

The Reporter

From the Rocky Mountain Chapter of GCSAA
Growing Green Since 1936



Lakewood Country Club

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President's Message

As we are now into the summer season, we are all no doubt battling stresses at our facilities. Maybe these stresses come from self-inflicted expectations, or a board of directors, or owner. Maybe they come from the weather and the extreme changes we see here in Colorado. Some may come from staff members or lack of staff being available. Regardless of where the stress may come from, every facility around the state is up against one thing or another.

That is the commonality in our membership. Through the good times and the stressful times, we have a network of peers that are battling many of the same things or hopefully, enjoying some of the good stuff along the way! The RMGCSA has established itself as one of the leading associations across the United States because of our great members and their willingness to help each other and advocate for our industry. The mission of the RMGCSA is very clear—Uniting and advancing Rocky Mountain area Golf Course Superintendents by sharing knowledge, providing education, and improving golf course management practices. I would just like to take a moment and thank each of you for being members of the RMGCSA and for working together to promote the success of your facilities and those throughout the entire association.

Throughout the start of the year, I have been able to have several great conversations with members of the RMGCSA. Many have offered feedback on things that they would like to see continue to improve to help raise the bar for themselves and other members. I have also had several conversations with those that are frustrated about decisions we have made as a Board of Directors. I am so thankful that these members have come to me with their concerns or frustrations as that is a great way for our Board to hear our members and adjust for the association. One thing is certain, we may not all agree on the methods used to accomplish goals of the association, but I sure hope that we can all agree on the importance of listening to one another.

The most common frustrations that I have heard surround the BMP initiative, specifically the requirement to have BMPs completed to attend events. Some members have been very vocal with their frustrations, even stating that we are preventing them from using their member benefits. While I understand that the first reaction may be to become frustrated that we are requiring this, I would just ask that you consider why we are requiring this and why the RMGCSA and RMEGI Board of Directors are so focused on this initiative.

President's Message

We have sent many communications on the impacts of potential legislation on our industry, and we spend hours each year advocating for our members to manage their facilities as the great stewards you all are. We have been advised by our lobbyist, Jennifer Cassell, that we present a much more unified front when we must battle certain legislation, and the recommendation was to take the work that was put into the State of Colorado's BMPs and adopt/customize to our facilities. We are working with Radius Sports Group to help drive this initiative as we believe it will be in the best interest of our entire membership to have these facility BMPs completed should we need an exemption from future legislation.

Again, thank you for continuing to make the RMGCSA such a great Association and for raising your voice to discuss issues that matter to you. Our goal is not to add frustration or stress to your already busy lives, but to help ensure that you are free to make the best decisions for your facility for years to come. I am happy to discuss other issues with you should you have questions or concerns! Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

All the best,

Aaron Fankhauser



Aaron Fankhauser

President, *The Club at Rolling Hills*

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Superintendent Spotlight

Overview: An interview with Benjamin Getman from Denver Country Club

Describe Your Facility?

Denver Country Club has a long-storied history dating back 138 years. Originally founded in 1887 as the Overland Park Club, it hosted a 9 hole golf course and a racetrack with grandstands for spectators. Wanting to expand its golf course, a small group of members sought out a new location for development along Cherry Creek.



The 120-acre property at the corner of First Avenue and Franklin was established in 1901. The original J. Foulis design weaved its way through the willows and cottonwoods, creating what would become an oasis in the city. Over the decades it has been touched by several renown golf course architects including William Flynn, A.W. Tillinghast, Coore/Crenshaw, and most recently Gil Hanse. Current facilities include an 18-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, outdoor platform tennis courts, grass tennis courts, a multi-dimensional Olympic-size swimming pool, a croquet and lawn bowling pitch, skate house and ice-skating rink, a fitness and wellness center, and dining and banquet facilities.

What Makes Your Facility Unique?

Age and tradition gives the DCC its unique feel. Steeped in the history of Denver, we are a cornerstone of the community. Privately owned by the membership, each patron has a vested interest in supporting the clubs' culture and home away from home atmosphere.

What's the biggest challenge you face at your facility?

Limited acreage and a growing city surrounding the property are our biggest challenges. Lack of space for expansion of practice facilities has been tricky to accommodate the new short course era in golf. Additionally, the Cherry Creek area is growing, which has increased traffic around the property, amplified the city noise, and eliminated some of our mountain views.

Superintendent Spotlight

What's your favorite tool in your cart?

Probably my cell phone. There is so much technology to be had these days, and the cell phone is the main hub. Being able to check on or fire irrigation, setup job boards, review data collection stats, check the tee sheet for members names, and communicate with staff and vendors on the fly is beyond beneficial. How we ever lived without these things is a wonder. Now I know how my parents felt about the microwave...

Mentor or How did you get into the business?

I have been very privileged to work with several great mentors. Not knowing it at the time but working for Scott at Ptarmigan was where my interested began. On my first day he took me on a course tour, showed me around, and welcomed me to the team. He may not remember that day, but I certainly do. My short stint at The Ranch with Jeff Therrian also left an impression on me, and to this day I always enjoy talking with Jeff when our paths cross. Doug Fisher and Ryan Davis led me through an outstanding internship where I learned how to be a responsible team member. But the person who had the most impact on my career and my personal growth was Doug Brooks. He gave me an opportunity to lead and learn, make mistakes, but grow along the way. I spent 8 years working with Doug, developing my skills, expanding my knowledge, running big projects, and becoming an effective leader. I try to emulate a lot of what each one of these individuals has taught me and I want to help my assistants and staff members be their very best as a result.

What's the most rewarding part of being a superintendent for you?

The most rewarding part of being a superintendent is the impact that we have on the people in our industry. Seeing someone take an active interest in what we do and how we get the opportunity everyday to improve our property is a good feeling. Seeing former interns at the GCSAA conferences who have worked into superintendent roles is beyond amazing, and having two previous assistants who are finding success and enjoyment in the industry is 2nd to none.

Favorite Restaurant?

Any place with a good chimichanga, endless chips and salsa, and a tasty margarita.

Superintendent Spotlight

Favorite sports team?

It's a toss up between the Denver Broncos and the Minnesota Vikings. I feel it's okay to root for both, the hard part is choosing which one to root for when they face off. I make my decision pregame and stick to it, but it's nice to know that in the end one of my teams will come out victorious.

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

I have been in the golf industry since 2001. I was hired at by Scott Robbins at Ptarmigan CC to mow greens, rake bunkers, and break equipment. He told me once that they still use photos of some of the predicaments I created when discussing safety and equipment with new hires. Proud moment for sure. Over the years I have worked at Greeley CC, The Ranch CC, and now DCC. I originally went to Colorado State University to study Landscape Architecture, but shifted my focus to turfgrass and golf course management after working as a seasonal staff member. In 2005 I completed an internship at DCC and graduated with an Associates in Applied Sciences from Front Range CC. I have been fortunate enough to move up the ranks as the years passed, and extremely blessed to have worked with many great people who have taught me so much

Tell us a little about your family?

My wife Jenn and I have been married for almost 12 years and we have a daughter named Olivia. They give me strength to persevere through the mud when the ruts are trying to pull me in. We have two dogs that run the household, but we love them for their flaws and their character. My wife and I both have adult children from previous relationships and her son has 3 children of his own, so we are also grandparents. It's an interesting dynamic for sure but a great one none the less.

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RMGCSA: Robotic Mower Education and Networking Event, The Club at Rolling Hills

Aaron Fankhauser from The Club at Rolling Hills

Sponsored by: Firefly Automatix, The Toro Company (LL Johnson), Kress Robotics, and Colorado Golf & Turf (Distributor for Husqvarna).

On June 16, around 75 members of the RMGCSA gathered at The Club at Rolling Hills to observe The Future of Mowing. Larger fairway mowers were showcased by The Toro Company and Firefly Automatix. Husqvarna, Toro, and Kress also put their small rough units on display. These mowers were tested with steeper slopes and some even demonstrated their ability to adjust mowing height on the fly moving from rough areas to fairway areas. The demo offered a chance for our members to see the units up close and test some of the safety features while also being able to ask the manufacturers questions about their robots!

Following the demo, the participants were invited back to network and got a more detailed look at the technology. Steak sandwiches and lobster rolls were plentiful as well as a few cold beverages after watching the robots work so hard! GCSAA points were available to those that registered, and the event was very enjoyable.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our sponsors for making the trip and making the demo so worthwhile for the attendees.

Below you will find a short video from the event: [RMGCSA: Robotic Event Link](#)

- Thank you from the RMGCSA Education Committee

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RMGCSA – Futures Tournaments – June 11th, 2025

RMGCSA Class C Committee at Flatirons Golf Course

Every cup cut, every fairway mowed and every green rolled is for the golfers and the grass. 4am alarms, sunrise to sunset workdays and achin' lower backs, for the golfers and the grass. Only we know the effort, perseverance and patience it takes to do what we do. Because of that, it's important to take a step back, a weekday off, join our peers for a round of golf and appreciate the community of folks who share the same challenges and passion for our industry. This particular day off was June 11th, for the Futures Tournament. Hosted by Superintendent Jake Jacobs, at Flatirons Golf Course in Boulder, Colorado. This event is for the hardest workers and the unsung heros. The grinders, the sellers and the hole diggers. The Futures is to celebrate our Assistants, Equipment Managers, Affiliate members, the current and the next generation of golf course leaders and superintendents. We were treated to a gorgeous summer day. A beautiful course with fantastic conditions and, as always, some great food.

“The morning started by driving into beautiful Boulder Colorado on a warm summer morning expecting to play an average city style course. Little did I know just how surprised I would be about the product that was put out. Right away you could tell the course would be in good shape by the extremely well maintained landscape surrounding the parking lot and club house. Well trimmed shrubs and healthy flowers caught my eye on every turn I took. When the time came to actually test out this track and see if my eyes were deceiving me, I was not let down. Well maintained tee boxes, surprisingly firm and well mowed fairways, spotless and thick rough, pristine greens, stringed trimmed trees/ponds, edged heads, and some of the most well maintained bunkers I've ever seen all came together to give the futures players a great round of golf! If you were unable to attend this event, I would highly recommend checking out what Jake Jacobs and his crew are doing at Flatirons Golf Course!” - **Brandon Abila, Assistant Superintendent at Todd Creek Golf Course and Class C Committee member**

“After golf we were treated to a taco bar for lunch and a presentation from speaker Joe Kunze, Arvada Golf Superintendent. The taco bar consisted of both chicken and shrimp fajitas with all the fixings. It was an excellent meal and a nice treat after a long day on the course. Joe gave a great speech touching on building a resume and interview strategies.” cont'd on next page

RMGCSA – Futures Tournaments – June 11th, 2025

He had some great insight on how to simplify the pre interview process, preparing for an interview, and making yourself stand out as a candidate in a competitive work market. I feel that everyone in attendance gained something that they can use the next time they go into an interview. Thank you Joe!” - **Brady McClean, Assistant Superintendent at Legacy Ridge and Class C Committee member**

68 golfers were able to get the time off to join us for this event and from the feedback and responses received, 68 golfers also had a great afternoon. Sam Pendleton (Mile High Turfgrass) and Patrick Cicolnai (Hiwan Golf Club) took home the two Closest to the Pin prizes. Sam on #4 and Patrick on #8. Kyle Kramer (Denver CC) and Andrew Wilfahrt (Denver CC) finished the day in third place, shooting a 66. Joel Gould (Green Valley Ranch Golf Club) and Brian Murtaugh (L.L. Johnson), took home second place with a 65. Garrett Marsh (City Park Golf Course) and Michael Melka (Simplot) shot a blistering 62 to secure the win and one year of bragging rights. Congratulations gentlemen.

The RMGCSA would like to thank Joe Kunze, Phelps Golf Design, Jake Jacobs and his entire staff for all of their work and contributions to make this tournament happen.



Legacy Scholarship Recipient

Emily Hester, Graduating Senior

I am a graduating senior from Douglas County High School, and I will be attending the University of Colorado Boulder in the fall majoring in Integrative Physiology. By studying in this field I hope to pursue a career as an Occupational Therapist so that I can help change the quality of life and lifestyles of people for the better through my daily career. Throughout highschool I enjoyed participating in clubs such as FFA(Future Farmers of America), NHS(National Honors Society), in which both of these clubs I held officer positions to help further my impact in my school community, as well as Link Crew(orientating incoming new students to the school), and FCA(Fellowship of Christian Athletes), I also participated in Varsity Volleyball. As one of the two managers of our school greenhouse we produced many plants and received a grant to help improve our greenhouse facility, along with being a part of FFA I competed on the Floriculture team where we identified flowers, diseases, tools and arranged flower arrangements in various competitions both at the regional and state level. Outside of school I enjoy hiking, painting, going for bike rides, paddle boarding and many other activities, as well as being involved at my church. This upcoming summer I am going into my third season as a part of the horticulture crew at our local golf course where we maintain flowers and flower beds all throughout the course. I am looking forward to being a big part of my college community throughout my four years at CU Boulder and I cannot wait to make this next big step in achieving my dreams and goals. By being a recipient of the 2025 RMGCSA Legacy Scholarship these funds will assist me in my college tuition. This money will go towards my first semester at CU Boulder, I am very thankful for this opportunity and the Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendent Association for supporting me in my educational goals.



Memorial Golf Recap

Kevin Malloy from TPC Colorado

The DU course at Highlands Ranch was a fantastic host facility, and lots of birdies were had, but also lots of “others”. Thank you to Scott Hallam and his entire team for putting out such a fantastic product amongst the mini heatwave that we were experiencing! Hopefully we didn’t make too much work for your staff, we should be able to take care of our own divots, ball marks, and bunkers, right?! With 102 golfers it was a great event that raised \$10,000 for turfgrass research. Many thanks to all the hole sponsors of the event who help make this event successful year after year, and a special thanks to the title sponsor LL Johnson. We were also blessed with some kind words from Dan Melchior who has been a huge part of this association throughout his career, and we hope that he continues to join us for some fun as he enters retirement.

The Flight Winners

Bender Flight Winner

Aaron Fankhauser – The club at Rolling Hills and Drew Hunter - Colorado Golf & Turf, Inc.

Bolin Flight Winner

Garrett Marsh – City Park Golf Course and Matt Bennett – Overland Park Golf Course

Hughes Flight Winner

Tyler Gillette – Buffalo Brand Seed and Robert Hayes – Green Valley Ranch

Cahalane Flight Winner

Chet Wilmes – Springhill Golf Course and Eric Strasheim – Murphy Creek Golf Course



Dan Melchior, LL Johnson

Memorial Golf Recap

Anderson Flight Winner

Timothy Davis – Legacy Ridge Golf Course and Joe Carlton – Legacy Ridge Golf Course

Krueger Flight Winner

Travis Abitz – L.L. Johnson and Steve Datwyler – The Club at Ravenna

Lyon Flight Winner

Jeff Eldridge – Nufarm and Sam Wineinger - Nufarm
The proxy winners obviously had time to sharpen their game because the Par 3s at the DU Course were no joke, including one that was almost longer than the following hole which was a par 4!

Closest to the Pins:

- #4 – Joe Carlton – City of Westminster
- #5 – Mark Cypress - Blackstone Country Club
- #13 – Bob Kinder –
- #17 – Brent Johnson – Collindale Golf Course



Joe “The Pro” Carlton—I think we know who carried that team to victory!



President Aaron Fankhauser and gracious Host Scott Hallam

Next year the event returns to the city of Westminster and Walnut Creek, which is always a fun golf course! Again, many thanks to all the sponsors that came out and supported the event : LL Johnson, Aquatrols, Buffalo Brand Seed, Colorado Golf and Turf, CPS Distributors, DryJect Colorado, G&S Solutions, Harco Fittings, Harrell's, Heritage Professional Product Groups, Irrigation Technologies, Mile High Turfgrass, LLC, Potestio Brothers Equipment, Simplot Partners, Soil Horizons, Inc, Wilbur-Ellis Company, The Krick Family, Flying Horse North Golf Club, The McCleary Family, The Club at Rolling Hills, The Johnson Family, Eaton Country Club, Jim and Cathy Wilkins

Affiliate Angle

Overview: An interview with Brian Robbins from SiteOne Landscape Supply



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

SiteOne Landscape Supply. I'm a Sales Support Representative. I support our sales team with anything irrigation.

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

I'm based out of our Englewood location. I cover the entire state of Colorado

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

We are a one-stop shop for anything related to the Landscaping & Golf industries. We provide Irrigation, Autonomous Mowing Equipment, Agronomics, Hardscape, Bulk Material, and Nursery products throughout Colorado with 20 locations.

What might we be surprised to know about your company?

In 2023 we acquired Pioneer Sand & Gravel

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

No.

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

I started at Valley Country Club in the summer of 1995 as a summer job while I was in high school. Being able to work outside and the comradery of our industry.

Affiliate Angle

What would you like other people to know about RMGCSA?

How much of a tight knit community it is and how willing everyone is to help each other out no matter the situation.

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

I have been married to my wife Alison for 22 years now. We have 2 sons and a chocolate lab with another chocolate lab joining our family in August. Parker 17 is an avid golfer and is showing interest in our industry by working at DU Golf Club this summer. Caden 13 is an avid soccer player and golfer. We enjoy being outside, traveling, golfing, hiking, skiing and just doing things as a family.

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 changes I've seen must be the use of technology in our industry. The advancements of irrigation technology with central controls and robotic mowers are probably the 2 that stand out the most to me.

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

I do my best to attend as many meetings and events as I can. It's important to let the other members know that they have resources out there to help them.

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 challenge I see has to be labor or should I say the lack of labor in our industry.

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

The use of robotic mowers and technology to help clubs be more efficient.



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Equipment Manager Spotlight

Overview: An interview with Mike Trujillo from Lakewood Country Club



Describe Myself:

I'm a dedicated mechanic with a strong work ethic and over a decade of experience in both my career and personal life. I've been proudly married to my wife for 13 years, and we're raising two wonderful children together. Reliability is something I value deeply—I've returned to the same job twice in my life, which speaks to my loyalty and the trust of others place in me. In the workplace, I lead by example. I treat my employees with kindness and respect, and I believe that hard work and integrity go a long way. Whether I'm under the hood of a vehicle or supporting my team, I put in the effort to do things right. Family, commitment, and doing honest work are the foundations of who I am.

How many years have you been turning wrenches and what was the first piece of equipment you ever worked on?

I have been turning wrenches for 20 years now the first piece of equipment was a Toro 3100-D

How many years have you been in the golf industry?

11 years

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

I play board games with my wife and kids do some 3d printing. I am also turning wrenches at home with a 1978 nova that I am currently restoring

What is your favorite turf equipment piece of all time?

The Toro 1298 is hard working and if you take care of them, they last a long time

Equipment Manager Spotlight

Do you spin or relief grind, or backlap?

In my opinion I would say relief grind because it gives you less friction on the blade to the bed knife. I know there are a lot of people that like to backlap but it takes almost the same amount of time to pull off and regrind and get a better cut.

Lease or own?

We do both; we lease fairway and rough units (high hours use mowers) and purchase everything else; that has been working for us

What's one piece of equipment that has been what you would call a monumental innovation to golf course maintenance?

Edge max bedknives; they hold their edge longer

If you could give one piece of advice to someone interested in a career in this aspect of the golf maintenance industry, what would it be?

Don't get consumed in this line of work I know it is easy to do I had to learn to balance the hours and having a family

Energy drink or coffee?

When I am on the go energy drink coffee with my wife on the weekends

What tool is absolutely essential for every golf course mechanic?

Good communication with everyone around you



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Local Advocacy with a Lasting Impact

Dave Phipps from GCSAA

Golf course tour highlights BMPs for state pesticide regulators

While GCSAA's government advocacy efforts span a broad spectrum, few initiatives match the visibility and impact of National Golf Day. Still, targeted local efforts can leave a lasting impression when the right opportunity arises.

One such opportunity came this year when Abigail Nickelson of the Washington Department of Agriculture reached out with a unique request. She was helping coordinate the Western Region Pesticide Meeting, a gathering of pesticide lead agency representatives from West Coast states, held in Vancouver, Washington. Topics included pesticide user training, worker protection standards, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

I first connected with Abigail at an ESA workshop, where we discussed GCSAA's Best Management Practices (BMP) initiative. She immediately recognized the value of our science-based approach and suggested adding a golf course visit to the tour schedule—an idea that took root quickly.

On April 30, as much of the golf industry was convening in Washington, D.C., sixty pesticide agency representatives traveled across the Columbia River to Columbia Edgewater Country Club in Portland, Oregon. Superintendent Jim Myers, CGCS, and his team graciously opened their doors, giving attendees a firsthand look at how BMPs help protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

To add depth to the tour, we enlisted several subject matter experts. Tom Calabrese, RG, CWRE, of EnviroLogic Resources, Inc., who has been instrumental in BMP development in the Northwest since 2008, provided foundational context. We were also joined by Ross Niewola of the USGA and Chas Schmid, Ph.D., from Oregon State University, who both contributed valuable insights into agronomic research and environmental stewardship.



Local Advocacy with a Lasting Impact

Our message throughout was clear: golf courses are professionally managed green spaces where science drives environmental protection. Attendees received a copy of the 2009 study, *Surface Water Quality Impacts from Golf Course Fertilizer and Pesticide Applications* by Hindahl, Miltner, Stahnke, and Cook—research that underpins many of our current BMPs.

Since fewer than half of the attendees had ever stepped foot on a golf course, the tour also introduced the daily tools and practices we use. Interest was high, from foliar versus granular feeding, data-driven water management, and aerification practices to discussions on pollinator habitat and conservation efforts. One particularly memorable moment came when Jim Myers was asked about mosquito control. His response? “I’ve never treated for mosquitoes—we rely solely on the Little Brown Bat, which is native to the Portland area.”

We wrapped up the visit with a Q&A session and informal networking around the equipment displays. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and it was clear that many attendees walked away with a new appreciation for golf course management—and the professionals behind it.

Certification News
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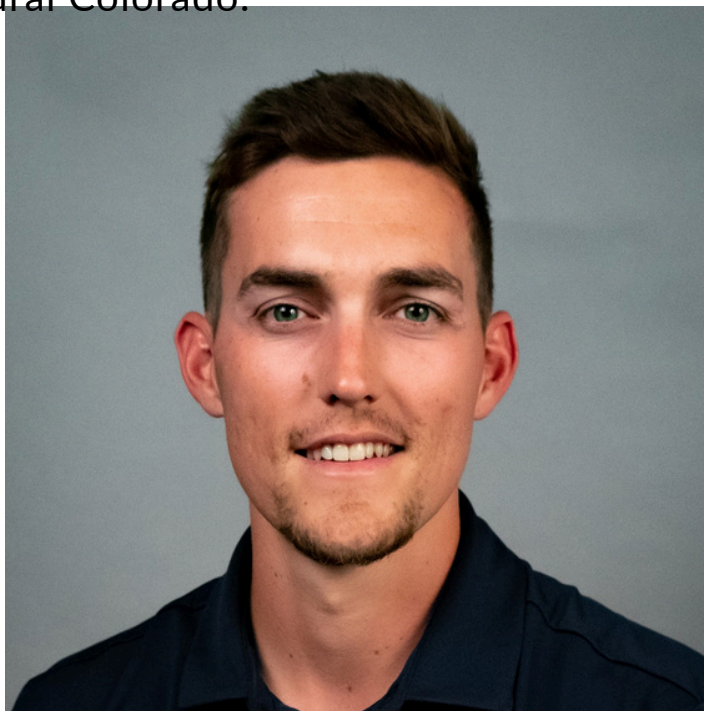
Pueblo, Colorado served as the vibrant setting for this year's State FFA competitions. I had the privilege of representing the Rocky Mountain GCSA Chapter (RMGCSAA) at the event, where we hosted a booth during the career fair and supported youth throughout the week by judging a variety of competitive events.

If you're anything like I was in the lead-up to this event, you might be wondering—how does the golf industry fit into an agricultural education gathering? My initial impression of FFA was rooted in childhood memories of livestock shows at rural county fairs, not neatly manicured urban golf courses.

However, after spending two days judging the prepared public speaking and employment skills competitions, and engaging with countless bright, motivated students, I quickly realized how much more expansive the FFA organization has become. Formerly known as “Future Farmers of America,” the organization has evolved its mission and identity. Today, FFA describes itself as supporting not just future farmers, but also those with interests in agricultural science, business, and technology, as well as production agriculture. This broader scope was clearly evident in the articulate, driven young people I met from across rural Colorado.

Our RMGCSAA team—including David Phipps, Gary Leeper, Joe Kunze, and myself—staffed the career show booth over two days. We engaged with hundreds of students, helping them understand where golf course management intersects with agriculture. Our aim was to shine a light on a career path that is often overlooked, despite offering meaningful, hands-on work in areas they're already passionate about.

What stood out most to me during these interactions was the professionalism and poise of these students.



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Regardless of age, each one greeted us with confidence offering a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and engaging in thoughtful conversations. Even without knowing their backgrounds, I was consistently impressed by their maturity, intelligence, and insight. Each student brought a unique perspective and skill set that any future employer would be fortunate to nurture.

Recognizing the critical moment these young people are in as they consider their career paths, we embraced the opportunity to present golf course management as a compelling option. Many students were intrigued by the idea of becoming an “urban farmer”—a professional who brings their dog to work, watches the sun rise over the fairways, and “harvests” recreation and enjoyment for others.

We highlighted the shared skills and interests between agriculture and golf, including heavy equipment maintenance, agronomy and fertility, and water management. Several students expressed enthusiasm about the profession, and many inquired about summer job opportunities at their local courses.

Participating in the State FFA event was time well spent—not only as a means of promoting our industry and connecting with future leaders, but also as an eye-opening experience into the incredible work FFA does to empower youth. This organization provides students with a pathway to success, often revealing strengths and capabilities they may not have known they possessed.

If we did our job well in sharing the rewards and opportunities within golf course management, perhaps we’ll see some of these students out on the course soon—helping to drive our industry forward.

Jordan Diederich



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The times, they are a changing..

In the Turfgrass industry, the only constant is that we manage through change. Changes can be simple: training new crew members, finding a new mower/product, changing courses, and of course the weather that we all battle. Thankfully, major changes seem to be less frequent for most. One major change that I am sure you have heard of by now is the change in ownership at LL Johnson last month. That update and more below... "We're announcing that Banyan Capital Partners/Oak Creek Golf & Turf has acquired Pattlen Enterprises, operating as LL Johnson Distributing & Midwest Turf. This change in ownership became effective on Friday, May 23rd, 2025.

What This Means for Our Customers: We want to assure you that while ownership has changed, our commitment to providing the same high level of service and support you've come to expect remains unwavering. You'll still see the familiar LL Johnson and Midwest Turf brand names in the market, continuing the strong legacy of excellence that has been built over nearly 50 years. Our dedicated teams will continue to uphold the standards that have earned us 15 Toro awards, including the 2024 Distributor of Excellence- North America.

Celebrating Our Leaders: Jim Johnson and Dan Melchior, who have been instrumental in our success, will be transitioning into consulting roles to ensure a smooth changeover. We extend our sincerest best wishes to Jim and Dan for their future endeavors, and we're incredibly grateful for their dedication to Toro and to our customers in Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

Meet Our New Leadership: We're thrilled to welcome Patrick Nolan as the new CEO of LL Johnson and Midwest Turf. Patrick brings with him 13 years of valuable experience in Toro Distribution. He will be working closely with Jason Grouette, who is stepping in as Integration Leader. Together, they are committed to maintaining the strong relationships and excellent service you've always received.

We're confident that this new chapter will allow us to continue providing the exceptional support and service that has defined LL Johnson and Midwest Turf for decades"

The times, they are a changing..

Why is this so important? It isn't everyday that we see major leaders in the Turfgrass industry step away. Jim Johnson and Dan Melchior have made so many impacts on their team and their customers throughout their 50+ years, that it is quite hard to quantify. For the Rocky Mountain GCSA, Jim & Dan have supported our Association as a Title Sponsor for well over 25 years.

We are blessed to have many great partners in our Rocky Mountain Chapter, but we would not have realized the successes we have achieved without your help! On behalf of the Rocky Mountain GCSA, we would like to thank you both for your support and we wish you the very best in your next chapters. Hopefully, there will be more fishing, golfing, and spending time with your families!

Sincerely,
Aaron Fankhauser, President RMGCSA

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Assistant Spotlight

Overview: An Interview with Nicholas Sebolt

Describe your Facility?

Red Sky Golf Club (Norman Course). What makes Red Sky a unique place to work is the breathtaking scenery we take in every day while having the privilege to do the work we are passionate about.

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

My favorite part of this job is the work life balance. All employees get two days off every week, which gives us the ability to enjoy our hobbies and take advantage of our time living in the mountains.

What is the biggest challenge at your facility?

Our biggest struggle here is post winter recovery. With such a short window before tournaments and peak golf, it is crucial to efficiently prioritize our recovery projects.

What do you like about your team at your facility?

One of the most curtail pieces to our operation is our crew. The vast majority of our guys are new in the industry and have done a tremendous job. They all show up every day with great attitudes and are always willing to learn and improve. They are the key reason for our success here at Red Sky



Crew Training Series Announcement

David Phipps, GCSAA Northwest Region Field Staff



Now Available: GCSAA Crew Training Series Videos!

We're excited to announce the release of the brand-new **GCSAA Crew Training Series Videos**, created to support you and your teams with accessible, high-quality education. These short, informative videos are perfect for onboarding new staff and reinforcing key skills with your existing crew.

Video Titles in the Series so far:

- **Crew Etiquette** – Covers professionalism, communication, and working as a team.
- **This is a Golf Course** – Helps new crew members understand the big picture: who we serve, why details matter, and how our work impacts the golfer experience.
- **Walk Behind Greens Mowing** – Step-by-step guidance on proper technique, pattern following, and mower care.
- **Greens Mowing (Triplex)** – Focuses on using ride-on units for efficiency while protecting putting surfaces.
- **Bunker Maintenance** – Demonstrates best practices for raking and shaping bunkers consistently and effectively.
- **Hand Watering** – Emphasizes when, where, and how to hand water to promote healthy turf and water conservation.
- **Handheld Equipment** – Includes training on string trimmers, blowers, and edgers with a focus on safety and precision.
- **Ride-on Equipment** – Highlights safe operation of fairway mowers, utility vehicles, and other ride-on machines.
- **Safety Basics** – Reinforces core safety practices that every crew member should know and follow daily.

Crew Training Series Announcement

These videos are a great way to support your team’s development without pulling them away from their work for extended classroom time. They’re easy to watch, straightforward, and grounded in the real-world knowledge superintendents value most.

The videos are available now through the GCSAA website within the My Learning Hub. You can watch them individually or integrate them into your team’s onboarding or weekly training routines.

Whether you're preparing new hires or reinforcing standards with your seasoned team, these videos are a practical resource to elevate performance and professionalism on your course. Your input is invaluable. Let us know your thoughts on the videos and any topics you'd like to see covered in future releases.

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Playability Matters!

In The Field!

Bunker Maintenance at The Club at Pradera

Chad Gilkison from The Club at Pradera

The question I get asked most frequently as the Golf Course Superintendent at The Club at Pradera is, “What is your biggest challenge with this property?” It’s an easy answer for me now going into my 3rd season here. Bunker maintenance and being able to sustain good playability from our bunkers is always my answer.

Nestled in the hills of Parker, The Club at Pradera was designed by Jim Engh and is an Irish-style golf course. The golf course blends Irish modern influences, with a Colorado twist as our website puts it. For you that are familiar with other Jim Engh courses in the area, you know that often means different. Or as Jim Engh himself puts it, quirky. Mr. Engh states that he likes to embrace the uniqueness of nature, as well as his passion to create a unique and interesting golf experience. Being different and “quirky” sometimes puts a strain on us a maintenance crew. This is most evident in daily maintenance to our bunkers. Most have severely steep faces and most are large. The steep inclines both inside and outside of the bunkers make them difficult to maintain. Fly mowing bunkers has quickly become the least favorite job for the crew.

Most of them are deep and make it impossible to get any mechanical equipment in and out of. Which means we can’t use a Sand Pro or anything similar, and all bunkers are raked by hand each day. The steep faces inside the bunker have made it difficult to keep sand on the faces and in our efforts to do so they have been contaminated with native soil over the years.

So, this season we decided we would try something new. We decided to go with the Aussie Style rake on them to pack the faces and steeper angles with sand and not disturb those areas on a daily basis. We have several crew members here at Pradera that had been at other courses that have used this maintenance style and were familiar with it.



Bunker Maintenance at The Club at Pradera



Bunker Maintenance at The Club at Pradera

We put our heads together in late winter/early spring and make a list of how we would get to where we wanted to be with them and what we would need to get there. The full-time crew that was here when the decision was made to go to the Aussie Style has done a tremendous job of buying in and taking ownership of our plan. They have also done a great job in training and setting an example for the seasonal guys that we are bringing on for the summer.

To try and get buy in from the membership before many of them were able to see them firsthand and play out of them we decided to put out a communication through our General Manager. If you are like me, it's hard to stop what we are doing on the golf course and take time to sit at my desk and write an explanation as to what we are doing. Like most of you, I've felt like it's a waste of time and takes me away from other "more important" tasks. I tried to explain what we were doing, why we were doing it and how we hoped it would make for a better playing experience. The communication included ways they could help us maintain them and gave several examples through pictures we took of what we needed them to stop doing. One way we asked for their help was to only enter and exit in the correct areas. With steep slopes we get several golfers trying to enter from the highest/steepest point which has eroded edges and creates deep footprints. During our audits and moving sand around we took several pictures of areas that had been damaged by this and included them. We also included several pictures of our crew compacting the faces and what that process entailed. The process took us several weeks and a lot of hard work from the crew.

In the end the response from membership was great and continues to be very supportive. The final product has been a big upgrade as well. Our bunkers still need a lot of work and attention, but it's shown membership that we are willing to try new things and give them the best playing conditions we can. It's also helped me to realize that they appreciate the information and it's best to hear it from us as a maintenance crew, instead of the architect/engineer/designer/professional golfer that every foursome seems to have these days! Here are a few of the pictures that I took throughout the process and the final products.



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