and highly competitive field of 13 superintendent associations from the Metropolitan, New England, and Mid-Atlantic regions, last year's champions were unable to reclaim the trophy, finishing in fifth place. Instead, the Hudson Valley GCSA surged to the top, posting a team total of 285—six strokes clear of the field on Tamarack's demanding par-70 Charles Banks layout.

### Scoreboard Confusion Adds Drama

What appeared to be a smooth finish turned chaotic when a computer entry error caused two groups to submit net scores instead of gross, affecting four teams. When entered into the scoring software, those incorrect numbers were effectively counted twice, scrambling the leaderboard.

The mistake wasn't discovered until after prizes had been awarded and some gift cards had already been redeemed. As a result, the Northeastern GCSA was mistakenly announced as the champion at the awards dinner.

After scores were audited and corrected the next day, the Hudson Valley was confirmed as the rightful winner, with the Northeastern team moving to second place.

Trophy handoffs are already in the works, and all teams took the correction in stride—a reminder that even in a detail-driven profession, human error still happens.

The correction also reshuffled the skins results, leaving only one Net skin and one Gross skin. Congratulations to Chris Kemble, who earned the Net skin with an eagle on No. 10, and Dave Lippman, who claimed the Gross skin with a birdie on No. 2.

### Championship Recap

Cool, breezy fall weather and firm conditions made Tamarack a true test. The squared-off greens, deep Banks-style bunk-



ering, and fast surfaces demanded patience and precise approaches throughout the day.

Hudson Valley's victory was powered by its Net teams, with Brent Thompson and Chris Kemble firing a 6-under 64 and Reese Wasson and Will O'Brien adding a 68. On the Gross side, Steve Whipple and Joe Meyer shot 76, followed by Dave Lippman and Grover Alexander with 77. The consistent performance across all pairings secured Hudson Valley's second title—their first since 2012 at The Stanwich Club.

Dave Lippman summed up the day: "It was a total team effort. Everybody was jiving with their partners all day. The course was amazing and brutal in the wind. Patience and fortitude won the day!"

Once corrected, the leaderboard revealed just how close the championship truly was—only three strokes separated second through eighth place. Tie-breakers, based on combined Gross and then Net scores, were required all the way through 10th place.

The Northeastern team edged New Jersey for second place. New Jersey claimed third, while a three-way tie at 293 ended with the Philadelphia Association taking fourth. Congratulations to all top-finishing teams in a hard-fought event.

### The Complete Results

What follows is a list of both the team and proximity winners. Congratulations to one and all!

#### Team Scores (Par 70 – 288: Ties broken by lowest gross scores, then net)

1st / 285	Hudson Valley GCSA
2nd / 291 (152)	Northeastern GCSA
3rd / 291 (154)	GCSA of New Jersey
4th / 293 (149)	Philadelphia AGCS
5th / 293 (150)	MetGCSA
6th / 293 (155)	Pocono Turfgrass Association
7th / 294 (148)	GCSA of New York
8th / 294 (154)	GCSA of Cape Cod
9th / 296 (152)	Long Island GCSA
10th / 296 (161)	Rhode Island GCSA
11th / 303	Connecticut AGCS
12th / 306	Mid-Atlantic AGCS
13th / 308	GCSA of New England

#### Closest to the Pin

#3 / 8' 7" Matt Santos  
GCSA of New England  
(Sponsored by Toro)

#7 / 7' 10" Parish Pina  
GCSA of Cape Cod  
(Sponsored by Allied Nutrients)

#12 / 3' 0" Chris Walton  
Philadelphia AGCS  
(Sponsored by BASF)

#15 / 6' 1" Steve McDonald  
Mid-Atlantic AGCS  
(Sponsored by Syngenta)

### Longest Drive

#5 / Net Div. Matt Earhart  
Mid-Atlantic AGCS  
(Sponsored by Plant Food)

#14 / Gross Div. Kevin Seibel  
MetGCSA  
(Sponsored by Ocean Organics)

#17 / Sponsors Div. Pete Jacobsen  
BASF  
(Sponsored by Envu)

### Low Gross Team Winners

69 Matt Cornuet & Reme Vadeboncoeur  
GCSA of Cape Cod

### Sponsorship Team Winners

68 Dave Conrad & Mike Weinert  
Plant Food

### Skins ~ Net

Eagle on 10 / Chris Kemble

### Skins ~ Gross

Birdie on 2 / Dave Lippman

## Our Sincere Appreciation to Our Sponsors

The 2025 Met Area Team Championship would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Thank you to Allied Nutrients, BASF, Envu, Ocean Organics, Plant Food, Syngenta, and Toro for their continued partnership and commitment to the golf course management community.

## More to Thank

Many thanks to:

- Kevin Doyle (GCSAA) for assisting with registration and filling in for the Philadelphia team
- Nick Roberto and EZ-Go for supplying additional carts

• Shaun Barry, who spent the entire day photographing groups and standing watch on the \$20,000 hole-in-one challenge — thank you!

And of course a big shoutout to Jeff Scott, along with his management team of Justin Mills, Zach Axtell, and Tyler Blizard, for hosting at Tamarack. The conditioning and course presentation were exceptional.

We look forward to seeing everyone next year. If your association's contact has changed, please let us know so we can update our records.

Event photographs can be viewed at:  
<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBQeVr>

Andy Drohen, Met Area Team Championship Co-Chair and a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is a regional manager with Allied Nutrients in Granville, MA.



Met team earns respectable finish. From left to right: Ed Grant of K&J Tree Service, Dave Moffett of Mosholu GC, Jason Meersman of The Patterson Club, Sean Cain of Sunningdale CC, Stephen Rabideau of Winged Foot GC, Blake Halderman of Brae Burn CC, Dave McCaffrey of Metropolis CC, Kevin Seibel of Century CC.

# Fall Seminar Highlights Turf Innovation, Traffic Management, and Career Insights

by Chip Lafferty



The Met's Fall Seminar and Annual Meeting took place on November 13, thanks to the continued hospitality of Rob Alonzi and Fenway Golf Club. The program covered a wide range of topics—from turf management essentials to communication skills that help build strong working relationships. Some subjects were a bit outside the usual superintendent seminar focus, but all were interesting and useful. More than 80 participants attended.

### Dr. Frank Rossi, Cornell / Zachary Holm, Turf Care Manager, Central Park NYC

Cornell's Dr. Frank Rossi and Zachary Holm, turf care manager at Central Park NYC, opened the educational sessions. They discussed how to track and manage turf traffic, care for out-of-play areas, and even deal with Bermuda grass now appearing in the Northeast.

Dr. Rossi, a longtime contributor to Met events, shared results from his research

using GPS devices to track golfer movement on the course. His data shows how traffic patterns affect soil compaction and why sand-based mixes with consistent particle sizes work best in high-traffic areas.

He also explained why traffic management can't be standardized—every group of golfers produces different traffic levels depending on carts, caddies, and whether they walk or ride. As a result, simple round counts don't tell the whole story of what the turf endures.

This led smoothly into Zachary Holm's perspective from Central Park, where he has

worked since 2021 after a career in professional sports field management in California. When he arrived, many park lawns were not prepared for the immense foot traffic from millions of New Yorkers. With strict pesticide limits in NYC, Zach relies on strong cultural practices—aggressive seeding, aeration, and choosing seed varieties that resist local stresses. His before-and-after photos showed remarkable progress across the park's 800 acres, and his ongoing efforts continue to improve conditions.

### Dan Denehy and Pat Finlen of Denehy Club Thinking Partners

After a short break, Dan Denehy and Pat Finlen of Denehy Club Thinking Partners took the stage. Drawing on their extensive experience conducting searches for top club positions across the country, they explained the many management and political structures that exist within private clubs. They emphasized how understanding these structures can help candidates better navigate the hiring process—and also help clubs operate more efficiently.



# Equipment Managers Come Together for a Day of Learning, Technology, and Community

by Dave Peterson



They encouraged attendees to explore the resources on their website, including guidance on committee roles, governance best practices, and how to avoid overreach. The session sparked many questions, and both Dan and Pat were generous with their insight, offering assistance to anyone looking to better organize their club's internal structure.

## Kevin Kline of the MGA

Kevin Kline then provided an update on the Arthur P. Webber Environmental Award and encouraged clubs to apply. He also confirmed that the Greens Chair Educational Series will continue, with the next session planned for March 19.

## Mike McCall, NYGCF

Mike offered a recap of the results of the New York Economic and Environmental Impact Report. He emphasized that as industry professionals we should all strive to become familiar with key findings of the report to be able to speak comfortably with members, legislators, and the public on positive economic and environmental benefits of the game of golf and golf courses.

## Adam Moeller of the Moeller Consulting Group

After lunch, attendees headed outdoors for a course walk with Adam Moeller of the *continued on page 15*

More than 35 equipment managers gathered at Silver Spring Country Club in Ridgefield, CT, for the second annual Equipment Managers Seminar. Held on November 18, the day was packed with valuable education, industry insights, and plenty of time to connect with peers.

The seminar kicked off with a warm welcome from Met Executive Director Mike McCall, who ran through the day's agenda and encouraged everyone to join us at the upcoming Holiday Party—another great chance to strengthen the MetGCSA community.

## Inside a New State-of-the-Art Facility

The day began with a guided tour of Silver Spring's impressive new shop and maintenance buildings. Leading the way were equipment manager Frank Ortiz, who has been at the helm at Silver Spring for the past four years, and our host superintendent, Bill Cygan who also happens to be the Met's newly elected president.

Frank and Bill walked attendees through the many benefits and efficiencies built into the new facility, offering practical tips for anyone planning a renovation or new construction. Their insights into small but important design details gave everyone plenty to think about.

## How Technology Is Changing the Shop

Next up was J.R. Wilson, equipment manager at Noyac Golf Club in Sag Harbor, NY. J.R. shared a forward-looking presentation on how technology is reshaping work in and around the maintenance shop. He covered a wide range of tools and innovations—from using QR codes for shop organization to GPS sprayers, robotic mowers, and equipment scanners for streamlined inventory and maintenance tracking. He also discussed drones for course monitoring and even 3D printing



for creating custom parts. Attendees left with fresh ideas and practical tech solutions they could bring back to their own facilities.

## Reel Grinding Tips and the Value of Getting Out on the Course

After a short break, J.R. returned for a deeper dive into reel grinding, offering step-by-step guidance and professional tips for achieving precise, efficient results.

He also spoke passionately about the importance of equipment managers getting out of the shop and onto the golf course to see equipment performance in real conditions. J.R. encouraged everyone to stay active in local and national professional associations and to build strong working relationships with both the maintenance team and course leadership.

## Wrapping Up With Networking

The seminar closed with an informal networking session. Many attendees stayed well after the final presentation—catching up with old friends, sharing ideas, and forming new professional connections.

The second annual Equipment Managers Seminar was a clear success, further establishing the event as a key educational and networking opportunity for turf industry professionals throughout the region.

*Dave Peterson, MetGCSA Vice President, is superintendent at Silvermine Golf Club in Norwalk, CT.*

# MetGCSA Rings in the Holidays at the Beechmont Tavern

The MetGCSA Holiday Party at the historic Beechmont Tavern in New Rochelle, NY, was a festive and well-attended gathering that brought together golf industry professionals from across the Met area. Guests enjoyed the warm atmosphere of the festive tavern,

along with a tasty buffet and complimentary drinks that set the tone for a relaxed and social evening.

The event drew a mix of attendees, including vendors, golf course management staff, and—making their first appearance at the holiday celebration this year—a number

of equipment managers. It was a great opportunity to connect, network, and celebrate the season with fellow professionals and their guests in a welcoming setting.

Those of you who attended enjoyed a memorable evening—one more reason not to miss next year's holiday gathering.





# Bob and Joe Alonzi Win GCSAA's 2026 Col. John Morley Award

The MetGCSA is no stranger to national recognition, but when two MetGCSA brothers win the GCSAA Col. John Morley Award simultaneously, the entire industry takes notice.

Local legends and past MetGCSA presidents Joe and Bob Alonzi will receive this prestigious award together on February 2 during the Opening Session at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Orlando, FL.

Named after GCSAA's founder, the award is presented annually to an individual who is, or has been, a GCSAA Class A or B superintendent member and who has made a significant contribution to advancing the golf course superintendent profession. Bob and Joe's selection marks the first time the Col. John Morley Award has been presented to a set of brothers.

Both Bob, a 55-year GCSAA member, and Joe, a 50-year GCSAA member, are now retired Certified Golf Course Superintendents (CGCS). As many MetGCSA members recall, each enjoyed a long and distinguished career at iconic golf courses in the Metropolitan area.

Bob served at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, NY, where he hosted the 1984 U.S. Open and the 1997 PGA Championship. Joe spent a good part of his career at Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY, hosting 17 PGA Tour events as well as the 2011 Senior Players Championship.

Beyond their work at high-profile clubs, Bob and Joe are widely known for their commitment to giving back to the industry and for mentoring countless young golf course management professionals who worked under their guidance over the years. They were also deeply involved with the MetGCSA, each devoting years of service to the board and ultimately serving as president. Both Bob and Joe were honored with the Met's Sherwood A. Moore Award—Bob in 1991 and Joe nine years later.



*Brothers Joe and Bob Alonzi recognized for their outstanding contributions to advancing the golf course superintendent profession.*

As any longtime Met member knows, the Alonzi family legacy continues through their sons. Rob Alonzi is a 33-year GCSAA member who succeeded his father, Bob, as superintendent at Fenway Golf Club in 2011 and remains in that role today. Joe's son, Christopher, is the superintendent at The Summit Club at Armonk in New York.

For the MetGCSA, Bob and Joe Alonzi's recognition feels both historic and deeply personal. Their careers, leadership, and mentorship have been woven into the fabric of the association for decades, shaping not only the courses they oversaw, but also the professionals who followed in their footsteps.

From boardrooms to maintenance facilities, their influence has long been felt by

Met members who worked alongside them, learned from them, or benefited from their steadfast commitment to the profession. That the Col. John Morley Award now recognizes the Alonzi brothers together serves as a fitting capstone to careers that helped define excellence in golf course management—locally, nationally, and across generations.

Congratulations, Bob and Joe, on this well-deserved honor.

*For the full article, see the December issue of Golf Course Management.*

# Jim Pavonetti Earns 2025 GCSAA President's Award for Environmental Stewardship

Fairview Country Club Superintendent Jim Pavonetti—long recognized for his leadership in environmental stewardship and consistent success in the GCSAA Environmental Awards—will receive the 2025 GCSAA President's Award for Environmental Stewardship.

He will be recognized on February 2 during the Opening Session of the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Orlando, FL. Established in 1991, the President's Award for Environmental Stewardship recognizes an exceptional contribution to the game of golf that exemplifies the golf course superintendent's role as a steward of the land.

A 30-year GCSAA member, Jim is one of the profession's most decorated environmental award recipients. He has earned three GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards (ELGAs) and has finished as a runner-up four times over the past eight years. His ELGA honors include the 2025 Healthy Land Stewardship Award, 2024 Natural Resource Conservation Award, and the 2023 Innovative Conservation Award.

Jim has served as superintendent at Fairview Country Club for the past 18 years, where he and his team employ an integrated approach to sustainability—one in which every decision considers its environmental impact. These efforts not only protect natural resources but also demonstrate that environmental responsibility and exceptional course conditions go hand in hand.



*Jim Pavonetti, CGCS*

“Through thoughtful management using best management practices, golf facilities can serve as green spaces that support clean water, wildlife, and community well-being,” Jim said. “Stewardship ensures the game remains sustainable for future generations and shows that golf can be a model for responsible land use and environmental care.”

Congratulations, Jim, on your well-earned honor.

*For the full article, check out the December issue of Golf Course Management.*

*Chapter News continued from page 11*

Moeller Consulting Group. Adam demonstrated GPS tools and robotic mowing technology and discussed how these systems can be integrated into existing maintenance programs. With robotics rapidly expanding in the industry, he stressed their potential value for many properties.

Despite the chilly weather, Fenway looked exceptional, and watching the robotic units in action made it clear why many consider this technology a possible “game changer.”

The day concluded with thanks to Rob Alonzi and Fenway Golf Club for once again serving as outstanding hosts for our association.

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

## Annual Meeting Notes

Midway through the Fall Seminar program, the nonvoting members were adjourned and board elections were held. Bill Cygan has assumed the reigns as president and Dave Peterson as vice president, allowing Steve Wickstrom to step down from the executive board to repeat a term as a director. Stephen Rabideau will replace Steve Wickstrom as treasurer, while Joe Gikis will assume the roll of secretary. Filling the vacancy on the board as a director is Robert Schipper of Canoe Brook Country Club, and replacing Luke Pittman as our Class C rep is Austin Banzet of Sleepy Hollow. Brett Chapin will be leaving the board as Mike Brunelle becomes past president. Many thanks to Brett Chapin and Luke Pittman for their dedication to our association.

## Upcoming Events

# More Events to Come!

*Regional News continued from page 7*

receive an award and be recognized at the annual MGA Green Chairman Educational Series, providing visibility for both the club and its superintendent.

## Share Your Story and Inspire the Golf Community

Golf course superintendents are at the forefront of environmental stewardship every day. Applying for the Arthur P. Weber Award is not just an opportunity for recognition—it is a chance to showcase best practices, inspire peers, and reinforce golf's role as a responsible steward of the environment. If your club is doing meaningful work in even a few key areas, this is the year to tell that story.

Applications will be available in the coming weeks and will be due in early March. The award will be presented at the MGA Green Chairman's Seminar, scheduled for Thursday, March 19, at Pelham Country Club in Pelham Manor, NY.

*Mike McCall is the executive director of the MetGCSA and managing member of the McCall Management Group, LLC.*

### Met Event

#### **MetGCSA Winter Seminar**

*Wednesday, January 14*

Westchester Country Club

Rye, NY

Host: David Dudones

### Industry Events

#### **2026 GCSAA Golf Championships**

*Saturday – Monday*

*January 31 – February 2, 2026*

Orlando, FL

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. Play one day or all three. The choice is yours. The courses: Omni Championsgate-International, Disney-Magnolia, Disney Palm, Reunion-Palmer.

#### **MetGCSA Nor'easter Chapter Party, Blue Martini, Orlando, FL**

*Wednesday, February 4, 2026*

Blue Martini

Orlando, FL

Join fellow MetGCSA members at the Nor'easter gathering, where you will be treated to an open bar, appetizers, food station, and live music, as well as the company of your Met colleagues.

#### **2026 GCSAA Conference and Show**

*Monday – Thursday*

*February 2 – February 5, 2026*

Orange County Convention Center

West Building

Orlando, FL

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.

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

#### **Nor'easter Ski Day**

*Wednesday, February 11, 2026*

Pico Mountain

Mendon, VT

#### **2026 New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show**

*Tuesday – Thursday*

*March 3 – 5, 2026*

Rhode Island Convention Center  
Providence, RI

For the 27th consecutive year, the conference and show provides turfgrass professionals from all areas of the industry the opportunity to view the newest products, supplies, services, and equipment available while offering a host of informative educational sessions, pesticide recertification credits, and endless network opportunities.

#### **2026 MGA Green Chairman Seminar & Arthur P. Weber Environmental Leader Award Luncheon**

*Thursday, March 19*

Pelham Country Club

Pelham Manor, NY

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