



# 2021 Special Awards Banquet

Celebrating our  
2019 & 2020 Special Award Winners  
&  
2021 Hall of Fame Inductee

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Thursday November 11, 2021  
Albany Country Club

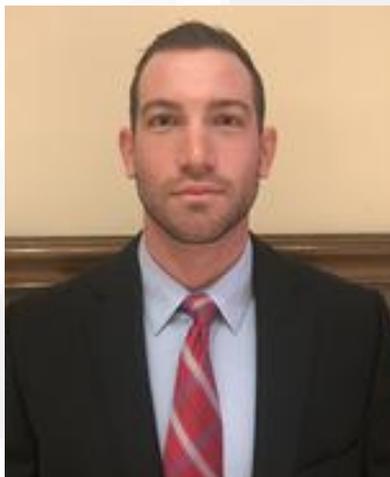


**PGA**

Northeastern New York Section

## ASSISTANT GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR - 2019

**Robert Jorgensen, PGA Assistant Golf Professional  
Saratoga National Golf Club**



Robert Jorgensen grew up in New Hartford, New York, and was introduced to the game of golf by his father, award-winning PGA Professional Mark Jorgensen. Robert played golf for New Hartford High School and attended Campbell University, where he completed the PGA Golf Management University Program.

He has been a PGA Member for four years and started his golf career in the South Florida PGA Section. Of his greatest achievements thus far, he cites completing his college education and attaining membership in the PGA of America. The highlight of his career, however, is the first time he beat his dad, Mark in a round of golf.

Jorgensen is TPI-certified and has attained PGA specialization in Teaching & Coaching, as well as in Golf Operations.

Robert cites his father, Mark, as a mentor who still inspires him to grow as a person and attain his goals.

## ASSISTANT GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR - 2020

**Christian Torres, Director of Operations  
Northeastern New York PGA Section**

Christian Torres grew up in Galway, New York and picked up the game of golf when he was 25, after playing at a local Executive course with some friends. Christian didn't play golf through his academic years, though he says he wishes he had. He says this drives him to introduce the game to as many juniors as possible through the programs facilitated within the Section.

Torres cites some well-know NENY Professionals as having helped him during his early years in the industry. Individuals such as Anders Mattson, Peter Tavares, Keith Sprenger and North Florida PGA Professional Brian Dorn, from Bay Hill, have all played a significant role in his career progression. Not having been in the game during his youth, Torres realized a bit later than some that he wanted to make golf his career, and he hasn't looked back, now a member of the Professional Golf Management Associate Program.

Christian says his greatest attributes are his abilities to learn, deliver and foster the connections necessary for success in golf. "I pride myself in my ability to teach all skill levels, allowing all golfers to get better," he says. He also has a newfound passion for tournament operations, with communication and organization also being vital traits he possesses.

Torres recently assumed a new title and now has a hand in just about everything that the Section does. He also enjoys teaching when not consumed with tournament operations, junior golf, membership responsibilities and attention to the Section's Foundation that was launched last year.

"This award means a lot to me and is a stepping stone towards my further career goals," he says. "It is an award that I have been striving for and it tells me I'm on the right path to achieving my future endeavors." He says he can't take all the credit and reiterates the gratitude he has for his mentors at Saratoga National, Bay Hill and the rest of the NENY PGA.

Christian Torres lives in Albany with his wife, Holly Meredith. The newlyweds recently got married on October 21.



## ROLAND STAFFORD AWARD - 2019

### Justin Hearley, PGA Assistant Professional Normanside Country Club



Justin Hearley grew up in Albany and started playing golf at the age of 14. Hearley's father and grandfather enjoyed the game, but it wasn't until his first lesson with Steve Vatter at Capital Hills that Justin, a multi-sport athlete at the time, considered a future in the game. He attended Christian Brothers Academy in Colonie and pursued the Professional Golf Management Program at SUNY Delhi, along with his roommate Ian Kelley, now a PGA Member in the New England Section..

Hearley says there was no "a ha moment" when he realized what he wanted to do in the golf industry, but he does admit getting hooked on the game as a teen and young man. He worked for Tom DeBerry and Erik Smith, getting sound advice from both professionals and credits Brian Hampson with teaching him the ins and outs of being a PGA Professional – "what to do and what not to do", as he put it.

Before winning the 2019 NENY PGA Roland Stafford Award, Justin earned two Section Assistant Professional of the Year Awards and was the 2018 NENY PGA Assistant Player of the Year. Justin served on the NENY PGA Assistant's Committee for several years and is now a member of the Education Committee.

Hearley is passionate about teaching and wants to leave the game better than when he started, a commitment to growing the game. Justin credit his grandfather, Louis Rossi with driving his passion for golf. "He introduced me to the game and always helped push me to work hard and give it everything," says Hearley. Justin stays focused with his grandfather in mind – "See it, Feel it, Trust it" he used to tell him. That quote is imprinted on Justin's golf balls.

Hearley lives in Guilderland with his wife Maria and their son Caiden, who turned one in August.

## ROLAND STAFFORD AWARD - 2020

### Kyle Kressler, Owner Cedar View Golf Club

Kyle Kressler grew up in Cincinnatus, New York and started playing golf when he was five years old. His father, an outstanding golfer in his own right, introduced Kyle to the game, and he'd go on to play in high school.

"I grew up around PGA Professionals my entire life, and knew in my teens that I wanted to play professionally. I realized at 22 that I wanted to grow the game and make a positive impact on the sport that I loved so much," Kressler says.

Kyle cites PGA Professional, Tom Sullivan as providing much guidance and mentorship over the past five years, before his passing last year.

Kyle is proud of his ability to teach others and loves to see his students have more fun, while playing better golf. He also takes pride in his fundraising efforts using the resources he has in golf. As the owner of Cedar View Golf Club, golfers will regularly see Kyle mowing the course in the morning, manning the golf shop in the afternoon and tending bar during dinner. He wears many hats!

"This award means the world to me because it is an award that symbolizes everything that Doug Evans and Tom Sullivan were to the game of golf and to their peers. It makes me so very proud to receive this award. I just hope to someday have even half the impact that they had on the game," Kressler expressed so eloquently.

Kyle Kressler lives in Massena, New York with his girlfriend Ashley and his dog Bear.



## PGA PATRIOT AWARD - 2019

Brad Gardner, PGA Head Professional  
The Edison Club



"Do the right thing, because it's the right thing to do." This is not just a credo that Brad Gardner learned from his grandfather as a young man, but a way of living your life. Gardner just completed his 6th season as PGA Head Professional at The Edison Club.

The man who grew up playing golf in Chittenango, New York had two early mentors who taught him how to swing a golf club, and also what it means to be a PGA Professional. He credits Jack Conger of The Links at Erie Village and Richard Winstead of Woodcrest Golf Club with guiding his path to a career in golf.

When Brad was a child, his dad was an airline pilot, sometimes leaving his mother without daycare. One of those occasions coincided with her ladies' league match one afternoon - so she brought him along. She handed him a golf club that had been cut down to kids' size and the rest is history. By the time he was 12, Brad knew golf would be his future.

The Patriot Award is a special acknowledgment of the good work a PGA Professional does for the heroes who sometimes go unheralded. Since 2018, Gardner has participated in a Golf Marathon to raise money for Folds of Honor, an organization whose mission is "To provide educational scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled service members". Gardner played 171 holes in 2018 and raised \$21,000. In 2019, he played 204 holes and raised \$30,000. In 2020, Gardner played an astounding 366 holes of golf in one day and raised \$54,000.

He further credits PGA Professionals E.J. McDonnell of Bonita Bay Club in Naples, Florida, C.J. Talbert of Metacomet Country Club in East Providence, Rhode Island, and his own General Manager and Director of Golf at The Edison Club, Craig McLean, for guiding his career in a positive direction, leading to this first Northeastern New York PGA Section Award.

Gardner expresses his appreciation to his NENY PGA colleagues, his team at The Edison Club and the members they serve in Rexford, New York. He loves what he does and looks forward to many great years growing the game of golf and doing good for America's fallen heroes.

## PGA PATRIOT AWARD - 2020

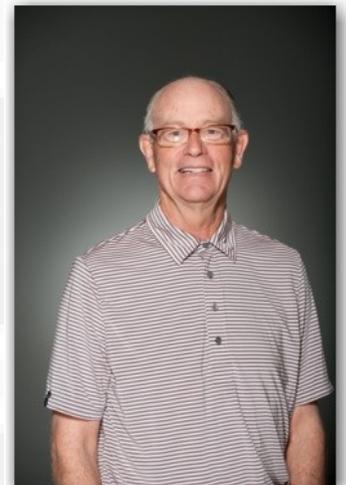
Brian Lowe, PGA Head Professional  
Catskill Golf Resort

Brian Lowe grew up in Carlinville, Illinois and started playing golf with his father at the age of four. He played his first tournament at the age of seven and finished 2nd to a 16-year-old. Lowe cites his dad as being an integral part of his maturation and continued enjoyment of the game. Also, PGA Life Member Homero Blancas Jr. was a mentor who helped him hone his skills when Lowe was living in Tucson, Arizona.

Lowe played golf in high school and was the captain of the University of Tulsa golf team during his collegiate years in the Missouri Valley Conference. Lowe says it was 1989 when he knew he wanted to pursue a career in golf, and cites Bill Gressick, Dave Rarich and former PGA of America President, Derek Sprague, as individuals whose advice in the business helped guide his success.

Lowe has enjoyed two stints at Catskill Golf Resort for a total of 16 years, as well as 15 years at Windham Country Club. While at Windham, Brian was introduced to Adaptive Sports Foundation, which led to his involvement with our nation's military personnel who have suffered physical and mental health issues. He now facilitates the understanding that golf provides a nucleus of recovery and enjoyment of life. His knowledge and experiences playing at golf's highest levels, along with his friendly attitude and travels are a few of his most important traits. Brian takes a great deal of pride in this award, as it is validation of his dedication to supporting the military. Doing so through golf is an added bonus.

Brian lives in Cairo, New York and enjoys the winter months at his home in Vero Beach, Florida.



## MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR (PUBLIC) - 2019

### Brian Hampson, PGA Director of Golf Normanside Country Club



Brian Hampson grew up in Averill Park, New York and was introduced to the game of golf through a summer job at Burden Lake Country Club after his freshman year of high school. In a “circle of life” moment, he would return there years later to serve as the facility’s Head Professional. Hampson credits Burden Lake Country Club owner and PGA Professional, Ron Choquette, as being an early mentor. “Ron was passionate about the game and one of the most outgoing and caring people I have ever met.” Brian would work at Burden Lake through high school and college.

Hampson played Eastern New York Golf Association events and other local junior tournaments, though his high school had no golf program at the time. He’d attend Hudson Valley Community College and SUNY Cortland, and after two years working out of golf, he realized that he wanted to be a PGA Professional. He was fortunate to have two more PGA Professional mentors in Chas Conrad at Shaker Ridge Country Club and the late NENY PGA Hall of Fame member, Tom DeBerry. “I use the lessons these two great professionals taught me every day. I was able to spend many hours with Tom during the last year of his life, and he was still helping me grow right up to the final weeks of his life. I am honored to call both of these gentlemen friends.”

As the PGA Director of Golf at Normanside Country Club, Brian oversees all golf operations, providing the highest levels of customer service. He considers member retention and acquisition vital aspects of his job. Hampson humbly says his strongest attributes are his organizational and communication skills.

He and his wife, Rima, have two children, Olivia, who attends Siena College and Owen, who is a senior at Albany Academy.

“It is always an honor to be recognized by your peers for a job well done. All awards, however, would not be possible without the help of our great staff!”

## MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR (PUBLIC) - 2020

### Ryan Butterick, PGA Head Professional Greenock Country Club

Ryan Butterick was born in Memphis, Tennessee and moved to Atlanta, Georgia when he was 14 years old. He started playing golf when a neighbor in Memphis built a set of clubs for his 12th birthday. He played casually with friends at a local public course at first, and then joined a club in Atlanta soon after moving there. He developed a serious interest in the game that first summer living in Georgia. He started working at Olde Atlanta Golf Club when he was 16 and played for his St. Pius X Catholic High School team from 1995 to 1999.

His first mentor in the game was Mark Williams, the PGA General Manager at Olde Atlanta Golf Club. Interestingly, Williams was a neighbor of Ryan’s dad when his father was a boy growing up in Memphis. In addition, Louie Bartoletti, the PGA General Manager at Wellington Golf and Country Club in Florida, where Ryan was an Assistant Professional from 2006 to 2007, has remained a friend and mentor. He then worked under PGA Professional Justin Thompson at The Wanderers Club from 2007 to 2014, where Thompson was integral in helping Ryan successfully navigate the extensive bookwork involved in attaining PGA Membership.

Butterick says his experience at Olde Atlanta fostered his desire to become a PGA Professional. He learned about organization, leadership, running large events and developing relationships – and he loved to play the game.

Ryan cites his work ethic, relationships and networking skills as his greatest attributes. He has a continuous desire to learn about the business of golf and is not afraid to seek advice and guidance from the seasoned PGA Professionals who have helped pave the way to his award-winning career.

He’s honored to receive this award and is proud and thankful to be recognized by his peers in the Northeastern New York PGA Section.

Ryan Butterick lives in Berkshire, Massachusetts with his new bride Sarah – they got married in March.



## MERCHANTISER OF THE YEAR (PRIVATE) - 2019

**Mark Jorgensen, PGA Head Professional  
Shaker Ridge Country Club**



Mark Jorgensen grew up in New Hartford, New York and started playing golf at the age of seven. Mark's father was a member of The Skenandoa Club in Clinton when NENY Hall of Fame Member Rick Wright was the PGA Head Professional. Jorgensen cites Wright and PGA of America Hall of Fame Member and 2010 PGA Golf Professional of the Year Jim Mrva as early mentors in his development in golf.

Mark played high school golf at New Hartford High School, where he took home a NYS High School Championship, and later played at Western Kentucky University, Edison Community College and Florida International University. It was a few years after college that Mark knew he wanted to pursue a career in golf.

Jorgensen was the 2002 Central New York PGA Golf Professional of the Year and celebrates his fifth Merchandiser of the Year Award this evening. These awards notwithstanding, Jorgensen says he is even prouder of the Mohawk Community College athletic facility being named after his father, Robert R. Jorgensen.

Mark treats everyone equally and fair, the way everyone should be treated in life, and is inspired by other golf professionals who do their job with skill and pride.

He lives in Saratoga Springs with his wife Diane. They have three children – Robert, Sam and Mia.

## MERCHANTISER OF THE YEAR (RESORT) - 2020

**Dave Cummings, PGA Director of Golf  
The Sagamore Resort and Golf Club**

Dave Cummings grew up in Lake Luzerne, New York, and played his first round of golf after graduating from college. That debut took place at Brookhaven Golf Club, and Cummings says he lost no less than 18 golf balls that day.

Having not touched a golf club until his early '20s, Dave didn't have any early mentors who reared him in the basics of the game at an early age, but he does cite Bob Pomeroy and PGA Life Member, Tom Smack, as having guided him during his early days as a professional in golf. Fifteen years and four Merchandiser of the Year Awards later, Cummings celebrates his great success with his colleagues in the Northeastern New York PGA tonight.

"I try to make every guest feel special, and take great pride in being able to communicate with the owners of our facility, as well as the rest of the staff on hand. They know that my door is always open for them," Cummings comments. Dave handles the budgeting, purchasing and staffing for the entire golf course operation, and says that it's an honor being acknowledged by his peers.

Dave Cummings lives in Queensbury with his wife, Sherry and daughters, Alexis and Christina.



## MERCHANTISER OF THE YEAR PRIVATE - 2020

**Todd Manderson, PGA Director of Golf  
Ballston Spa Country Club**



# PGA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD - 2019

**Rick Wolcott, PGA Head Professional  
Mohawk Golf Club**



Rick Wolcott got into the game of golf at the age of nine when he started caddying for his father's employer. Growing up in Schenectady, Rick attended Linton High School (now Schenectady High School) and would go on to captain the Hudson Valley Community College golf team.

Rick cites some important early mentors in getting him interested in the game, including NENY PGA Hall of Fame Members Armand Farina, Bob Haggerty and John Maurycy. These men taught him about life, as well as how to dress and act like a golf professional. He learned how to teach the golf swing by watching them work with their students.

It was during his second year at HVCC, when he was 19 years old, that he knew he wanted to be a golf professional. Now, after more than 47 years as a PGA Member, Rick has earned several Northeastern New York PGA Section awards, including the Resort Merchandiser of the Year award in 1995, the Roland Stafford award in 2015 and the Section's Golf Professional of the Year honor in 2016. The 2019 PGA Professional Development Award is the latest honor of his stellar career.

Rick says there are a lot of talented professionals in the NENY PGA Section and winning awards are just a residual effect of giving members and customers your best every day. It is his passion for the game that drives his efforts, rather than the awards and accolades.

He is currently enjoying his second stint as the PGA Head Professional at Mohawk Golf Club. Located right there in his hometown, Mohawk is where he caddied as a child and learned the ropes as an assistant professional just out of HVCC. With a century of history, Mohawk Golf Club is a staple in our area, and Rick Wolcott is just as treasured, as a leader and mentor of golf professionals in New York State. He has also served our Section on several committees.

Wolcott lives in nearby Niskayuna, and thanks his partner, Deborah Bremm, and his step-daughters, Ashley, Jenna and Brittney, as well as grandkids for their support.

## PGA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD - 2020

**Anders Mattson, Owner  
Anders Mattson Golf**

Anders Mattson grew up in Queensbury, New York and started playing golf when he was eight years old. The majority of those early golf swings came right in his backyard, before spending many of his childhood hours teaching himself how to play the game. Mattson played golf in high school and participated in the golf intramural program at Furman University, where he graduated in 2002.

Anders started working at Saratoga National Golf Club right after his graduation from Furman. "In lieu of going on the job search, I maintained a position there and had a great 18 years," Mattson says. As a result, Anders cites the club's PGA Director of Golf Peter Tavares, whom he worked with for almost two decades, as a mentor who helped guide him in many aspects of the golf business. In addition, Mattson has traveled and met many of the great golf coaches in the game. He says they have all inspired him in some way. While at Saratoga National Golf Club, he helped form the Saratoga National Golf Academy and coached more than 60 long-term junior golfers who have competed on the local, regional and national stage, including the Drive, Chip & Putt National Finals at Augusta National Golf Club.



Anders is the owner and founder of AndersMattsonGolf, located at Saratoga Golf Studio in Saratoga Springs. A three-time NENY PGA Teacher of the Year, Mattson has also been recognized by Golf Digest magazine as one of the "Best Young Teachers in America" (2017 and 2019) and "Best Teachers" in New York State (2016 and 2018). Mattson earned his Class A certification with the PGA in 2009 and later added certifications with Titleist Performance Institute (TPI Level 3 Certified Golf Professional), AimPoint and TrackMan (Level 2 Certified Professional).

"I enjoy sharing the information that I have learned with other golf professionals. In doing so, I hope the game will be in a better place," Anders says. "Being recognized by my peers is something I have always taken a lot of pride in and I am happy to be a representative of the Northeastern New York PGA."

Anders Mattson lives in Saratoga Springs with his wife, Janice and daughters, Emelia and Andi.

## BILL STRAUSBAUGH AWARD - 2019

### Matt Daley, PGA Head Professional Schenectady Municipal Golf Course



Matt Daley grew up in Schenectady and was introduced to the game of golf at the age of 10. His dad was a long-time member of Shaker Ridge, and Matt was one of a group of junior golfers who would play 36 holes or more per day. After attending Linton High School (now Schenectady High School) and Hudson Valley Community College, Daley went to work in Florida to learn the business of golf. He would take a hands-on approach to merchandising, customer service and tournament administration. This is when Matt decided that being a golf professional would be the career choice for him.

Daley's early mentors include Chaz Conrad, a PGA Life Member from Shaker Ridge, Bob Haggerty of Schenectady Municipal and Herb Moreland of Western Turnpike, each of whom shaped the player Matt would become as a professional.

Chris Reiman was a head professional under whom Daley worked and learned many of the tools he implements to this day. Reiman was very hands on, but allowed Matt to get involved and express his thoughts and opinions.

Matt spent 13 seasons as an assistant professional at Schenectady Municipal Golf Course. After pursuing other avenues in the industry for 10 years, Daley returned and has served as PGA Head Professional since 2013. He has earned a series of NENY PGA Section awards, including two Assistant Professional of the Year Awards, a Youth Player Development Award, a PGA Professional Development Award and most recently, the 2019 Bill Strausbaugh Award that we celebrate this evening.

Matt's philosophy is that it doesn't cost anything to be nice to people. That kindness will often be returned. He sticks to that notion, understanding that you never know what someone is going through. So, smiling, being friendly and demonstrating one's knowledge as an expert in the game of golf is the least he can do.

Daley continues to call Schenectady home, where he lives with his wife, Liza and two children, Quinn and Reagan.

## BILL STRAUSBAUGH AWARD - 2020

### Tom Oppedisano, Head Golf Coach Skidmore College

Tom Oppedisano grew up in Niskayuna, Ballston Spa and Amsterdam and was introduced to the game of golf by his dad when Tom was only four years old. Tom learned the game and matured while participating in the Ballston Spa Country Club junior golf program. He played golf at Amsterdam High School and went to Clemson University on an Air Force ROTC scholarship.

Oppedisano cites Jim Hefti and PGA Professional Dave Craig as having impacted his early career choices, but says Mike Shpur had the biggest influence on him all those years ago.

Understanding the complexities and challenges of the industry, Tom strives to be the best in every aspect of the business of golf. He has completed many avenues of PGA Education, before focusing on golf operations, mentoring, teaching and playing.

"PGA Magazine did an article on me after I was the first PGA Professional to earn all six (at the time) Certified Professional Program categories as a "Renaissance Professional", trying to be good at everything to add value to my employer. That opened a lot of doors," Tom states proudly.

As the head golf coach at Skidmore College, Tom is responsible for recruiting, coaching and mentoring his student athletes on and off the course. He is a trusted resource to them as they go through their college years.

"This award is very meaningful to me for several reasons, but mostly because it recognizes the impact we can have on other people, be it golf professionals, other facilities, customers or the community. The business is difficult, and it is extremely challenging to find personal balance within it. To be able to navigate that balance and still have a positive impact is what life is all about," Tom expressed.

Tom Oppedisano lives in Clifton Park with his wife, Spectrum News Meteorologist, Heather Morrison Oppedisano and their two sons Tommy and Vincent.



# YOUTH PLAYER DEVELOPMENT - 2019



## Gerald Fitzgerald, Area Golf Trainer Dick's Sporting Goods



Gerald Fitzgerald grew up in Athlone County Westmeath in Ireland and played golf at Marist High School. From there, he went on to attend the College of Marketing and Design in Dublin. Gerald got his start in professional golf when his brother Conor, who is the superintendent at Van Schaick Island Country Club in Cohoes, encouraged him to take the Playing Ability Test.

Fitzgerald cites Donny Lyons, a PGA Professional at George Wright Golf in Boston, with providing valuable insight into the life of a PGA Professional. "I spent a day with Donny, starting at his home at 6:00 am for breakfast, until 7:00 that night," Gerald remarked. "I will always remember his kind words when he sat me down that evening and spoke candidly about the business of golf."

Gerald has worked at Dick's Sporting Goods for more than two decades, where he is responsible for establishing and maintain customer service standards related to custom fittings and club repair, including maximizing sales and profitability and controlling payroll and expenses.

"As a Town of Colonie PGA Jr. League Captain, I am responsible for creating a welcoming environment for all girls and boys – one that encourages fun and character development."

Fitzgerald previously worked in the New England PGA Section as an assistant professional, manager and PGA Head Professional.

Gerald enjoys exercise, chess and a musical instrument called the tin whistle. He says if he could meet anyone living or dead, he'd choose his very own dad, who unfortunately passed away when Gerry was only three years old.

Fitzgerald's longevity and breadth of experience is something to be proud of. However, he is most proud of his kids. "They are great ambassadors for the game of golf. Hannah played in college. Fiona made it to the semi-finals of the Drive, Chip & Putt in Boston and my son, Ian plays golf for Shaker High School.

Gerald Fitzgerald lives in Latham with his wife June and their three kids.

## YOUTH PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AWARD - 2020



### Lucas Cohen, Owner and PGA Head Professional New York Golf Park

Lucas Cohen was born in Hudson, New York and moved to Hollywood, Florida at the age of seven. He was introduced to the game of golf when he was three years old when his grandfather cut down a set of clubs for him to use.

He took some lessons at a young age from Arnie Finkel and PGA Member in the South Florida Section, John Bungert. Cohen played on the Cooper City High School team and went to the state championships in 1993. After a few years in other ventures, Lucas got back into golf and attended the Professional Golfer Career College in California in 2001 and 2002. He says he knew he wanted a career in golf after graduating from college and went to PGCC to further his dreams.

Cohen is the owner and head professional at NY Golf Park, where he teaches and hosts golf camps and clinics. He also founded the Playground Golf Foundation, where he organizes golf in school programs in Columbia and Greene Counties. Lucas is also the U.S. Kids Hudson Valley Summer Tournament Director, running eight events throughout the upper Hudson Valley.

Lucas says he's learned so much from so many, and cites Brad Benson, Sean Kicker, Steve Voguit, Chad Middaugh, Eric Mabee, Peter Busch and Peter Maassmann as being instrumental in his growth in the game.

Cohen affirms the life lessons that golf can teach all of us and promotes optimism throughout adversity, taking the good with the bad and finding solutions to problems. He teaches the game in a manner that is simple and understandable to the beginner, but is technical enough to see progress, even in his most skilled students.

"It is nice to be recognized by my peers for the work that I do," he says. "I am very passionate about growing the game, as it has given me so much purpose in life."

Lucas splits his time between Hudson from spring to fall and Hollywood, Florida during the winter. He has two children, Sager age 13 and McKinley age 9.



## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AWARD - 2019

**Bob Cain, PGA Director of Instruction  
Saratoga National Golf Club**



Bob Cain grew up in Clifton Park and was introduced to the game of golf by members of his family who had been playing for years. Bob attended Catholic Central High School in Troy and followed that up with four years at The College of Saint Rose in Albany.

Through his career, Bob has worked at two of the finest clubs in New York – Westchester Country Club and Saratoga National Golf Club. In addition to his instruction duties at Saratoga National, Cain also teaches at Anders Mattson Golf in Saratoga Springs, specializing in junior golf and winter programming. He holds various certifications from the PGA of America and U.S. Kids Golf.

“This award is a reflection of my students’ success, which is important to me,” Cain reflects.

Bob Cain lives in Saratoga Springs with his wife Tricia and their son Patrick.

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AWARD - 2020

**Dan Gaucher, PGA Assistant Professional  
Shaker Ridge Country Club**

Dan Gaucher grew up in Willimantic, Connecticut. His father, brother and grandfather were golfers, and he’d “tag along” for as long as Dan can remember. In fact, Gaucher grew up just a few hundred yards from a golf course, so it’s all he remembers doing. He played golf at Windham High School and graduated in 2005.

Dan cites several golf professionals as shaping his philosophies in golf, including John Boucher, Jon Cote, Mike Adams and Terry Rowles. “From a professional standpoint, I can’t thank Peter Tavares at Saratoga National for his friendship and mentorship,” he adds.

As an assistant professional, Gaucher runs various player development programs, assists with the facility’s golf shop merchandising efforts and serves members however he can. Dan confirmed that he likes to ask questions and fully understand everything.

He says that winning an award like this reassures him that he’s on the right track when it comes to growing the game.

Dan Gaucher lives in Latham with his wife Meredith and daughters, Lily and Elizabeth.



## SALES REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR - 2019

Alex Smith, Sales Representative  
Greg Norman



Alex Smith grew up in Barneveld, New York, a hamlet of 280 residents located about 20 minutes north of Utica. The youngest of five kids, Alex started playing golf at the age of 13 before getting his first job in the industry at Thendara Golf Club when he was 15 years old. He played one year of high school golf at Holland Patent High School and graduated from the Mississippi State University Professional Golf Management Program in 1996.

Alex was the 2017 Greg Norman Rookie Sales Representative of the Year and the company's 2018 Sales Representative of the Year, becoming the first to repeat that feat in 2019. He also earned the Central New York PGA Section Sales Representative of the Year Award that same year. These accolades come after Alex spent 15 years as PGA Head Professional at Beaver Meadows Golf Club in Phoenix, New York. He served on the Central New York PGA Section Board of Directors for eight years and chaired several committees.

"I always saw myself as being on the sales side of the golf industry, but I had a really nice career as a head golf professional at a private club. It was tough decision [to leave green grass], but when the opportunity came to work for Greg Norman, I just had a feeling that the line would have success in our market."

During his years at Beaver Meadows, Alex did business with a lot of sales reps and became adept at understanding the good ones. He'd seek to replicate those traits in his own sales relationships, being very conscious about service, following up and doing what you say you're going to do. He says that customers appreciate that and trust him even more because of this philosophy.

Alex sites his time in school at Mississippi State, his early work experience in Atlanta and the good fortune to work with local pros such as Mark Jorgensen and Rick Pohle, as keys to his success.

He and Sue, his wife of 18 years have two daughters, Lizzy (17) and Anna (15). The Smith family lives in Syracuse and tries to get out to play some golf together in the evenings – nothing too competitive he says.

## SALES REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR - 2020

Ken Handy, Owner  
Merchant Preferred Processing Network, LLC

Ken Handy grew up in Ballston Spa, New York and started playing golf when he was 12 years old, after being introduced to the game by a friend of his. He cites professionals Bill Gormley and Doug Mochrie as being early teachers and mentors in his growth in the game.

Ken played golf at Ballston Spa High School with teammate Kevin Hughes. He then played at Binghamton University, graduating in 1987.

As the owner of his own business, Ken provides PGA Members and golf facilities with credit card processing and related products. Ken's passion for the game and his respect for PGA Professionals were the perfect marriage of a long-standing partnership that has been in place with the Section. It permits a direct benefit of savings offered to NENY PGA Section golf facilities, bottom line of conducting business for these common place expenses as well as a revenue share utilized towards section membership and tournament programming over the years..

"I am honored to receive this award because I have developed so many great friendships with PGA professionals throughout the years, and I find it humbling to be recognized by the very people I enjoy spending time with and admire so much," he states.

Ken Handy lives in Queensbury with his wife Cindi. They have two children, Kenny and Madeline.



## TEACHER OF THE YEAR - 2019

### Eric Mabee, PGA Head Professional Country Club of Pittsfield



Eric Mabee was the 2016 and 2018 Northeastern New York PGA Section Merchandiser of the Year for Private Facilities. His hard work and dedication to providing quality merchandise at fair prices have been catalysts to his sales success. The personal attention to detail he provides each and every member and guest who walks through his golf shop doors has a lot to do with it as well. Having put those same traits of professionalism and expertise into place on the lesson tee, Eric now takes home the 2019 NENY PGA Section Teacher of the Year Award.

Mabee started playing golf when he was 15 years old in his hometown of Ripon, Wisconsin, a city founded in the mid-19th century by a former New York steamboat captain. Mabee was a baseball player before a bum elbow sidelined him enough times for his doctor to suggest he take up another sport. He watched a lot of Golf Channel in those days and learned much about the golf swing and the game in general, becoming the Wisconsin State Player of the Year in 2002, shooting a record 66 on the final day of the high school state championship. He moved on to the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, where he played four years of Division I golf and earned all-conference honors in three of his four years.

Professionally, Mabee went to work at Willowbend on Cape Cod, where he started learning the business under PGA Director of Instruction, Danny Caverly. He'd go on to spend five years working with Craig Harmon at Oak Hill Country Club, and learned under such instructors as Billy Harmon, Charlie Epps, Chuck Cook, John Bierkan, Tom Dyer and Craig Shankland. He also cites Rick Bunge, his high school physical education teacher and golf coach, Kevin Murphy of McArthur Golf Club and Matt Scarafoni of Pittsfield as mentors as well.

Now in his 7th year at Country Club of Pittsfield, Eric enjoys playing with his dogs, fishing or building things – he likes to tinker and figure out how things work. The golf swing must be one thing he's analyzed more than a few times, as his list of playing awards and accolades continues to grow each year.

He lives "right behind the 15th hole" with his wife Rachel, who works for PGA REACH as the PGA WORKS Program Lead. They have three dogs named Blue, Ollie and Willow.

Mabee says success comes from self-reflection. "What did I do today that can influence tomorrow?" With the successful path Eric's career is on, there will be many tomorrows for him to influence.

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR - 2020

### Steve Jensen, PGA Head Professional Schuyler Meadows Club

Steve Jensen grew up in Grinnell, Iowa and started playing golf at the age of eight, when local PGA Professional, Larry Crawford took him under his wings. Jensen played golf at Grinnell High School and attended Ferris State University, graduating in 1989. Jensen says he knew he wanted to become a PGA Professional when he was 16 years old.

In addition to Crawford, Jensen cites Bill Kittleman at Merion Golf Club, Curt Siegel at Laurel Valley, Vic Tortorici at Sailfish Point, Mike Stubblefield at Montclair Golf Club and Randy Erskine at Washtenaw Country Club as helping guide him on the right path in the business of golf.

"I feel my greatest attribute as a PGA Professional is the ability to organize all of my golf programs to give the members and their guests a great experience while playing at Schuyler Meadows Club," Jensen says. He has served Schuyler Meadows Club and their membership as the Head Professional for the last 25 years.

He adds, "Winning the Teacher of Year Award means that your fellow PGA Golf Professionals recognize your accomplishments as a teacher and a golf coach. In our business, helping people play better golf is second to none. To win this award once is very special, to win it twice is something I will always cherish."

Steve lives in Loudonville with his wife Cindy, and they have two children Mark, age 28 and Davis, age 26.



# DOUG EVANS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD - 2020

## Doug Evans, Assistant Executive Director Northeastern New York PGA Section



Doug Evans served the PGA of America well for two decades. He was a man who loved the game of golf and cared deeply for the members he served as Assistant Executive Director and Tournament Director of the Northeastern New York PGA Section. He worked tirelessly for the Section's junior golfers who learn and compete every summer. Doug's contributions to our section, and the game in general, are immeasurable, but the impact he had on all of us remains great.

As we celebrate his life and the light he shone on so many wonderful aspects of golf – competition, camaraderie and membership – we consider the void left by his passing and the absence we feel when teeing it up in a special NENY event or walking into a big Section meeting. Doug made each of these things better, selflessly, and with enthusiasm and love. From Manistee, Michigan, Doug Evans graduated from Ferris State University with a Professional Golf Management Degree. He helped develop the NENY PGA Junior Golf Association and Junior Tour from inception – this after spending time in the Connecticut and Michigan PGA Sections. He worked as an assistant professional in Hartford, Connecticut, enjoyed Capital District high school and college sports and was an avid Green Bay Packers and Detroit Lions fan. He coached girls' softball, volunteered in the Cohoes Girls Recreation Softball league, was a CYO basketball referee and loved golf and fishing. He enjoyed being around people, laughing with them and sharing conversation.

The NENY PGA Section Special Awards Committee is proud to introduce a new award to be given annually in special recognition of an individual who is a steward for the NENY PGA Professionals and the game of golf in general. This new award category is eligible only to non-PGA members who have made lasting and meaningful contributions to the Section, its members and the entirety of the local golfing community. The "NENY PGA Doug Evans Distinguished Service Award" is awarded posthumously to Doug Evans, who demonstrated these traits on a daily basis.

We welcome Doug's father Hilman Evans and his sister Cyndi here this evening.

# GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR - 2019

## Josh Hillman, PGA Head Professional Taconic Golf Club



Josh Hillman grew up in Greenfield, Massachusetts, where his dad introduced him to the game of golf at the age of five years old when he got his first set of golf clubs. From then on, Josh became a “golf junkie”, as he puts it. His first experience with golf lessons came under James Bucky O’Brien, who was the head professional at the Country Club of Greenfield. Josh would go on to play four years of varsity golf at Greenfield High School and then at the University of Rhode Island.

Hillman was interested in course architecture in his younger days and decided he wanted to be a golf professional during his sophomore year at Rhode Island. He reached the second stage of Qualifying School on a couple of occasions, but his career path in golf changed when family life became the bigger priority.

Josh was an assistant professional at Taconic Golf Club for two years under Rick Pohle and took his first head professional position at Berkshire Hills for five years. He returned to Taconic in 2013 as PGA Head Professional and now enjoys almost a decade in Williamstown, creating great golf experiences for his members and serving on the faculty at nearby Williams College, where he also serves as the school’s Head Men’s Golf Coach.

Josh has an impressive resume of awards and accolades, including several playing honors, the 2015 NENY PGA Merchandiser of the Year Award for Public Facilities and of course, the 2019 Section Golf Professional of the Year Award.

Hillman says he’s spent his whole life enjoying the game of golf, and wants others to get the same satisfaction as he derives from hitting that little white ball. He is proud of his efforts to grow the game through his successful junior program. He’s even had a National Champion on his Williams College golf team.

Josh lives in Williamstown with his wife Angie and their son, Jacob, age 12.

# GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR - 2020

## Mike Behan, Sales Manager and Partner W&B Golf Carts Inc.



Mike Behan grew up in the Westchester town of New Rochelle, and had his first golf lesson with PGA Professional Dick Santucci at Rye Golf Club when Behan was 11 years old. He moved to Dutchess County when he was a teenager and played golf at Arlington High School. Citing baseball as his true love, he played ball for a year at SUNY Delhi before determining that golf was the career path for him.

Mike used to attend the Westchester Classic PGA TOUR event and once saw the club's PGA Head Professional, Bob Watson, chatting with Seve Ballesteros. He says he knew he couldn't play like Seve, but perhaps he could spend his days at the course, managing the duties of a club professional.

He says he's had many mentors over the years, and cites the following as being instrumental in his growth in the industry: PGA Professional Rhett Myers, now the owner of Vassar Golf Course in Poughkeepsie, John Sanges, Mark Heartfield, Jack Druga, now of Shinnecock Hills and Dave Carazo, all PGA Members with stellar careers of their own. Behan is proud to remain friends with each of these gentlemen to this day. Finally, Mike says Bill Strausbaugh was a very important part of his life. "I only worked with him for two months, but we remained close until he passed away," he adds.

Mike says his greatest attributes include leadership, love of the PGA of America, empathy and support of his fellow PGA Members. "I've always made time to answer the phone for those who need help," he says. "It could be a simple question related to their job or even something more personal."

Mike reflects on the many memories and stories from his time in golf. Many friends and mentors who he emulates as a mentor to others all these years later. "It's a reminder of how fortunate and blessed I have been," he opines. Golf has given Mike so much and he is humbled to join the past winners of this award, the NENY PGA Golf Professional of the Year.

Michael Behan and his wife Stacy recently moved to a new home in Warren County. He thanks Stacy for many years of support in his career endeavors. Mike and Stacy have a son, Brendan who is a senior at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He's majoring in Corporate Finance and Accounting and will be embarking on a new career at Nasdaq after graduation.

# HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - 2021



## Glenn Davis, Head Golf Professional Albany Country Club

Glenn Davis joins a storied group of PGA Professionals as we celebrate his induction into the NENY PGA Hall of Fame. With names like Sullivan, Lowe, DeBerry and Stafford, these 46 men represent the best of the best in our Section, and have served as mentors to so many professionals who have followed in their footsteps.

Glenn Davis grew up in Catskill, New York and was introduced to golf by his father when he was around 10 years old. "We began by playing alternate shot on a nine-hole par 3 course and eventually joined Catskill Country Club, where I played nearly every day over the summer," Davis shares. Davis was mostly self-taught, but did listen in on conversations between some of the local "scratch" golfers, hoping to pick up a few pointers.

Glenn played varsity golf at Catskill High School and would continue to hone his skills in the club golf program at Syracuse University.

"It never occurred to me that you could make a living in golf unless you were on Tour until I worked in the bag room for PGA Professional Dave Rarich, and then in the golf shop for PGA Professional Bobby Brown," Davis says. It would be Brown who'd first suggest Davis pursue a career as a PGA Professional.

Davis cites Tom DeBerry as his greatest influence professionally after working as an assistant professional at Normanside Country Club for five years. He says NENY PGA Hall of Fame Member, Herb Moreland was a huge mentor from a playing and teaching standpoint.

Davis says his greatest attribute as a PGA Professional is the ability to understand and relate to different personalities. Whether it's as their coach and instructor, tournament or league administrator, golf shop owner or playing partner, he was once told, "Glenn, you have the unique ability to treat everyone differently, but all of them fairly."

He says his primary duties are no different than they were 26 years ago – manage or help manage all aspects of the golf operation, including merchandising, instruction, tournaments and leagues and outside operations.

Glenn Davis lives in Delmar, New York with his wife Anne and their three children – Ryan, a senior at Fordham University, Will, a sophomore at Syracuse University and Caroline, a sophomore at Bethlehem High School.

"Induction in the NENY PGA Hall of Fame is validation that learning and taking advice from your peers and mentors, working hard and believing in your own abilities will eventually lead to success." – Glenn Davis – NENY HOF 2021