



Rocky Mountain Chapter

GCSAA

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

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Photo Courtesy: Kevin Malloy- TPC Colorado

Growing Green Since 1936

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President's Message

Kevin Kallas, Saddle Rock Golf Course



Here we go, 2024! So, what's next? As I sit here writing this, I am covered in 2-3" of snow cover wondering what the upcoming season will look like while watching staff paint the break room, my mechanic working on equipment, all just staying busy. Come on spring is all I can say, we are anxious to be back outside!

Big year ahead for your association. The Board has been working on locking in golf events and making minor changes to event formats. New "in season" education is being looked at hard for more learning opportunities outside of our annual conference. The Government and Legislation Committee will be busy with more pesticide preemption and local control talk, more pollinator protection and new small equipment engine regulations are just some of the issues to watch for in 2024. With the support of the Colorado Golf Coalition, which is made up of the RMGCSA, the Colorado PGA, Colorado Golf Association and the Rocky Mountain Club Managers Association, we will be well represented at the state level when anything comes to the forefront that might affect us.

A portion of your membership dues which may go unseen by most all of us (and just might be the most important part) goes to our lobbyist, Jennifer Cassell of Bowditch and Cassell. Jennifer represents the Golf Coalition and keeps her ears open to anything at the state level that might impact golf. When an issue arises, she notifies us and assembles members, most notably Mitch Savage (winner of GCSAAs 2023 Excellence in Government Affairs!) to be at the ready to talk to anyone needed or to be at the state capital at a moment's notice to speak on the Coalitions behalf. Let me tell you, if you want to be a part of something, this is the one to look at. I have represented the Coalition multiple times at the capital, and it was more rewarding and eye opening than I ever thought it would. Contact Joe Kunze (kkunze@arvada.org) or Mitch Savage (msavage@commongroundgc.com) if you are interested.

If you have any interest in serving on a committee or have an idea or even a complaint, please reach out to me or the board. We will listen and make changes; after all it is your membership and association in the end.

- Aaron Fankhauser – Vice President, Conference and Reporter publication Committees
- Joe Kunze – Secretary and Treasurer – Government and Legislation and Scholarship Committees
- Jake Jacobs – Golf Committee
- Bill Tanner – Membership Concerns Committee
- Kevin Malloy - Membership Concerns Committee
- Chad Gilkison - Membership Concerns Committee
- Steve Schommer – Chapter Education Committee
- Ethan Howard – Assistant Committee
- Tyler Gillette – Affiliate Liaison
- Tim Davis – GCSAA Delegate

And with that, I will leave you with the Masters, earlier sunrises, spring temps, greener grass blades, all on the horizon. Till then, enjoy the down time of the off season and make sure to spend some time with family, friends and even more importantly, yourself.

KK

2024 Board of Directors

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Ethan Howard
Pole Creek Golf Course

2024 GCSAA Excellence in Government Affairs Award

A Collaboration from the RMGCSA Government and Legislative Committee

On February 1, 2024, Mitch Savage, CGCS, received the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Excellence in Government Affairs Award at the GCSAA National Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix, Arizona. As stated by the GCSAA, “The Excellence in Government Affairs Award recognizes a chapter, superintendent or coalition for outstanding advocacy or compliance efforts in government affairs” and is awarded based on “efforts best serve the interests of the golf course superintendent profession and the golf course management industry.”



Mitch began his involvement with government affairs in 2016 as a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador. Mitch won the GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador Leadership Award in 2019. Additionally, Mitch has testified in front of the Colorado House Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources Committee, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, and Senate Energy and Environment Committee at the state capitol in Denver regarding the local control and regulation of the Colorado Pesticide Applicators Act. He has hosted faculty from Colorado State University at his facility, Common Ground Golf Course, involving pesticide education and regulation for nearly 50 state and federal pesticide compliance officers. This is just a sample of all the work he has done to advocate for our industry to legislation for what’s best for our profession and our industry so that all can have the tools we need to be successful at each of our properties.

2024 GCSAA Excellence in Government Affairs Award

It's very important to note something Mitch talked about over and over when he accepted the award. Many times, he referenced this award being a collaborative and team effort. One of the most admirable reasons Mitch won this award is his willingness to work with others. This was on display during the award ceremony when many of Mitch's peers from the RMGCSA were there to support and recognize him for this award. The example he sets by working with Golf Professionals in the Colorado PGA and Colorado Golf Association, members of the Mile-High Chapter of the Club Management Association of America, and his fellow Golf Course Superintendents in the Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association is one all need to follow. From a news release on the award, "Our profession is doing some amazing things with advocacy, and I am excited and honored to be a part of the industry-wide efforts," Mitch said. "There will never be too many people on the team, and there is always a need for more individuals to answer the bell and stand up and advocate for the golf course management profession."

Mitch has been a member of the RMGCSA since 2007, served on the Board of Directors and was the chairperson of the Government and Legislative Committee in 2021 and 2022. He has also been a member of the GCSAA for 21 years and earned the designation of Certified Golf Course Superintendent in 2022.

From all of us at the RMGCSA, congratulations Mitch on a well-deserved award! Please follow any of the links below to read more about Mitch's Award:

[Golf Course Industry Article](#)

[TurfNet Article](#)

2024 GCSAA Excellence in Government Affairs Award





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Event Recap

RMGCSA Chapter Hospitality Event: Pedal Haus Brewery Phoenix, AZ

By Jeff Wichman, Patty Jewett Golf Course

A 5-minute Lime scooter ride, from my hotel, brought me to the Pedal Haus Brewery for the RMGCSA Chapters Hospitality Event. There were 200 people that signed up for this event great event. Our first event of the 2024 season was sold out. A big thank you to Pedal Haus Brewery staff for tasty food and fast service at the bar.

This social event was filled with members and their guests whom got caught up with what is new on this year's horizon, both work-related and personal. Some of the amazing conversations that took place were congratulating members on their new jobs/career advancements, or meeting new contractors that could potentially be installing a new irrigation system. As always, there were heart felt goodbyes to members who have meant so much to our association. I would like to say to them, that parting is bittersweet, but I am grateful for the time that we have had together. Until we meet again, take care, and stay awesome. Goodbye, my dear friends.

Thank you to the following companies for their generous contributions: LL Johnson, Potestio Brothers, Irrigation Technologies, The Club at Rolling Hills, Simplot, Helena, HARCO, CPS, Buffalo Brand Seed, Heritage, Syngenta, Inman Inter West, Target, Golf & Sports Solutions, Phelps Golf Design, Mile High Turfgrass, GJ Pipe, VI-Core and BASF.

Please save the date of our next event:
RMGCSA Pesticide Workshop on March 12, 2024.

Event Recap

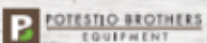
RMGCSA Chapter Hospitality Event: Pedal Haus Brewery Phoenix, AZ



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MEET THE BOARD



Back Row/Left to Right: Steve Schommer, Jake Jacobs, Gary Leeper, Bill Tanner, Eric Strasheim, Ethan Howard, Tim Davis, Kevin Malloy
Front Row/Left to Right: Jeff Wichman, Aaron Fankhauser, Kevin Kallas, Joe Kunze Not Pictured: Chad Gilkison, Tyler Gillette





Kevin Kallas, President Saddle Rock Golf Course

I began my golf career while in my junior year of high school when all I did was want to play golf. I fell in love with the job, and I really never left it. After a short attempt in college, I returned back to the course and was hired as a full-time lead worker doing coursework and assisting the mechanic in the winter. A few years later I was offered the mechanics job full time, something that I am grateful to have done looking back. After 5 years my desire to get back onto the grass grew and when an opportunity arose to become an Assistant Superintendent, I jumped on it. I spent over 10 years at 2 different courses learning all I could. Today, I am in my 7th year as a Superintendent and looking forward to many more.

I am 23 years married to my wife Adrienne. We have a 20-year-old daughter, Aly who is a sophomore at the University of Oregon and 2 dogs, both who had high hopes of being course dogs that were either afraid of equipment noise or became car sick every morning on the way to the course and now enjoy their time at home.



Aaron Fankhauser, Vice President The Club at Rolling Hills

Aaron has worked at The Club at Rolling Hills for the last 19 years. Beginning as a seasonal, Aaron is now the Director of Agronomy/Assistant General Manager for the Club. Originally from Kansas, Aaron has been in Colorado since 2004 and is a graduate of Metropolitan State University. Aaron currently serves as the Vice President of the RMGCSA and has been involved with the Board of Directors for four years. Aaron and his wife, Melissa, have 3 kiddos, Drake (13), Emma (11), and Brody (6). The family is rounded out with two goldendoodles that go to the course almost every day!



Joe Kunze, CGCS, Secretary/Treasurer City of Arvada

I was born and raised in Neillsville, Wisconsin. I began my turfgrass career at the young age of 13 at the local golf course sorting trash and mowing the clubhouse grounds. The manager and I came to an agreement that I was to work 80 hours and my payment was a "like new" set of Tommy Armour 845 Silver Scott irons. Since then, I have worked on golf courses for almost 30 years. I helped grow-in and open The Oaks Golf Course just outside of Madison, Wisconsin as an assistant before returning home to be the Golf Course Superintendent at Neillsville County Club in 2005. In 2012, my wife and I moved to Denver, Colorado. I was lucky to have learned from everyone at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club, Fossil Trace Golf Club and Lakewood Country Club before obtaining the position of Golf Course Operations Manager for the City of Arvada in January of 2020. In 2023, I was very fortunate to have earned the designation of Certified Golf Course Superintendent from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

I have a wonderful wife, Laura, for the last 10 years. Maxx and Marlo are our pups who love to join us camping, fishing and on other outdoor adventures. Other hobbies include skiing, hiking, golfing and doing projects around the house.

I have been a member of the RMGCSA since 2016, chair of the Government and Legislation Committee in 2023 and 2024 and am greatly looking forward to serving on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors through 2026.



Gary Leeper, Executive Director

Gary Leeper, owner of Interactive Management, Inc. is a native of Colorado. His company Interactive Management, Inc. performs executive and administrative functions for International, National and Regional trade and professional associations.

Gary is a graduate of Mesa College in Colorado and has a BA in Criminal Justice and Political Science and a Graduate of the US Chamber of Commerce School for Association Management, University of Oklahoma, a six-year professional development program for association executives.

Gary is a retired high school football coach from Denver North High School where he was head coach in the 90's. Gary has now stepped over to the other side and is now a Division I football Referee.

Gary and his wife Julie of 33 years reside in Broomfield and have two children, Elizabeth and Matthew.



Chad Gilkison, Director The Club At Pradera

Hello, my name is Chad Gilkison and I'm very excited to hopefully be a part of the RMGCSA Board. I am currently the Golf Course Superintendent at the Club at Pradera in Parker Colorado. I've been in this position since December of 2022. My family and I moved to the Denver area a little over 4 years ago when I became the Golf Course Superintendent at Cherry Creek Country Club in Aurora. I held that position for 3.5 years. We moved from the Kansas City area where I had lived for 20 years after graduating from Kansas State University. I've been in the Golf Course maintenance industry for over 15 years now. While working as an Assistant Superintendent and eventually a Superintendent in Kansas City I was very involved with the Heart of America Golf Course Superintendent Association, holding several different positions during that time.

When not on the golf course, my family and I enjoy golfing, tennis, attending sporting events and concerts. During the winter months we try and ski as many days as we can. I have two boys who are active in sports, so we spend a lot of time at the ball fields and pool.



Jake Jacobs, Director Flatirons Golf Course

Jake Jacobs is currently the Superintendent at Flatirons Golf Course which is owned and operated by the City of Boulder. A proud graduate of Boulder High School and Front Range Community College, Jake was inspired to pursue a career in Turf Management after working for Flatirons Golf Course as a seasonal employee during his time in high school. All of Jake's tenure has been with the city and Flatirons Golf course. The city promoted him to a full-time employee in 2001 and then became Superintendent in May of 2018. In his free time, he can be found playing golf, going to CU games, and hanging out at home with his wife (Ariel), daughter (Paisley), 4 horses, a mini horse, 2 goats, 3 chickens, and 2 cats (Apple and Onion).

Bill Tanner, Rio Grande Club



Born in Sterling, CO in 1971, my family moved to Kansas soon after. First northwest Kansas, Colby, KS to be exact and then southwest Kansas in Garden City. That is where I was introduced to golf and golf course management. I was in high school, looking for my first job since my paper route, when I applied for a crew member position at Southwind Country Club.

Summers throughout high school and college were spent on the crew learning all of the basic tasks of the course. While attending Kansas State University, I was not inspired by my chosen major. I did like working on the golf course, and decided to get a minor in horticulture with a specialization in turf management.

I graduated from KSU in May of 1995. My first assistant superintendent's position after college was at North Hills Country Club in Sherwood, AR (Little Rock area). Owned privately, NHCC was managed by Golf Enterprises and then American Golf. In 1998, I moved within the company to take an assistant's position at Diamond Oaks Country Club in Ft. Worth, TX. Not long after, I was offered a superintendent's position at Los Rios Country Club in Plano, TX.

I took a brief hiatus from the golf industry in the early part of 2000's, but got back into it by moving to Eureka Springs, AR and just becoming a crew member on a course again. I moved to Colorado in the spring of 2006 by taking the assistant's job at the Rio Grande Club & Resort. I was promoted to superintendent in 2008 and stayed in that position until 2014. At that time, the private ownership of the club was providing a less than stellar working environment, so I resigned and moved to Colorado Springs, CO in 2015.

While there, I worked with Redstone Golf Construction and King's Deer Golf Club in Monument, CO. I also took a position for a time with Gary Schinderle at Golf Envisystems. After learning that the Rio Grande Club & Resort was sold and the new ownership had made a commitment to improve the management and facilities of the golf course, I returned to become the superintendent again in 2019.

Personally, my wife Jeremie and I have been married for seven years. She is a registered nurse and has her own line of skin care and other products that she developed by researching the medicinal effects of essential oils. We enjoy playing golf together, taking road trips and spending time with family.

Kevin J Malloy, CGCS, TCP Colorado



I was born in Vail, Colorado to a Golf Course Superintendent. From a very young age, I spent a lot of time on a golf course with my dad while we moved from Colorado to Chicago to Minneapolis, with each stop involving a new golf course build. Following high school I headed south to pursue my degree in Turf Management at the University of Arizona. Upon successful completion of my Bachelor's Degree I landed a job working for the PGA Tour at TPC Scottsdale, as an Assistant Superintendent on the Stadium golf course. Following 30 months at TPC Scottsdale, and 3 Waste Management Phoenix Opens, I returned to Minnesota as the Assistant Superintendent at Bearpath Golf and Country Club, where I was fortunate enough to work side by side with my dad for almost 5 years. Then I returned to Colorado for the first time and worked at The Summit Course at The Club at Cordillera. After 2 years I received the opportunity to oversee my own facility Austin Country Club in Austin, MN. I spent 4 years there which was packed with large agronomic projects, from drainage to tee builds and large scale tree removal. Following a brief stint at Medina Golf and Country Club in Medina, MN I was afforded the opportunity to become the Director of Golf Course Maintenance Operations here at TPC Colorado. We host an annual Korn Ferry Tour event in which we are fortunate to have lots of industry support from this great organization. To date, I have participated in the execution of 8 PGA Tour events, including 3 PLAYERS Championships. Each event is unique and has its own challenges, but all are exciting to say the least! My wife and I reside in Berthoud with our 6 year old daughter, Clare, 8 month old son, Jack, and a 7 year old border collie, Bunker.

Steve Schommer, Director Indian Peaks



I am beginning my 19th year in the golf course maintenance industry. This is the longest career I have had, and I've had many! I joined the Air Force after high school, knowing I wasn't ready for a formal college setting. I was attached to the Army infantry out of Fort Campbell, KY, home of the 101st Airborne Division. I called in air strikes for the "air assault" infantry, but my dream was to become a police officer. After my four-year enlistment was up, I declined to re-enlist and moved back to Minnesota to become a police officer. I met my wife working security at a hospital in Minneapolis, got my Law Enforcement degree and became a Minneapolis police officer. After nearly 5 years of policing, my wife received a job offer that required a move to the New Orleans area. I decided to give up policing for a myriad of reasons and thought about going into golf course maintenance then. I began to fly in anticipation of getting my commercial pilot's license, but while driving to the airport to take my first solo flight, on September 11, 2001, tragedy struck. I needed a new plan. Apparently, I was delusional, as I decided to start a home inspection company instead of trying golf maintenance. After almost 5 years of home inspections, a little storm named Katrina flooded our house and my wife's company relocated us to the Denver area. I decided enough was enough and started working at Thorncreek in the golf maintenance department. I went to CSU (Go RAMS!!!) and got my B.S. in Landscape Horticulture, had 2 kids, worked at Murphy Creek, The Broadmoor (West for a few weeks, then Mountain for about 3 years), Thorncreek (again), Wellshire, City Park, Willis Case and now I have landed at Indian Peaks in Lafayette. It has been a wild ride and I can say I love golf course maintenance and the people associated with this career field are the BEST!



Tyler Gillette, Affiliate Liaison Buffalo Brand Seed

I was born and raised in the NW suburbs of Chicago and a lifelong Chi-town sports fan. Post high school I attended Miami University (Ohio) where I graduated with a degree in Business, majoring in marketing.

After college, I relocated to Northern California where I spent just over a decade between Sacramento and the East Bay. During that time, I got into the seed industry and met my now wife, Jennessa. We relocated to Denver in the fall of 2015. We had a daughter in 2019 named Rory and also have two dogs named Wilbur and Winston.

I joined the team at Buffalo Brand Seed at the beginning of 2022 and am embarking on my 3rd full season doing outside sales. I'm very passionate about the game of golf and truly enjoy working closely with many superintendents/courses all over Colorado.

When not out talking seed with customers or hanging with my family, I enjoy playing golf, traveling, and live music.

As the Affiliate Representative for 2024, please let me know if there is anything I can do to help better the experience for the vendors associated with the Rocky Mountain chapter.



Tim Davis, GCSAA Delegate Legacy Ridge Golf Course

Tim has worked at Legacy Ridge Golf Course for 5 years but has been in the golf industry for 25.

Originally from Kansas, Tim started his career at Golf Club of the Everglades in Naples Florida directly after graduating from Kansas State University. After a few years down in South Florida Tim started to miss the changing seasons so he took a job at Highlands Ranch Golf Club. This move brought him closer to family and the mountains. Tim also worked at The Links in Highlands Ranch, Denver Country Club, Pinehurst Country Club, and Broken Tee before working at Legacy Ridge. Tim is a past president of the Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association (2020) and also serves on the Rocky Mountain Environmental Golf Institute Board of Directors. Tim is married to Liz and has two boys Nate (10) and Sam (8). When Tim isn't skiing with his fam you can find him coaching one of his boys' sports teams. They both play baseball, soccer, and lacrosse. One of Tim's most memorable moments on the job was seeing a shuttle launch in the very early morning, during a tournament set up at Golf Club of the Everglades, nearly 250 miles from Cape Canaveral.



Ethan Howard, Class C Ex Officio Pole Creek Golf Course

Have grown up around the golf industry most of my life I was able to see from a young age what it entails. I was fortunate enough to have some very close people in my life that led me the right way and gave me opportunities to learn and grow in the industry. I started in 2010 when I was in high school with the Golf Club at Bear Dance. The superintendent of the course was and still is very close with my family and grew up with my dad in high school. Once I graduated from high school, I took a detour for 5 years and was hired on the fire department. I always loved being around the golf course so during my time on the department I still worked part time on my days off at Bear Dance to stay around golf and help whenever I could. I started learning more and more about turf maintenance and what it entails and was looking for a career change, so I decided to go back to school to Rutgers University for turf grass management. After graduating I started looking for jobs that would keep bringing me to the next level and achieving the ultimate goal of becoming a golf course superintendent. I spent time with not only Bear Dance but also Lone Tree Golf Club, The Ridge at Castle Pines, and my current course of being Pole Creek Golf Club. Pole Creek was always dream of mine from the previous superintendent who I grew up with as well and came out as a kid quite often, to the current superintendent. I am very fortunate to have known a lot of people in the turf maintenance industry. I am very fortunate to be where I am now and have a great relationship with my current superintendent as he has known me since I was born basically. Being in 13 years now of total time with turf management I couldn't ask for a better job and wish I had chosen this career straight out of high school with education. I still get the rush when I get to work before the sun is up and seeing the mowers out on the course and the product produced.

Superintendent Spotlight

Steve Datwyler, The Club at Ravenna



Describe Your Facility —The Club at Ravenna is an 18-hole private club designed by Jay Morish and opened in 2006. The golf course sits at the base of the foothills, bordered by national forest to the west. The course has dramatic elevation changes, winds through red rock formations, traverses canyons, and is divided by the Dakota hogback offering 3 distinct geologic ecosystems throughout the golf experience.

What's the biggest change while being in the golf industry?

The use of technology and using data to manage the golf course. As of recent, there is a lot of information in our industry that assists with essential data points. We have been utilizing a daily drone service for 5 years to fine tune our irrigation demands. The information that we gather from daily data collection, GDD models, and utilizing heat maps, has substantially reduced inputs, shaves hours off our weekly workload, and has provided us the essential information to provide consistent conditions that has improved our member and guest golf experience at Ravenna. This topic in general has kept me more engaged in Golf Grounds Care and I am eager to learn more.

What would you tell someone that is interested in getting into golf course management? Golf Grounds Care is a rewarding career that offers tangible results every day. The job allows for a lot of creativity and yes, it has challenges, but you are on the golf course every day, and how many people can say that?

Tell us about your family? I met Meg my second semester while attending CSU, we got married in Westcliffe, CO in 2003. We adopted our son Leo (16) in 2020 when he was 12 years old. We have enjoyed the challenges and rewards of having Leo in our life. Leo is employed at Ravenna during the summer to learn work ethic and hopefully pick up some life skills along the way. We have a very special Siamese cat; Arnie that was named after Arnold Palmer, we adopted him the day “the King” passed. Arnie satisfies my need for a dog since he plays fetch, is always by our side, but you won’t find him in my cart. We adopted 2 more cats (Meg’s idea) to keep Arnie entertained while we are at work. We enjoy spending time in Westcliffe where Meg’s parents have a family cabin.

What do you like about your team at your facility?

We have a tight group of veteran employees, each bringing a unique trade and talent. We have a lot of fun, play practical jokes, and the team loves drinking Modelo’s at the end of the day.

What makes Ravenna unique? Our team has undergone 8 seasons of in-house renovations lead by Kevin Atkinson of Atkinson Golf Design. We have assembled a team of very talented equipment operators, irrigation specialists, and have committed to keeping 80% of our staff employed year-round.

Our team also maintains the common community landscape for the HOA and manages snow removal for Ravenna’s private roads. We have staff members that maintain residential landscapes and operate an exclusive snow removal service for residents. This keeps us engaged with members/residents and promotes a community feel. This summer, our new Ground Care Facility will be under construction. The facility will be a massive upgrade from our 16-year-old “temporary” facility. I have enjoyed the process of providing input for space and look forward to the improved efficiencies of the new facility.

What is the most rewarding part of your job? The autonomy and trust that has been earned from our club’s owner and Director of Golf. I have also enjoyed watching our team’s talent grow each year and giving more trust and empowering employees to perform their job with similar autonomy that I have been given. Our club’s leadership provides great resources for employees to be successful. I’ve also enjoyed watching the club and community grow since 2010.

Favorite hole on your course? Hole 7. A short, risk/reward, drivable par 4. It’s usually an easy birdie or par but it can be brutal if you hit an errant drive.

Favorite movie? Any of the 1990’s classic comedies with Jim Carey, Adam Sandler, or Chris Farley.

Shorts or Pants? Shorts. In fact, I was likely wearing shorts when we did company headshots.



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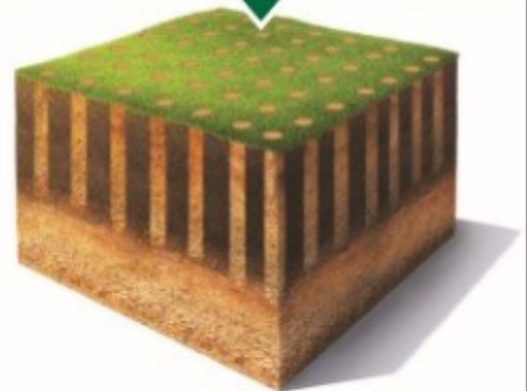
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Assistant Spotlight

Tyler Olson, TPC Colorado



Describe your Facility

We are an 18-hole facility that does around twenty-seven thousand rounds a year while also hosting a yearly Korn Ferry Tour event. The course can be played from as little as 4,100 yards all the way up to 8,000+ from the tournament tees and offers a variety of options with some short risk-reward par 4's and a couple of monster par 5's. One thing that makes our course unique is the par 5 13th hole; at 773 yards it is the longest hole on any of the major tours. It also has a tribute to "hell bunker" from St. Andrews that's nearly 100 yards long and almost 15 feet deep.

What would you tell somebody looking to get into the industry?

For anybody looking to get into the turf industry I would say connect with as many people as you can, networking is such a powerful tool and you never know how one encounter can change the trajectory of your career. I always wanted to work at a facility that hosted PGA tournaments or major championships, but we didn't have many of those opportunities in Iowa. I happened to be playing in a member guest in a small town in southern Minnesota where I met Kevin Malloy which led me here to TPC Colorado.

What is your favorite hole on the course?

My favorite hole on property would have to be the 10th because it's a drivable par 4 but it has a bunch of small deep pot bunkers guarding a green with a big ridge running right through the middle. The view might be the best part; it has a reservoir running all the way down the right side of the hole and all the mountains, including Longs Peak, off in the distance.

Favorite restaurant?

My favorite restaurant would have to be a BBQ joint back home in Iowa called Jethro's. They actually have one of the challenges from man vs. food called the Emmenecker challenge. My go to order is the ribs and wings combo with a corn muffin and they serve your beer in 32oz mason jars.

Favorite movie?

My favorite movie would have to be Tin Cup, I know I wore out at least one vhs when I was younger because of how many times I had watched it, and I could still probably recite it almost word for word.

Favorite team?

I live and breathe Iowa State, so I am a big Cyclones fan. I grew up five miles from Ames, its where I went to school, and I have been going to sporting events there for as long as I can remember.

How many years have you worked in golf and how did you get started in the industry?

My journey into golf started at a young age, my family were members at the country club of my hometown of Nevada, Iowa and I got my first job in the kitchen there when I turned fourteen. I learned really quick that that is not what I wanted to do long-term, so I ended up writing a note to the superintendent asking if he had any open positions and putting it in his mailbox, and luckily for me he did and so I stated my turf career when I was fifteen.

Favorite restaurant?

My Favorite restaurant would have to be a BBQ joint back home in Iowa called Jethro's. They actually have one of the challenges from man vs. food called the Emmenecker challenge. My go to order is the ribs and wings combo with a corn muffin and they serve your beer in 32oz mason jars.

Director's Corner

By Chad Gilkison, The Club at Pradera

First off, I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year! May the coming year bring you all joy, success, wonderful moments, the perfect amount of moisture and the best playing conditions possible. Cheers to a great 2024!

As I was deciding what to write this article about, I started reflecting on how I got to this point in my career and what helped me get here. If you know me or have had a chance to listen to me tell my story, then you know it always comes back to getting involved in whatever you can and building as many relationships with people in this industry as possible. I got a late start in golf course management as I graduated with a degree in Business Administration and worked in the finance world for my first 7 years out of college. When I finally decided I had had enough of sitting behind a desk and being stuck inside all day I made a phone call to Todd Bohn. I had met Todd while I was at Kansas State University and knew he was a Golf Course Superintendent at a Club in the area. I asked for a job as part of his crew for the upcoming season, but it was already late May, and he had a full staff at that point. He referred me to one of his good friends in the industry, Woody Moriarty who was the Superintendent of a high-end Country Club in the area. I met with Woody a couple of days later. I remember most of the time we spent talking was him trying to talk me out of the career choice I was about to make. He rattled off the names of several members at the club that worked in and or owned banks or financial planning services that he would talk to about getting me a job. I continued to tell him that I wanted to give golf course management a shot and he finally gave up and offered me a job on his crew.

Knowing I was getting a late start and if I wanted to make a career out of this I decided to dive in and do whatever I could to move up the ranks as fast as I could. Besides starting my education in turfgrass management by taking night and online classes from the local junior college the other piece of advice that Todd and Woody gave me was to get involved in the local Heart of America Golf Course Superintendent Association and start meeting my peers in the industry. Woody was nice enough to sign me up as a member of the Association and allow me to attend seminars and the Assistant Superintendent events. Attending these allowed me to meet not only other people in my situation, but also Superintendents in the area that would eventually end up offering me my first Assistant job. I was able to network with so many great people and learn so much in a small amount of time.

After becoming an Assistant Superintendent, I continued to look for ways to set myself apart from others knowing eventually I would want to become a Superintendent. At that point, the market in Kansas City was very saturated with Assistants like me. Knowing this, the Superintendent I was working for at the time mentioned that I should apply for the Green Start Academy that took 50 Assistant Superintendents from across the United States and Canada. It's a leadership and development program that focuses on building a strong foundation by offering growth through networking, professional development courses and interactive peer groups. I applied and was lucky enough to be chosen for the 3-day event held in North Carolina. The event gave me a chance to forge connections and skills that I still use to this day. I was even able to meet an Assistant Superintendent from Denver by the name of Mitch Savage (great guy). There are still several men and women from this class that I still talk with frequently to this day. I believe my experience with Green Start helped me to move from 2nd Assistant at the Club I was at to a 1st Assistant position at another high-end Country Club in KC. A few years later I was told about another program for Assistant Superintendents that I should look into. This one was called the Excel Leadership Program that is sponsored by Nufarm. Again, I applied and was lucky to be accepted in the 3-year program. Similar to Green Start, this program took 12 Assistant Superintendents from the US and Canada and brought them together 3 times a year to offer leadership training for personal, career and community/industry stewardship. Again, there was Mitch Savage. He was a part of the inaugural class, and in my class was his brother Marty Savage. Throughout my 3 years I was able to meet so many great people and build strong relationships. The employees from Nufarm, colleagues in my class and the other 2 classes as well as leaders in our industry like Pat Finlen, Bob Farren, Alex Stuedemann and so many others. I tell everyone I know that these two programs are the reason I am in the position I am today.

Director's Corner

Continued

Not only did I get involved with these 2 programs, but I made it a priority to get involved with my local chapter at the time. I became the Assistant Superintendent representative or Class C Ex Officio for the HAGCSA. Again, I was able to meet tremendous people in the Kansas City market and gain a wealth of knowledge, resources, and networking opportunities. Eventually, I would become the Superintendent at Wolf Creek Golf Links in Olathe, KS thanks to my fantastic boss/Superintendent at the time Bill Irving. Bill knew how much I wanted to progress in my career and was nice enough to ask the Board of Directors at Wolf Creek to change his title to Director of Agronomy so I could take the title of Superintendent and get the clock started on becoming a Class A Superintendent. Proving again it's the people you know and meet in this business that help you get to where you want to be.

Fast forward a few years and my family and I decide to leave our comfort zone of our friends and family in KC and move to Denver Colorado to start the next chapter of my career and our life. Just like all things there is an adjustment period of a new job, new home, new schools, etc. During this time I really wasn't involved at all in the RMGCSA or much of anything outside of work. I still had my connections from the past with Mitch and Marty as well as getting to know Ethan Howard through Excel, but that was about the extent of it. I also had a connection with Tim Davis as our parents are good friends back in Manhattan, KS. Everyone knows Tim and what a great guy he is and how involved/invested he is with the RMGCSA. He gave me the nudge this past fall to try and run for a Directors spot and get back to being a bigger part of my local chapter and the opportunity to meet great people that make up the RMGCSA. My small network in the area has already doubled just after a few months and one Board meeting.

The moral of this long and drawn-out story is for anyone reading this to get involved if possible. Whether it be an up-and-coming Assistant who is wanting to take that next step or a seasoned Superintendent who is willing to share/gain knowledge from other like-minded individuals. Getting involved and getting out of my comfort zone has gotten me to where I am today. As part of being on the RMGCSA board, I am helping out with two different committees. One of the ways I help is by trying to recruit committee members to share ideas and insight. To help prove my point of networking, two of the guys I approached to help are guys that I met while being on the HAGCSA board in KC. They are now regional sales managers for ENVU and Nufarm and cover Colorado so they are also members of the RMGCSA. Again, I encourage you to get involved. Whether it's running for a position locally, or nationally or just coming out to play golf and hang out with peers at RMGCSA events this upcoming season. You never know who you are going to meet and the connections you will make unless you try it.



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Affiliate Corner

Wes Epple, BASF



Did you go to college? If so, where and what major did you graduate with?

I am a proud graduate of 3 universities: North Carolina State University, BS- Turfgrass Science, 2011, Purdue University- MS- Agricultural Economics, 2018, Indiana University- MBA, 2018

How and when did you begin working in the golf industry and what do you like most about it?

My first job in the golf industry was with BASF Corporation in 2012 as an Inside Sales Specialist working out of the corporate office in Raleigh, NC. In that role I supported Sales Specialists in the field by calling out to end-users and distribution partners to inform of promotions and new products. Through college I worked as a Student Research Assistant in Dr. Lane Tredway's field lab at NC State. I enjoyed seeing the products from different manufacturers and how much work was done by researchers and industry representatives to fine-tune these solutions to best fit the needs of customers. This led to awareness of Sales and Technical personnel that travel designated territories assisting customers. While we all have our own product lines we primarily represent, I noticed that often times many of the best sales representatives kept the concern of finding a solution for a customer ahead of their own desire to push a particular product. Solutions-focused selling is something I try to implement every day in my role. I've always enjoyed being outdoors, and to be able to visit beautiful properties that are managed with so much attention to detail and concern for the natural environment, I knew that I wanted to work in a role which allowed me to visit places I otherwise would have no way of seeing.

Tell us a little about your family, and what hobbies or activities you participate in when you are not at work?

I married my wife, Kelsey, in 2017 and we have 2 children. Our son, Brooks, is 3 and our daughter, Drew, is 1. Outside of work I enjoy running, smoking barbecue, spending time with my wife and kids, and following NC State Wolfpack athletics.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the profession since you began your career? Or, what are the most important changes that the company has seen the past 5-10 years?

The biggest change I've noticed in the last decade is the access to information and how it has greatly impacted how we are all able to do our jobs more efficiently. The Covid-19 year accelerated this change. The ability for individuals to interact so quickly between texting/tweeting/etc. and the quick ability to reference labels or trial data has allowed us to be a step quicker in solving a problem.

Do you regularly attend RMGCSA meetings or events, if so why are they important?

Given CO is the furthest point of my territory and the only area in which a flight is typically required, RMGCSA meetings are attended by me only a few times each year. I try to plan my travel early in the year to put dates on the calendar which would allow me to attend. That said, these meetings, and similar events with other associations (NTGCSA, WTGCSA, OKGCSA, AGCSA) are an amazing way to interact with superintendents from a cross-section of clubs, budgets, and disease/weed/insect pressures. It's amazing how a topic discussed in one chapter will almost act as a "heads-up" to me that other areas of the region will later discuss.

What would you like other people to know about RMGCSA?

Of all the associations I work with, the RMGCSA is one of the most professional in how they conduct their business. The leadership is always very welcoming and truly cares for the growth of its members across the state of Colorado. Also, the RMGCSA seems to truly value its vendor partners. As a vendor it is certainly appreciated.

You know a lot of people in our industry. What are they saying are the biggest obstacles to overcome for them to be successful?

The biggest obstacle I continually hear is rising costs, primarily the rising cost of labor and finding available labor in higher cost of living areas, like much of booming Colorado. Superintendents are incredible at adapting and squeezing the most they can out of their tools.

You get to see many facilities and properties. What is an interesting new or innovative practice you have seen?

Capital improvements to infrastructure, primarily the use of cooling/heating systems in greens, is incredible to me. Throughout my territory there are multiple facilities which have installed these systems in recent years (Alotian Club, Southern Hills CC, Colonial CC, Vaquero Club, more to come...). Outside of such expensive innovations, the use of simple drones to capture imagery of the course is an affordable yet productive practice. It's incredible the difference in appearance of a property from 30 feet above as opposed to eye-level. This allows for earlier detection of dry spots, drainage issues, pest pressures, etc. Plus, piloting a drone can be a lot of fun!

What is your current affiliate company and your position? How long have you been in this position?

Sr. Sales Specialist- Turf & Ornamentals at BASF Corporation. In role since 2014. Celebrating 10 years in May!

Where are you based out of and what territory do you cover?

I live in McKinney, Texas. I cover Turf & Ornamentals Sales in Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas.

What are the responsibilities of your company to our industry, and how is your company involved with RMGCSA?

BASF Corporation is the world's largest chemical company. Based in Ludwigshafen, Germany, BASF operates in a variety of businesses, including Agricultural Solutions. In North America, BASF is very committed to being on the forefront of new technologies and tools to aid growers in production, whether that be in traditional row crop agriculture or in specialty markets like turfgrass management. Since Colorado was added to my sales territory in 2020, I have participated annually in the RMGCSA Annual Conference as well as attendance/participation in some meetings throughout the territory including sponsorship of the Hospitality Event at the GCSAA Conference. It is my goal to continue to enhance our participation in 2024.

What might we be surprised to know about your company?

BASF Corporation mostly sells intermediate chemistries which are used in the production of goods by other manufacturers. In fact, Agricultural Solutions is one of the few areas within our company where end-users purchase our products directly. Also, many of the products you may interact with everyday are BASF technologies utilized by these other manufacturers in enhancing their products. For example, if anyone wears Adidas "Boost" golf shoes, BASF makes the Infinergy foam which is used for the cushioning of the sole. Even the automotive paint finish in your vehicle is likely a BASF-enhanced product. Like the popular commercial states "We don't make the products you buy, we make the products you buy better."

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