

The Reporter

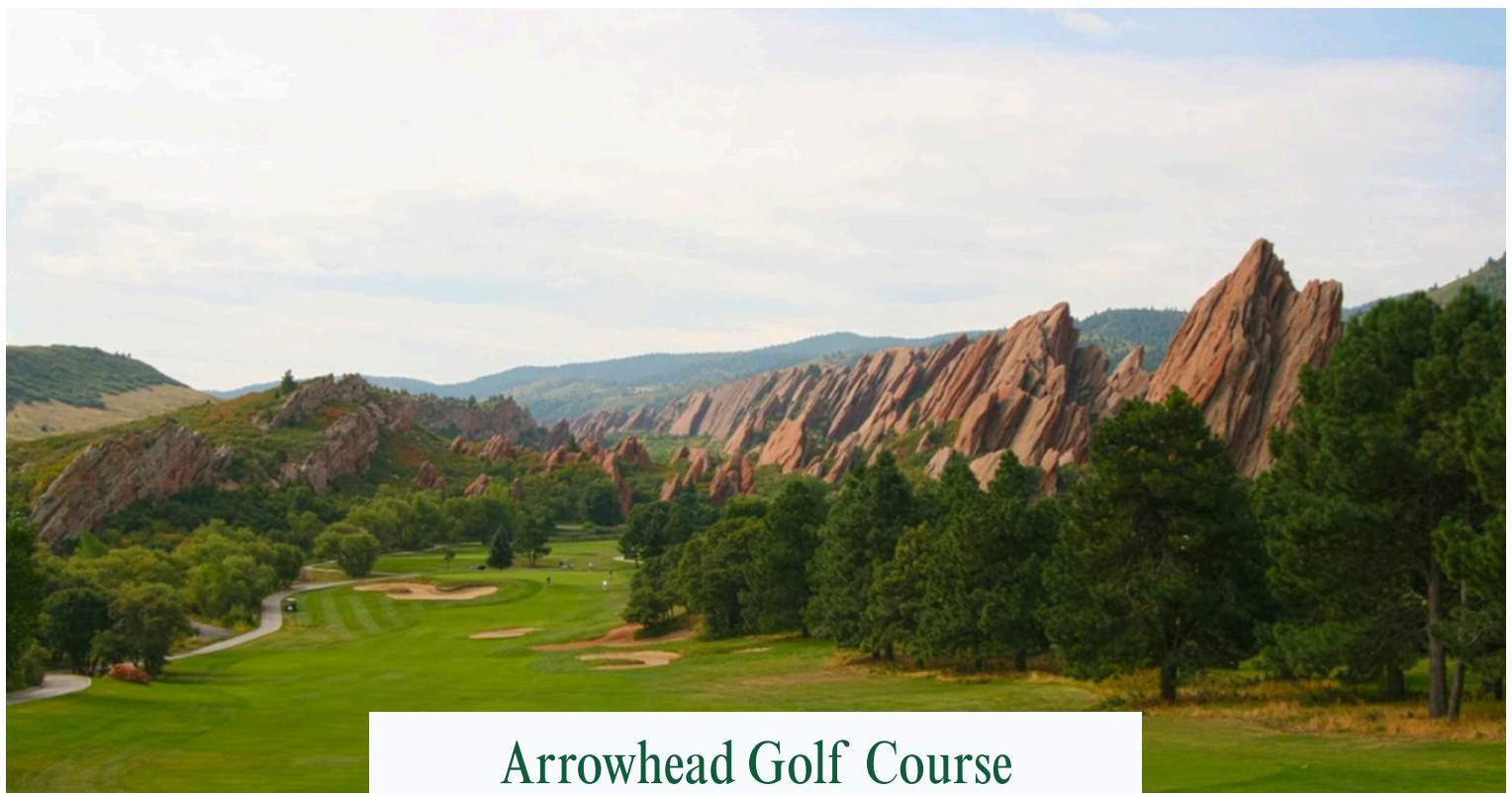
From the Rocky Mountain Chapter of GCSAA
Growing Green Since 1936



Keystone River Golf
Course

Table of Contents

3	President's Message
5	Superintendent Spotlight
7	Walk and Talk Recap
12	Assistant Spotlight
15	Futures Recap
17	Affiliate Cup Recap
19	FFA State Convention 2026
21	Steely-Eyed Missile Folk
25	Equipment Manager Spotlight
28	Director's Corner
29	Stipend Opportunities
31	Affiliate Angle
25	Silent Auction Information



Arrowhead Golf Course

President's Message

Joe Kunze, CGCS, City of Arvada, RMGCSA President

Drought of 2026

To put into perspective just how challenging the weather and drought has been so far this season, consider a few statistics from July.

July 2026 was the second-hottest July on record for Colorado as a whole, and in some areas of the state, including the Western Slope, it was the hottest on record. From July 25–28, Colorado experienced its hottest heat wave since 1951. Burlington recorded a temperature of 113°F on July 27, while a weather station in Dillon reported 11 days above 85°F, a new annual record with August and September still to come.

With this extreme heat comes extremely high evapotranspiration (ET) rates. Data from Colorado State University's CoAgMet stations illustrates just how significant the increased demand has been. When annual precipitation is compared with the amount of water lost through evapotranspiration, the resulting water deficit is approximately 28% higher year to date than the average.

That number is important. If our plants require roughly 28% more water than normal to maintain healthy growth, while at the same time many courses are being asked to reduce water use by 20% or more, drought stress can develop very quickly, even when we feel we are already "cutting 20%." Eliminating irrigation from driving ranges, out-of-play areas and other rough areas may not be enough this year to conserve the water needed to maintain all of the playable areas of the golf course. As a result, stress is being seen throughout many properties.

The impacts extend beyond turf health. As conditions become more challenging, courses are implementing Cart Path Only policies and, in some cases, providing a playing surface that simply cannot meet the standards we would normally expect. These decisions are not made lightly. They are often necessary responses to conditions that are outside of our control.

Of course, every golf course has a different situation. As we discussed during our Round Table earlier this year, and hopefully will have an opportunity to revisit, water restrictions and availability can vary dramatically depending on the source of irrigation water. Courses using recycled or reclaimed water may have adequate supplies, while others may be facing significant limitations. Some courses are operating under guidelines or restrictions established by water agencies, contractual agreements or policies that may have little to do with the actual availability of water.

These differences will also play a major role in how we recover from the stress of this season. If restrictions continue or become more severe later this fall, how will that affect our ability to prepare courses for the following season? How do we set realistic expectations for recovery?

President's Message

Joe Kunze, CGCS, City of Arvada, RMGCSA President

And if we experience another dry winter in the mountains, what does that mean for the 2027 season, and potentially even 2028?

These are difficult questions, but they are also important ones for our profession.

As golf course superintendents, we have the responsibility of managing an incredibly valuable and increasingly scarce resource. Water management has always been an important part of our jobs, but years like 2026 remind us just how critical that responsibility has become.

Every season presents an opportunity to learn. This year may teach us more about managing water budgets, adjusting irrigation strategies, selecting and maintaining turf under extreme stress, and determining the best methods and timing for reestablishing turf when conditions improve. It may also remind us of the importance of communication with our staff, owners, boards, water providers, golfers and each other.

No two courses face exactly the same challenges, but we are all navigating the same changing environment. Sharing what we learn and supporting one another will make our entire industry stronger.

As we move through the remainder of 2026, I hope we can continue to learn from this season, share ideas and experiences, and prepare ourselves for whatever the next year, and the next several years, may bring.

Joe Kunze, CGCS

President, City of Arvada



Superintendent Spotlight

By Ben Montoya, Class A, Gypsum Creek Golf Course

Describe Your Facility

Gypsum Creek Golf Course is a public 18-hole golf course. Designed by Pete Dye, it sits in the Gypsum Valley, roughly 35 minutes west of Vail. The course originally opened in 1997 as Cotton Ranch Golf Club. The Town of Gypsum purchased it in 2010 and renamed it Gypsum Creek Golf Course.

In your view, what is your facility doing particularly well?

There are world-class golf courses in the valley, and those guys do an unreal job of maintaining those playing conditions. We really pride ourselves on providing an affordable local option and doing our best to give comparable golf experience to the other courses in the area with larger budgets.

What advice would you offer to someone considering a career in golf course management?

The pursuit of perfection in this industry can be really intimidating, and I've seen it affect people in negative ways. I think emphasizing self-acceptance and the possibility of being damn good, even without perfection, is a good attitude to have.

What do you find most rewarding about serving as a superintendent?

When the vision comes together, and the team takes pride in what they're doing while locals and golfers are happy it is amazing to see. When the vibes are right it's hard to imagine a more satisfying profession.

Who has served as a mentor to you, or in what way did you first become involved in the industry?

I was an intern at Eisenhower Golf Club at USAFA, and I was very inexperienced in this industry. I think a lot about the crash course that Greg Utermohlen and Tony Scites gave me that summer, and how it really started me down this career path and set me up for success.

Which hole on your course is your favorite, and what makes it meaningful to you?

So many good stories come from 17, the par 3 with a huge drop in elevation. The view is so memorable, especially in the fall when there's a dusting of snow in mountains.



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Superintendent Spotlight

By Ben Montoya, Class A, Gypsum Creek Golf Course

What is the most recent book you have read?

There is plenty of time for audiobooks while mowing or spraying and that is my way of passing time. My wife has me on Dungeon Crawler Carl and there are plenty of laughs in there, my goal is to finish 52 books a year of all different varieties.

How do you prefer to spend your time away from work?

I have a 2- and 5-year-old so mainly just chasing them around and trying as many activities as possible. We love to get the raft out on the river as a family and enjoy the water.

Which sports team do you support?

I love hockey and support the Avs. Also, my own team, the Black Team that usually dominates Keenan Lilyquist's White Team in our Thursday night pick up hockey games in Eagle.



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Colorado Golf's Walk and Talk Brings Sustainability to Life

By Lauren Russell

Best Management Practices in Real-Time for Colorado Legislators



On June 15, Colorado golf course superintendents, legislators, civic leaders, researchers, and industry professionals gathered at CommonGround Golf Course in Aurora for the inaugural Colorado Golf Walk and Talk, an interactive event showcasing the environmental, economic, and community benefits of golf across the state.

Hosted by the Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association (RMGCSA) and the Rocky Mountain Environmental Golf Institute (RMEGI), the event provided attendees with a behind-the-scenes look at the science, stewardship, and innovation that take place on Colorado golf courses every day.

A Living Classroom for Sustainability

The morning featured a guided walking tour of CommonGround Golf Course, led by superintendent Mitch Savage. Participants explored native habitat and wildflower areas developed in partnership with the Denver Botanic Gardens and the “Monarchs in the Rough” pollinator areas, learned about the wildlife habitat that supports 140 bird species, and observed demonstrations highlighting the science behind golf course management.

Colorado Golf's Walk and Talk Brings Sustainability to Life

By Lauren Russell

Best Management Practices in Real-Time for Colorado Legislators

A key objective of the Walk and Talk was to help legislators experience firsthand how golf courses function. Across Colorado, golf facilities provide over 33,000 acres of managed greenspace, support wildlife habitat, contribute to community well-being, and use less than one percent of the state's annual water consumption.

As conversations around water, sustainability, and land management continue across Colorado, events like the Walk and Talk help foster greater understanding of the positive role golf courses play. The deliberate route illustrated how golf course design, planning, and management work together. Participants experienced firsthand how sustainability efforts extend to native habitat areas, buffer zones around waterbodies, pollinator gardens, reclaimed water infrastructure areas, and wildlife corridors.



Preserving Wildlife Habitat and Driving Conservation

The course features 15 birdboxes - participants visited several kestrel nesting boxes and caught a glimpse of rare mountain bluebirds. Attendees also learned about CommonGround's community engagement through hosting an ongoing birding group that views and documents native bird populations.

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Participants explored how innovation is driving resource conservation across Colorado golf. Commonground is one of many courses throughout Colorado that uses reclaimed water for irrigation, demonstrating how alternative water sources reduce demand on potable water.

Superintendents illustrated how moisture meters work to determine the plant's needs, how irrigation systems can match water demand in real time, how systems are managed remotely, and how they shut off during rain events. Legislators also learned how pump stations deploy variable frequency drives (VFDs) to reduce energy consumption, lower operating costs, and ease strain on the electrical grid during peak-use periods.



Growing the Game and Growing Stewardship

Beyond showcasing BMPs, the Colorado Golf Association shared information on community engagement and player development, STEAM learning, and youth programs through highlighting CommonGround's Par 3 course.

Colorado Golf's Walk and Talk Brings Sustainability to Life

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Best Management Practices in Real-Time for Colorado Legislators

In addition, RMGCSA president Joe Kunze educated legislators on Colorado Golf's "Path to 100" initiative, a statewide effort focused on 100% of Colorado golf courses developing and adopting a facility-level Best Management Practices (BMP) Guide to advance environmental stewardship throughout the state. Colorado is currently leading the country with facility BMP Guides in place at 96% of RMGCSA member courses and at nearly 80% of all Colorado courses.



Bringing Stewardship Into Focus

The success of this inaugural event reinforces the value of bringing stakeholders together on the golf course. Public officials engaged directly with superintendents and industry experts, asking thoughtful questions and demonstrating a genuine interest in understanding how golf contributes to Colorado's environmental, economic, and community landscape.

A key takeaway: Colorado golf courses are serving as multi-functional community assets by providing recreation while advancing conservation, supporting wildlife, conserving resources, and contributing to broader environmental goals. And that - is sustainability in action.



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Assistant Spotlight

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

Describe your Facility?

I oversee City Park Nine, a 9-hole facility in Northwest Fort Collins. It was built in 1940 with towering Elms lining each fairway. We have tight fairways with small, flat greens that resemble the style of the times when it was first constructed.

What makes your facility unique?

It's a charming course that feels more like a midwestern, park style property. Many of our greens are under deep shade, which offers an interesting vibe and a fun challenge to maintain.

What do you enjoy most about your team?

A lot of my team has been with me since I started here in January of 2021. We are like family, we give out hugs, high fives and encourage each other through our actions. I can rely on each one of them.

What do you feel your facility is getting right?

I feel proud that we strive to offer great playing conditions for all levels of golfers. We hang our hat on being accessible, friendly and affordable but push for the same results as higher end facilities.



Jordan Diede & Family



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Assistant Spotlight

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

What advice would you give someone interested in a career in golf course management?

Don't take things too seriously. Some days can feel daunting with the amount our profession is up against. If I've had a hard day, I go home and tell my wife, "It's just growing grass." While I know it's a lot more than that, it helps me put my problems in perspective and allows me to simplify.

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

I started working on the grounds crew for the Colorado Rockies AAA team at 16. Moved to golf maintenance at 18 and never looked back. I've spent over half my life in this industry and I'm thankful for every experience that has shaped me.

What is the most unexpected thing you've found yourself doing as an assistant?

My only assistant job has been with City Park Nine. We do not have a traditional hierarchy of a head superintendent here. Me and another fellow assistant oversee the golf course operations. I get the opportunity to play the pseudo role of Superintendent, and it has prepared me well for the day I move into that official role with another course.

What is the most rewarding part of being an assistant?

You get to do everything. This position allows you to master your craft day in and day out. It's the reason why I was drawn to the turf profession in the first place.

Who has been a mentor to you, or how did you get into the business?

Too many to count but I would like to highlight one individual, the late Tony Koski. He was my advisor and professor at Colorado State. I admired his focus on our industry; he made it a better place and was instrumental in so many young turf professionals.

What is your favorite hole on your course, and why?

#7- it's the longest of all holes. Gives you a beautiful view of the foothills. Offers the most forgiving shots and has our largest green on property.

Assistant Spotlight

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

Without incriminating yourself, what's the funniest or silliest thing you've done on the job?

A few years ago, an unnamed employee drove a Walking mower into our irrigation ditch. In efforts to retrieve the mower, I jumped into the water with all my clothes on and hooked it up so we could tow it out. I'm happy to report, it's still running to this day and we named it," The S.S. Minnow".

What's the last book you read?

Probably a parenting book, you can never get enough advice when it comes to that profession!

What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work?

I enjoy exercising, running, hunting and fly fishing. Most of all, I enjoy my family time.

Favorite Moive?

Wolf of Wall Street

Favorite Restaurant?

Colorado Room in FOCO

What is your favorite tool in your cart?

Light weight hose or moisture meter

Shorts or pants?

Skies out, thighs out. Team shorts

Favorite sports team?

Lifelong Broncos fan, God Bless Bo Nix

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Playability Matters!

In The Field!

Futures Tournament 2026

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

This year's Future's Tournament was held at Mariana Butte Golf Course in Loveland, Colorado. It was a beautiful day for golf, with excellent course conditions and a great turnout. In fact, this was our chapter's highest attended Future's Tournament to date, with 88 contestants taking part. The day certainly did not disappoint. We even had a hole in one from one of our participants! The pace of play was quick throughout the event, which was a testament to how well run the operations are at Mariana Butte.

Here are the final standings for the event. Congratulations to all these teams and individuals!

Closest to the Pins:

#4 Blake Larson, Springhill, Hole In One!!

#8 Andrew Wilfarth, Denver CC

#11 Tyler Gillette, Buffalo Brand Seed

#14 Daniel Kubistek, Rolling Hills CC

1st Place Richard Moore, Aurora Hills and Blake Larsen, Springhill, 60

2nd Place Steven Faussett, CPS, and Brian Temple, Indian Peaks Golf Course, 64

3rd Place Curtis Lawson, Littleton Golf and Tennis and Matthew Hartung, Fossil Trace Golf Club, 65

4th Place Tyler Gillette, Buffalo Brand Seed and Joel Gould, Green Valley Ranch, 65



Futures Tournament 2026

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

The second leg of the day brought us to the clubhouse, which overlooks the western part of Loveland and the Big Thompson Valley. Participants enjoyed lunch provided by the club's food and beverage team before turning their attention to our educational speaker, Aaron Fankhauser. Aaron is the Assistant General Manager and Director of Agronomy at The Club at Rolling Hills in Golden, Colorado.

Aaron delivered a well-thought-out presentation on the importance of investing in yourself. He challenged participants to think about their own careers and emphasized that building your marketability starts with evaluating where you are today, defining where you want to go, and identifying the clear path that will get you there. It was clear that Aaron captured everyone's attention, and we greatly appreciate him taking the time to share his experience, knowledge, and wisdom with our members.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make this event such a success. Here's to 2027 and making it bigger and better.



Affiliate Cup 2026

By Kyle Postlethwaite, Class AF, Colorado Golf and Turf

Dear Craig and the Pole Creek Golf Course Staff,

On behalf of everyone who participated in the Affiliate Cup, thank you for hosting an outstanding event at Pole Creek Golf Course. With 140 players participating, it was a fantastic day of golf, camaraderie, and competition.

A special thank you to Craig and all the Pole Creek staff for your hard work and hospitality. Your efforts helped make the event a tremendous success, and we truly appreciate everything you did to make the day enjoyable for everyone.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Heritage PPG for their generous sponsorship and support of the Affiliate Cup. Your generosity plays an important role in making this event possible.

Closest to the Pin

- **#2 Ranch:** Mike Melka – Simplot
- **#7 Ranch:** Sean Kennedy – Plum Creek
- **#2 Ridge:** Kyle Postlethwaite – Colorado Golf and Turf
- **#5 Ridge:** Doug Choate – Battlement Mesa Golf Course

Affiliate Cup Results

1st Place & Affiliate Cup Champion – Target Specialty Products – 50

Daryl Dinkel
Doug Choate
Jake Falke
Chris Carter

2nd Place – Nutrien Solutions – 52

Robert Gonzales
John Waddle
Lance Juelfs
Jimmy Rodriguez

3rd Place – L.L. Johnson – 52

Travis Abitz
Steve Blais
Nick Lang
Kolin Vandersluis



Affiliate Cup 2026

By Kyle Postlethwaite, Class AF, Colorado Golf and Turf

4th Place – Simplot Partners – 53

Jason Aerni

Aaron Fankhauser

Brayden Webb

Danny Muchuga

Congratulations to all the teams and players for a great competition. Most importantly, thank you to everyone who helped make the Affiliate Cup such a memorable event.

We look forward to returning to Pole Creek Golf Course and continuing this great tradition in the years ahead.



FFA State Convention 2026

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

Every June, thousands of young people gather on the campus of CSU Pueblo to attend the annual Colorado FFA State Convention. During the first part of the week, FFA members compete in a variety of events, facing off against chapters from across Colorado to test their leadership and career development skills centered around the agricultural industry. Some of these competitions include public speaking, creed speaking, agricultural issues, auctioneering, and many more.

This was my second-year volunteering to judge these talented students, and once again, I came away impressed by the next generation. Each student arrives prepared, professional, and driven. Many are not yet 18 years old, yet they already possess the qualities, work ethic, and experiences that will make them valuable members of the future workforce. Their confidence, knowledge, and passion for agriculture are remarkable to witness, and it is encouraging to see so many young people invested in their personal and professional development.



FFA State Convention 2026

By Jordan Diede, Class C, City Park Nine

On days two and three, students had the opportunity to network with businesses, schools, and prospective employers at the career fair. The Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association held a booth staffed by Gary Leeper, Joe Kunze, Scott McHenry, and myself. You might be wondering where golf fits into the equation, and that is a question we often receive from attendees.

Our industry recognizes the value of the experiences and skills FFA provides these students with. Their education is rooted in agriculture, and we see many direct connections to careers in golf course management. Agronomy, irrigation, fertility management, equipment operation and maintenance, leadership, and environmental stewardship are all areas where the golf industry aligns with FFA experiences. These similarities provide an excellent opportunity to introduce students to a profession they may not have previously considered.

Many students expressed interest in learning more, and that is where we can help. Our volunteers shared information about free student memberships, connected students with local golf course superintendents for summer employment opportunities, and discussed the many career paths available within the golf course management industry.

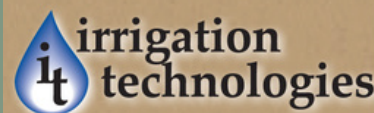
The RMGCSA as also the GCSAA are forging a great relationship with the FFA. This is a great example by representing our industry at events like this and getting exposure to young people who may be interested in doing what we do everyday. These are extremely talented, young, motivated individuals who would and will be very successful working in the golf course industry.

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Steely-Eyed Missile Folks

By Tyler Miget, CTEM, Class EM, Haarmony Club, EM Liason RMGCSA

During our Kansas Loop for our project, Under the Greens, my friend, Morgan, and I got to sit down to interview Kevin Sunderman. He serves as the COO of the GCSAA. About halfway through I found that I was the one on the interview seat. We were talking about initiatives and he asked me what achieving my CTEM actually meant to me.

I didn't have anything loaded. I had feelings, no surprise if you know me, but nothing polished. What came out felt like a jumbled mess. When I finished, he told me that was exactly the case GCSAA has been trying to make to decision makers at the places we work. I've been chewing on that for weeks. I am always going to work to dignify the work of the people behind the scenes because I believe that when the whole picture can be seen, it deepens understanding and therefore appreciation.

November 14, 1969

Apollo 12 wouldn't have launched by today's standards. It was a soupy Florida mess. The rules about flying into weather like that got written because of Apollo 12. But things were different nearly 60 years ago. When the mission launched, it got hit by lightning twice inside the first minute. Every screen in Mission Control turned to garbage at the same instant. The largest, most powerful thing humanity had ever launched was already cooking, and a room full of people had about 30 seconds to decide whether to abort.

John Aaron was 24 years old, sitting at the EECOM console. A year earlier, during a test, he'd seen that same scrambled pattern on his screen. Much like us tinkerers and fixers, he got curious about it. It wasn't imperative for him to chase it, but we all know that itch. He went and figured out what caused it on his own time, and filed away a solution should he ever encounter that issue again.

He was the only person in the building who recognized the problem. He called for an obscure switch, SCE (Signal Conditioning Equipment), to be thrown to auxiliary. Alan Bean, the Lunar Module Pilot, knew the switch and hit it. The crew hit their Translunar Injection burn that afternoon.

Gene Kranz, on the Flight Director rotation, called Aaron a Steely-Eyed Missile Man, which is still the most badass compliment in space flight.

Steely-Eyed Missile Folks

By Tyler Miget, CTEM, Class EM, Haarmony Club, EM Liason RMGCSA

Aaron did the research and the extra work when nobody made him do it. Then his number got called, and he delivered. That's the whole story, and that's the whole argument for certification.

The Certified Turf Equipment Manager

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- EMCP Level 2 (1 Large Test)
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There are currently less than 75 in the world.

The Process

I started the EMCP 1 process soon after I got into the turf industry. I had no intention of pursuing EMCP 2, let alone CTEM. It was recommended to me as educational material. I had a background in automotive as an ASE Certified Technician, but I immediately saw the benefits of the study guides for the Cutting Units and Hydraulics specifically. There is stuff from those that I didn't know and use every time I grind or read schematics. I took the tests. Got my EMCP 1 in my first 6 months on the job and then went on to EMCP 2 because it was a look even deeper.

It was never something that took away from my job. I looked at my time studying and learning as an investment. One that is now paying dividends in my time and stress saved most of all.

We are like the O-line of turf management. We do our dirty jobs, open up the lanes, and set others up as best we can. We don't like people looking at us. The better we do our job, the more the team gets to shine as a whole. Most of us would rather not have someone look over our shoulder, especially for an evaluation that has stakes.

Steely-Eyed Missile Folks

By Tyler Miget, CTEM, Class EM, Haarmony Club, EM Liason RMGCSA

I was puckered the entire time leading up to the attesting. 5 minutes in, I realized that the people that were looking at what I was presenting were rooting for me and for our role. It was downhill from there.

I know that I am nowhere near the best EM around. I feel convinced that I would be put to shame by many of you in diagnostics, cleanliness, organization, or any other item on a long list of the competencies we have to possess. Please let that be an encouragement to you. If this tickles your fancy, find a way to get after it. Bit by bit. It's like eating an elephant: one bite at a time.

The Change

What changed? Not one thing about how I set cutting units, interact with our team, or go about my day.

What changed is how it feels to walk in the rooms. I don't think any of my colleagues respect me more, nor do I think that our Superintendent or General Manager think of me differently. I think that the process helped show key people in our organization a little more of the picture. It gave them a window in, within a structure that I could talk about that didn't seem like self-aggrandizing or boasting, or teeing up a request for more money. Our GMs probably have no idea that the most important place on the golf course is where the reel meets the bedknife. They can, however, benchmark exactly what credentials are worth, and so can your board, and so can whoever owns the place. I'd rather work with that than pretend it's not a factor.

We should say this part out loud more. Certification is obviously personal growth. It's also professionally advantageous. For certified supers versus uncertified, the base pay difference is roughly 16% annually (GCSAA). Nobody has that number for EMs yet. There is room for EMs to move that needle as well.

The Landing

Everybody remembers the first words spoken and a few of the guys who walked on the moon. They all went and came home because four hundred thousand people were excellent at the work they did. A lot of those people were holding wrenches.

Steely-Eyed Missile Folks

By Tyler Miget, CTEM, Class EM, Haarmony Club, EM Liason RMGCSA

Our lineage lives in the space between the lab coats and the pipe fitters. Much is asked of us. We're all trying to put out our best so our teams can do their best all to support the highlight of someone's week.

I know we often reduce what we do to "Just growing grass" and at times that's helpful. But, if I may wax poetic for a moment, in an age where people are so disconnected, lonely, and divided, we prepare the essential tools to set the table for people. On the places we prepare, people get time together, a chance to play, and a breath of fresh air. I think that's pretty excellent.

Kevin's read was that this is the case GCSAA needs in front of the decision-makers. The association and task groups can build the program, but still can't make the argument for us. We are the argument. Every time one of us finishes this and tells a superintendent, or a GM, or the guy at the course down the road what it was honestly like.

Consider this me telling you. If you're interested, start. Find some low-hanging fruit and check a box. Sign up for EMCP Level 1 this fall. Let that brain itch get the ball rolling.

What I told Kevin, in way too many words, was this. I think that CTEM dignifies us individually, our profession, our role in the entire golf ecosystem, and I think it makes me a Steely-Eyed Missile Man for our team here at Harmony.

Certification News

Congratulations to new and renewing CGCSs!

Be the first to congratulate fellow members in your chapter.

Recertified Members

Daniel Sprague, CGCS
Rocky Mountain GCSA

July 2026 CGCS Members

Equipment Manager Spotlight

By Mary B. Sawyer, Class EM, Denver Country Club

How many years have you been turning wrenches?

25+

What was the first piece of equipment you ever worked on?

Professionally, UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters

How many years have you been in the golf industry?

3+

Do you hold any certifications?

None in golf currently though I am focused on completing EMCP levels 1 and 2 with the goal of holding CTEM in the next couple of years. I have several certifications from my army aviation days to include: Combatives, Combat Life Saver, and Non-rated Crewmember Standardization Instructor.

What hobbies for you enjoy outside of work?

I love spending time with and training my pack of dogs. I enjoy hiking, horseback riding, and catching live music shows when I can. Living in Colorado provides ample opportunity for outdoor adventure that my pack and I are always excited to take advantage of. We recently hiked Saint Mary's glacier and had a wonderful time. My shop dog, a 2-year-old female Kelpie named Nalani tackled the hike with ease and put the rest of my pack and myself to shame.

What is your favorite piece of turf equipment of all time?

The pieces that run!! Jokes aside, I personally enjoy working on the Toro Reelmaster 5410D's. They are more spacious in the engine compartment than smaller units, I enjoy the simplicity of diesel fuel systems, the reels are hardy, and I love how good the cut looks when everything is just right. I, however, believe that more important than any piece of equipment is the team you work with. I am lucky to have an amazing superintendent and assistants' superintendents, a motivated shop assistant, and a highly skilled team of professional operators. This combination is what makes the stress of keeping all our equipment in good shape and reacting to breakdowns/damage much easier to manage.



MARY SAWYER

Equipment Manager Spotlight

By Mary B. Sawyer, Class EM, Denver Country Club

When do you prefer spin grind, relief grind, or backlap?

I am relatively new to the golf industry and very interested in developing a comprehensive grind program. For now, we do not have relief grind capabilities in my shop. We anticipate a grinder update with this season's budget approval, and I look forward to incorporating relief grinds into our program then. Currently we spin grind as soon as quality of cut diminishes. We back lap in between spin grinds to hone our edges and extend the interval between spin grinds. Our sand mowers are currently back lapped most frequently, and I plan to incorporate bed knife facing into their grind program to increase longevity.

Do you lease or own equipment, and what are the pros and cons of either?

We currently own all of our equipment, which I personally prefer. The last course I worked at leased a lot of their equipment. Leasing was nice when the shop was overwhelmed with repairs/services because most issues can be treated as warranties and handed off to the Lessor to handle when needed. The downfall I personally experienced with leased equipment was the return maintenance/repair requirements, depending on the intensity of use and resulting damages. Unfortunately, most of my experience with leased equipment came at the end of the lease terms for several carts that were in terrible condition. This meant we needed to execute a bunch of repairs on equipment that would no longer be available to us, which was a burden on the shop's labor and budget that season. I personally prefer ownership of our equipment as I believe the value in equity is much higher when properly maintained. But depending on your courses buy out options and lease terms, I can see the value in frequent equipment upgrades with lease packages and quicker shop turnaround. I think I am just old school in mentality. I would rather own something, take great care of it, and reap the benefits of that care for as many operational hours as possible. This is a point of pride for me as a mechanic though I see the value in lease packages as well.

What is one piece of equipment you consider a monumental innovation to golf course maintenance?

Again, being relatively young in the field of golf course equipment repair, I do not have as much experience with innovations as most of the EM's I look up to. The EM that trained me spoke frequently about the value of triplex/triflex cutting units on course labor, which I acknowledge. My current and previous shop ran all red reels, and the value of Toro's DPA innovation is evident in our everyday operations. I believe DPA reels streamline reel adjustments and make a deeper understanding of those adjustments more accessible to novice equipment managers like me.

Equipment Manager Spotlight

By Mary B. Sawyer, Class EM, Denver Country Club

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

Two things really sold me on the golf industry. First the dog friendly nature of our work. Second is the welcoming nature of our community. I have worked in several niche mechanical fields and there is often a level of competition between technicians that inhibits the sharing of information and professional development of less experienced technicians. I have found that golf equipment managers are the exact opposite. The equipment manager's community has been extremely welcoming and supportive. There are so many resources from course work and training to international and local group chats. The one piece of advice I would share with someone interested in this area of course maintenance is to take advantage of those resources. Go to the classes you are interested in, network with the subject matter experts at conventions and association events, join the chat group, attend functions, and participate in your local and national Associations. I have found that when dealing with the most difficult issues in our shop these resources are beyond helpful. The ready and willing nature of EMs to support other EMs is somewhat unique to golf and is one of the many reasons I love working in this area. It has been a powerful tool and motivator for me and my shop.

Energy drink or coffee, and how much a day?

Coffee, too much

What tool is absolutely essential for every golf course mechanic?

My analog Accu-gauge, both bed knife and groomers, is the most essential tool in my shop. Grinders and pi-tapes are obviously a necessity but the HOC gauge reigns supreme. We are hyper focused on ACA and course conditions in our shop. Not only does the Accu-gauge enable us to consistently set and maintain HOC across our fleet it also allows me to make on the spot corrections as needed on course which allows us to tightly control consistency with every cut. Although I rank the accu-gauge highly I feel negligent not mentioning my hydraulic equipment lift as it was down for a couple of months this season which taught us its supreme value when up. A functioning equipment lift reduces repair/maintenance/and cut check time significantly which speeds up shop operations and has a ton of value for equipment managers.

Director's Corner

By Ben Getman, Class A, Denver Country Club

The Value of Attending the Local and National Conferences

As the season winds down and we turn our thoughts towards 2027, it is important to keep in mind that the growth does not stop, even after the mowing ends. The offseason brings time to connect with our colleagues, refresh our mindset, and expand our arsenal of turfgrass tools. Attending the RMGCSA Annual Conference and the GCSAA National Conference is a great way to do all three.

Our RMGCSA Conference Committee has worked tirelessly to recruit a fantastic lineup of relevant and informative speakers. Covering a wide range of golf course and career related topics, this is an outstanding conference where every attendee will benefit personally and professionally. It is filled with excellent opportunities to catch up with colleagues, share scars of the season, learn some new tips, and reflect on the past few months with a little less noise around. I have been fortunate to attend this conference for many years, and after each one I feel a more meaningful connection to the local profession. Packed with incredible insight, a cache of comradery, a bountiful spread of BBQ, beer, and Monday Night Football, the RMGCSA conference is short and sweet.

The GCSAA National Conference is a whole other animal. This weeklong educational conference and tradeshow bring together industry professionals from all around the world. Loaded with several different educational tracks, GCSAA provides an enormous program of learning and career development opportunities. This event costs more than the RMGCSA, but I have never left the annual conference feeling short changed. Just like everything in life, you get out what you put in. It took me a year or two to figure this out, but the intuition and comprehension I have gained from these classes, tutorials, and tradeshows has greatly benefited my career. In addition to education, the networking that happens at GCSAA is amazing. Every year I run into past coworkers, interns, and longtime friends. I get to put faces to names and voices of nonlocal vendors. I have met new people every year, many of which I have engaged with post conferences. Our industry is chalked full of passionate, friendly, and insightful people. We all have our own unique challenges, successes, and areas for improvement, but the sharing of stories, hearing what others have dealt with, and how they go about getting the job done at the highest level is always extraordinary and awe-inspiring. When the conference concludes we all go back to our courses, taking with us an engrained sense of involvement, knowing we depend upon each other.

Superintendents, Assistants, Equipment Managers, and golf course staff are the future of our industry, and these conferences are an investment in theirs.

THREE STIPEND OPPORTUNITIES

*Invest in Your Professional Growth.
We'll Help You Get There.*

RMGCSA is proud to invest in our members through three stipend programs that promote leadership, education, and engagement.

1

RMGCSA NATIONAL GOLF DAY STIPEND



HELD EACH YEAR IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Support the future of the golf industry by representing RMGCSA at National Golf Day. Two (2) annual stipends are available to assist eligible applicants with travel and lodging expenses.

\$ TWO \$1,000 STIPENDS
to assist with travel and lodging expenses

HELD EACH YEAR
Early May in Washington, D.C.

WHO CAN APPLY
Active RMGCSA members

REIMBURSEMENT
Submit within 30 days after the event with receipts and supporting documentation

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES INCLUDE:

- ✓ Transportation to and from the event
- ✓ Lodging accommodations during the event
- ✓ Meals, entertainment, and other incidental expenses that eligible for reimbursement)

APPLICATION PRIORITY ORDER:

1. Executive Board Members
2. Government/Legislative Committee Members
3. RMGCSA Board of Directors



Enhance representation of the Rocky Mountain Chapter at the national level while supporting our volunteer leadership.

2

RMGCSA GCSAA TRADE SHOW AND CONFERENCE STIPEND



RMGCSA is proud to support members attending the GCSAA National Trade Show and Conference. Two stipends are available to help with attendance at the largest golf industry event.

\$ TWO \$2,000 STIPENDS
for two (2) members (Class A, B, C, D, or EM)

GCSAA NATIONAL TRADE SHOW & CONFERENCE
the industry's largest educational event

WHO CAN APPLY
Active RMGCSA members

REIMBURSEMENT
Submit within 30 days after the event with receipts for conference & education registration, travel expenses, and lodging (ess)

APPLICATION IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED SCALE:

- ✓ What Class are you currently and is your membership active?
- ✓ How long have you been a member of the RMGCSA?
- ✓ Have you have to the GCSAA conference in the past? If so, how many times?
- ✓ Have you served on a RMGCSA committee?
- ✓ Why is attending the GCSAA National Conference important to you?



Expand your knowledge, build connections, and bring back value to the Rocky Mountain Chapter.

3

RMGCSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE STIPEND



RMGCSA is committed to member engagement and professional development through our Annual Conference. Two stipends are available to help with registration and hotel expenses.

\$ TWO \$750 STIPENDS
for two (2) members (Class A, B, C, D, or EM)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
held each November

WHO CAN APPLY
Active RMGCSA members at both time of application and conference; First time attendees encouraged

REIMBURSEMENT
Submit within 30 days after the conference with receipts for registration package & hotel expenses.

IMPORTANT DETAILS:

- ✓ Applicants must be active members at both the time of application and the time of the conference.
- ✓ Recipients will be reimbursed for eligible conference registration expenses upon submission of required receipts and supporting documentation.
- ✓ Current RMGCSA Board and RMEGI Board members are not eligible.



Stronger participation. Greater representation. A Stronger Rocky Mountain Chapter.



TOGETHER, WE ELEVATE OUR PROFESSION.

Thank you for your continued support, participation, and dedication to the Association.





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Field Spencer
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Affiliate Angle

By Cooper Michel, Class AF, United Ag & Turf Golf

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

I am a Sales Representative for United Ag & Turf Golf and have been in the role for about four months. United Ag & Turf recently took over the existing John Deere Golf dealership in Colorado, so it has been an exciting few months getting the operation up and running and getting to know our customers.

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

Our shop is located at 5353 Sherman Street in Denver—right next to the Grizzly Rose. I cover the northern portion of Colorado from the eastern border all the way to the Western Slope. I-70 is a rough dividing line for the territory, although I also cover several areas south of it, including the entire Eagle/Vail Valley and Roaring Fork Valley.

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

I think our biggest responsibility is simple: provide our customers with the best service we possibly can. That means being responsive, following through on what we say we are going to do, and providing quick turnaround on equipment, parts and service. Equipment managers and superintendents need a partner they can depend on, and our goal is to earn that trust.

We are just getting started with our involvement in RMGCSA, but we've really enjoyed it so far. We've attended several industry events, had a blast at all of them, and are looking forward to finding more ways to get involved and support the association.



Cooper Michel

What might we be surprised to know about your company?

We're big! United Ag & Turf is the largest John Deere dealer in the country, with more than 49 locations across Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. We are also the exclusive John Deere Golf dealer throughout those three states and sell John Deere construction equipment out east. Having that network behind us gives our Colorado Golf operation access to a lot of resources, helps us turn around equipment orders quickly and gives us access to a healthy used-equipment inventory.

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

I attended Kansas State University and graduated with a B.S. in Agronomy with an emphasis in Golf Course and Sports Turf Management.

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

I got my start in the golf industry in 2012 as a crew member at Cypress Ridge Golf Course in Topeka, Kansas. From there, I eventually made my way to Colorado and spent several years as an Assistant Superintendent at Roaring Fork Club in Basalt before moving to the manufacturer side of the business with Rain Bird and, now, United Ag & Turf. Along the way, I've also had the opportunity to volunteer at several PGA events, which has given me the chance to see another side of the industry.

What I enjoy most about this business is definitely the people. Many of my closest friends are people I've had the privilege of working alongside over the years. It's a relatively small industry, and the relationships you build are a big part of what makes it so enjoyable. Plus, it's hard not to have a good time on a golf course!

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

My wife, Emily, and I met while I was working at Roaring Fork Club in Basalt and she was working for the Aspen School District. We've now been married for five years and have a two-year-old daughter, Blair. These days, most of our free time is spent chasing her around. We take just about any chance we get to "Go Outside," as Blair demands, and spend a lot of time hanging out with our neighbors in the alley.

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 in the past 5-10 years?

One of the biggest changes I've seen is how much more data is being used to make agronomic and operational decisions—and how much technology has developed to support it. Crew management systems, fleet maintenance tracking, precision irrigation and all kinds of other software have really changed the way golf courses operate.

Having worked on the golf course side and then for manufacturers, it's been interesting to watch that technology evolve and see how quickly it has become part of everyday course management.

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

Absolutely! First off, they're fun. More importantly, they give everyone in the industry a chance to get together, share ideas, learn from each other and build relationships. Especially being relatively new in my current role, they've been a great opportunity to reconnect with people I already know and meet a lot of new people along the way.

What would you like other people to know about RMGCSA?

This group really does support each other, and I've seen that time and time again. It's much more than just a place to pick up your CECs. It's a community of people who are willing to share their experiences, help each other out and make the industry better.

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

Mother Nature!

- This year has been a pretty good reminder of that. Between the dry, warm winter and the extreme heat and lack of rain this summer, superintendents across the state have certainly had their hands full.

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

I've had the opportunity to see a few facilities that have started transitioning portions of their equipment fleets to electric. There are certainly areas of the state where we could eventually see more pressure or requirements to move toward electric equipment, so getting to see facilities that are already heading in that direction has been a great learning experience.

It's especially interesting to see what works well, where the limitations still are, and how those facilities are adapting their operations around the technology.



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Annual Conference

Dear Valued Members,

We cordially invite you to join us for the 10th Annual RMGCSA Conference. We have created this compelling event to bring more value to your RMGCSA membership. This event is a convenient, cost effective, and fun opportunity to earn your educational credits in an atmosphere that is tailored specifically for our membership.

This two-day event includes education as well as table top displays brought to you by our affiliate partners. Day one will start with breakfast, registration, and message from the incoming RMGCSA Board of Directors. This will be followed by a lineup of engaging speakers. These speakers will present a wide range of golf course and career related topics. Following the days' education there will be a welcome reception linking BBQ, games, and Monday Night Football. This reception will provide an opportunity for sponsors to meet with superintendents to discuss products and continue fostering relationships with the membership.

Day two will offer a breakfast that will provide additional opportunities for members to network and catch up with seldom seen friends. RMGCSA is excited to offer this event to our membership as an opportunity to learn and network. We think this is an outstanding conference where every member will find something which will benefit them personally and professionally. Prior to the event on Monday there will be a "pre-game" social event on Sunday night at 6:30. This is an "on your own" event but a great opportunity to talk shop with your peers. RMGCSA looks forward to seeing you again at the 2026 event, it has become one of our most popular and successful events.

Sincerely,

Joe Kunze, CGCS, RMGCSA President, City of Arvada

Hotel Information



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Upcoming Events



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<u>Annual Conference</u>	November 15th- 17th Denver Marriott West

To Find More Information and Register
for the Annual Conference Visit:

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