



THE NEWSLETTER

November - December 2020

of the **Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England, Inc.**

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President's Message by Peter J. Rappoccio



I hope this message finds you well and you and your families had a nice Thanksgiving. As we approach the holiday season, many of us have wrapped up golf for the 2020 season....and what a season it was! With all of the challenges in terms of rules and regulations, weather conditions, and an increased amount of golf activity at many of our courses, 2020 will certainly go down in history books in more ways than one.

Thank you to those who joined us for our December virtual meeting. We had a nice attendance and two great presentations by Dr. Karl Guillard and Tyler Bloom. Both brought great topics and education to the meeting and I am thankful they both joined us. I encourage all of you to attend our Annual Meeting on January 7th. It will be held in a virtual format but your presence is just as important to us virtually as it is in person. We have a great speaker lined up, Laura Katen, whom you may remember as our 2020 Annual Meeting speaker. We will also be hosting our annual business meeting with elections of officers and recognizing both 25 and 50 year members (new this year). I would like to thank Ryan Emerich and Don Hearn for all their work in setting up these meetings.

As we approach the New Year, hopefully 2021 will bring a renewed sense of normalcy to the world. As 2020 winds down, I am thankful for all of the good things that have happened over the course of the year, but I'm mindful of all of those who we lost to this terrible pandemic. We are so fortunate to have so many people working tirelessly to help save lives and find a cure for the virus. There is still a certain unknown as we head into the spring, but I feel, as hopefully the rest of you do, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I am hopeful we can continue our in-person golf meetings next season, Bob Dembek has got a great schedule of events lined up. Thank you to all who are planning on hosting a meeting in 2021.

I hope every one of you has a wonderful holiday and a Happy New Year! I look forward to seeing you at our virtual meeting on January 7th.

Thank you.

Regards,
Peter

WE EXPRESS OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO

The Watschke family on the passing of **Dr. Tom Watschke** Professor Emeritus at Penn State University.

The Almonte family on the passing of **John Almonte, Sr.** retired member who was superintendent at Oak Hill Country Club and Worcester Country Club prior to his retirement.

The Snow family on the passing of **Jim Snow**, former National Director of the USGA's Green Section

CONGRATULATIONS TO

Chris Donadio who was recently appointed superintendent at **Woodland Golf Club**. Chris was the assistant at Woodland prior to his appointment. Chris is following **David Mucciarone** who has worked at Woodland for 50 years, 20 as the assistant working alongside his father, Norman. Upon his father's retirement David continued his tenure at Woodland for 30 years as superintendent. David will be staying on as Superintendent Emeritus.

Joel Cyr has been elevated from the Assistant Superintendent to Superintendent position at **Blue Hill Country Club**. **Jason Adams** is continuing his tenure at the club as General Manager.

Ben Pacific has been selected as the Superintendent at **The Haven Country Club**. Ben was previously the Assistant Superintendent at **Nashawtuc Country Club**.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE MEMBERS WHO RENEWED THEIR CERTIFIED GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT STATUS (CGCS)

Pat Daly, CGCS

Framingham Country Club
Framingham, MA

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Melrose, MA

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welch Mechanical, Friend of the Association

Trevor Bendig, Assistant Superintendent,
Franklin Country Club

Back Issues!



Past issues of the NEWSLETTER are available using this link: <http://bit.ly/GCSANEnewsletters>.

As in the past, *The Newsletter* continues to invite Affiliate members to submit a press release about new personnel, new products or a company bio. We will print each and every release **free of charge**. This is a great way to advertise for free. Who said nothing in this world is free? Free advertising to better your company, wow what an offer.

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Thoughts From Your Executive Director by Don Hearn

This is the time of year when we're looking at education opportunities, a break from the pressures of the season and seeing friends and people in our profession and industry. Some of these opportunities happen at our winter meetings during the months of December and January. The December meeting took place virtually earlier this month using an online platform. Board members gave a brief update of their areas of responsibility and speakers delivered useful information.

Dr. Karl Guillard from the University of Connecticut spoke about his research dealing with the Minimum Level of Sustainable Nutrition (MLSN) approach for soil test interpretation and recommendations. He is looking for superintendents across all six New England states to send soil samples for the project. The goal is to collect enough soil samples and data to develop MLSN guidelines specific for New England golf courses. A description of the program is attached [here](#).

Our second speaker was Tyler Bloom. He founded Tyler Bloom Consulting this past June. Prior to this he was the superintendent at Sparrows Point Country Club in Baltimore, Maryland. He had a lot of ideas and used many examples of what worked well for him and might work well for superintendents needing ideas for recruiting employees. Tyler was recently the recipient of the Leo Feser Award. This award honors the late Leo Feser, a pioneering golf course superintendent and a charter member of GCSAA. The award is presented annually to the author of the best superintendent-written article published in *Golf Course Management* — GCSAA's flagship publication — during the previous year. Tyler authored the article [Ready, willing and able](#), which was published in the January 2020 issue of *GCM*.



At the recent annual meeting of the International Association of Golf Administrators (IAGA) Jesse Menachem was elected President of the organization. Jesse, the Executive Director/CEO of Mass Golf, is a friend to many superintendents who he has worked with during his years at Mass Golf (formerly the Massachusetts Golf Association). Jesse is the fourth executive of Mass Golf to lead the IAGA following in the footsteps of Dick Haskell, Tom Landry and Joe Sprague. IAGA was formed in 1968 to promote and conserve the best interests and the true spirit of the game of golf as embodied in its ancient and honorable traditions. With those pursuits in mind, the IAGA serves as a medium for golf administrators to exchange information, techniques and other data relating to the game of golf and establish channels of communication among all of the world's golfing fraternities.

Members are golf administrators of state and regional amateur golf associations and other invited national golf-related organizations. These administrators manage the affairs of their respective golf associations in various capacities. The IAGA has members from the United States Golf Association, Golf Canada, and most of the state and provincial golf associations throughout North America.

The IAGA holds its annual meeting in early November. A host of IAGA members and guest speakers make presentations on golf-related topics. Breakout sessions allow members to interact and discuss specific problems in their fields, and a new Board of Directors is elected during the business meeting.

As all of us know, this has been a year of ups and downs and uncertainty. Thinking back to March, I had the feeling we wouldn't survive the year as the Association we had become over the past 96 years. Fortunately, I was wrong. Sure, much of what we consider a normal year evaporated. Only two events were held during the golf season. The Championship in August at The Haven Country Club and the Assistants event at Marlborough Country Club in September. Of course, these events weren't conducted as normal, but it didn't seem to matter to those who attended. From what I could tell, it seemed like it was really more about seeing and talking with others in our industry that helped make the events successful. Because of the state and local restrictions in place we weren't able to conduct onsite transactions and registrations were prepaid. Scoring was conducted electronically using a platform that



I recently saw this plaque online and thought it might create an idea for helping golfers recognize who is responsible for managing course preparations.

Our 2021 Annual Meeting will take place January 7, online, using the same platform (Zoom) as the December meeting. The intent is to conduct business as normal, or as normal as is

possible. Business will be conducted with the usual agenda and announcements. Our speaker will be Laura Katen. Laura will be presenting the topic "Leveraging Communication to Have Impact and Achieve Results." Those who attended the 2020 Annual Meeting had the good fortune to experience Laura's exciting and interactive presentation. We expect more of the same this time.

Thoughts *continued*

provided live “up to the minute” scoring for all who played at The Haven. This eliminated the need for handling scorecards. Both of these options will be adopted for future events. There was no after-golf gathering and a box lunch was the norm for both events.



A milestone and history maker has taken place at The Country Club where current Past President Dave Johnson is Director of Grounds. The first female in the club’s history has been appointed to the position of General Manager/COO. Kristen LaCount has taken over for longtime General Manager, David Chag, who is ending a 33-year span at the club. David has been a friend of superintendents and shown the utmost respect for their

responsibilities. He has been an active member in groups associated with the club and golf industry and has spoken at many club and course conferences and workshops.

The following is reprinted in part from an article written by Abby Patkin of Wicked Local.com

Kristen is the third generation of her family to have worked at the club. Her mother grew up just across the street from the club, in Buttonwood Village, working weekends at the front desk throughout college while LaCount’s grandmother worked in the

club’s business office. LaCount’s father started as a dishwasher, quickly working his way up to become TCC’s youngest executive chef, a position he held for decades.

“We had one car in our family, so we’d come over and pick up dad at the back delivery area, and we’d be sitting on milk crates with a bowl of peppermint stick ice cream waiting for him to finish up work,” LaCount recalled. “So the club was always extremely present in my life.”

There’s a common trope of executives starting in the mailroom and working their way to the top. For LaCount, it was the club’s snack bar, where she got her start as a young teenager in the mid-1990s.

“It really was my first taste of interacting with staff and learning how to manage people, and that was probably a huge point for me ... that just reinforced that this is the industry that I wanted to be in,” LaCount said. “It wasn’t just about food and beverage and service and golf, and all those things. It was really about the personal connections that you make.”

Fresh out of college, she saw a job offer fall through and, on her father’s recommendation, met with former TCC General Manager David Chag for some career advice.

“Mr. Chag, David, took me under his wing and said, ‘What do you think about learning a little bit of the front of the house and the management side?’” LaCount recalled.

With Chag as her mentor, LaCount buried herself in the work and rose through the ranks. By the time the club hosted the 2013 U.S. Amateur Golf Championship, she knew she wanted a future in club management. And TCC, with its large membership and sprawling, college campus-like grounds, captured her heart.

She was made TCC’s first-ever assistant general manager, raised as Chag’s eventual successor. And she made her home in Brookline with her husband, Prairie Fire restaurateur Dan Kerrigan, and their two children.

Of his mentee, Chag said LaCount’s personality and work ethic made her a natural leader.

“She has an incredible work ethic and enthusiasm and personality that’s infectious, so others tend to want to work with her,” he said. “People enjoy being around her.”

Now, 17 years after she first joined the club full-time, LaCount has taken the reins.



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The Newsletter

Thoughts *continued*

“She just struck us that she was the best person for the job, so much so that we decided not to do a search, but just to directly hire her,” said TCC President Lyman Bullard.

He added, “I think she has been preparing for this job her whole life, and she has just jumped right into it with great energy, enthusiasm and leadership.”

LaCount, who took office Oct. 1, has her work cut out for her amid the ongoing pandemic, Bullard said.

“As you can imagine, in a COVID world, there are no dull months in any organization, anywhere,” he said. “I think she has everybody on the staff ready to be as creative and flexible as we need to be to make it a fun winter experience for our members.”

For her part, LaCount said she plans to maintain the stability the club saw under Chag’s leadership, even as TCC navigates high-profile projects and events, including the 2022 U.S. Open, which the club will host.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to be a challenge for all of us. I know of no one who hasn’t been challenged. It’s important to make note of all who continued their support through continued membership and sponsorship of our Association this year. While some look at dues as an expense, I look at it as an investment.

An investment in the future of our profession and industry. As an Association we are grateful to those who have continued their support. We have offered ways to help companies and their representatives stay connected to the membership through the use of online video presentations. Greg Cormier, our Affiliate Representative, conducted most of these and he and those interviewed enjoyed doing them. Sure, it was a new way for us to help our supporters let others know more about their business.

It was also fun for all involved. We would like to continue spotlighting our commercial sponsors in ways that create interest and tell a company’s story. It’s great way to get exposure and let others know about the people associated with a company.

We also have had strong support from superintendents who were scheduled to host meetings this year. Every cancelled event was immediately rescheduled for 2021 on approximately the same date as this year. Bob Dembek, Golf Chair has spent considerable time lining up courses and dates for our events. Not an easy task, but one he has done well. He is always looking for host sites so please let him know if you would like to host an event and he will contact you to arrange details.

Let’s not forget – if we don’t support our profession and industry, who will?

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Takeaways from 2020?

By Colin Smethurst, CGCS - Hillview Golf Course

2020 is a year we will all remember the rest of our lives. The global pandemic touched all of us in every portion of our lives both personally and professionally. Further, the climate continues to be volatile. The Earth is now the warmest it has been since we've been around to record it.

This has sprung wildfires, drought, and super storms. And finally, social unrest continues to boil over and our country is as divided as I can remember it in my lifetime. No matter where you stand politically, the politics of 2020 rages inside of people. What can I take away from this year that we all want to leave in the rearview?

Water: Sweet nectar from the Gods

I spent more time this summer than I would like to admit staring at my irrigation ponds. Is there enough water in there to water fairways tonight? When do I cut them off altogether? What if my wells dry up? Or the next morning after running a heavy cycle: "Ok that's it, I'm fired, time to dust off that communications degree!" The drought of 2020 was one for the books. When rain came, it was always scattered and if you're like me that blob of sweet yellow and red on the radar would go above and below the golf course. I tried to take it in stride and both myself and the golf

course overcame. Turfgrass is resilient, it'll bounce back.

Don't sweat the small stuff, focus down the middle.

When COVID broke out, nobody knew how it would affect our business and in the beginning at least in Massachusetts, no revenue was coming in. This forced budget cuts and for me as a municipal superintendent, it hit hardest on labor. I told myself to make sure the place was good down the middle. Greens, tees, fairways in that order. Everything else you get to is a bonus. Focus down the middle and survive.

Family is everything and yours is hurting

This year has put everyone's relationships to the test. At least for me, it will be the mental and emotional damage that this disease has wreaked that will be remembered. My wife and I have faced the strain of juggling her working remotely, figuring out child care with few safe options, and still trying to eek out just a few minutes of time for each other. My son has been forced into isolation and I worry about what it's doing to him. He's the strongest 5 year old I know but I see the toll of 2020 wearing on him. I know with the season behind me, I'm trying to get things as right as possible at home.

Patience really is a virtue

Be patient with everyone in your life because we're all struggling. From your family to your greens chairman to the cashier at Market Basket, nobody is having a good year and there are days when we're at the tipping point. Let that person vent and unburden themselves, take a deep breath and try to make that interaction a positive one.

Be Thankful

If you still have your job, your health, your family and your family's health. Be thankful! Try to enjoy this down time as much as you can and spend it with your loved ones. And remember this quote as you move forward into 2021: "Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times"

Merry Christmas and a Happy New year!

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With autumn passed by and the agronomic practices in the rearview mirror, the frosty and snowy mornings will begin, and staff numbers will have lightened. Planning projects may be part of a larger master plan for the facility. These are great tools to ensure the projects undertaken by the club are done in a fiscally responsible manner and keep progress moving forward on a schedule. A very

beneficial undertaking for the facility, but what impact does that have in your department? While budgeting offers a chance to plan for equipment and staffing numbers, have you done any planning specific to the grounds team at your facility? Tyler Bloom discussed the importance of your people extensively during the recent Zoom meeting. Below are some ways to maximize your team with currently available resources.

The winter offers the perfect time to engage your biggest assets, your team. Why not consider a SCOR analysis with them? Getting their feedback on team dynamics could be key in making improvements you never saw. Where are the strengths of your team, what challenges do they see? Are there opportunities that would improve the processes you already have in place? What risks do your staff see within the grounds department? Would you benefit from this information? Would your team be more effective after engaging them in developing such an analysis?

Do you challenge or set goals for your staff? We thrive in an industry that blends science and art while newer techniques trend towards quantitative, measurable data. GCSAA offers two great programs that will benefit individuals on you staff, your team, and the facility. These professional development opportunities for key staff members can assist you structure advancement or benefit increases for your people, all while increasing their value to the facility. These are the programs mentioned by Bloom on the December meeting Zoom! What better time to encourage participation than the off-season?

The **Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series** is composed of certificates covering key competency areas of:

- Agronomy
- Business
- Leadership and Communications
- Environmental Stewardship

The certificates are golf-centric, available to GCSAA members and non-members, and can be completed in any order. It is strongly recommended that an assistant superintendent has at least two years of work experience before beginning any of the ASCS certificates. However, the certificates are available to all and not limited to assistants.

Equipment Management Certificate Program Level 1- Level 2 - Certification are a series of exams designed to demonstrate proficiency in key competency areas related to turf equipment. This certificate program is available to any and all turf equipment technicians regardless of whether you work for a golf course.

The Level 1 program is made up of eight exams covering the key competency areas of:

- cutting units
- drivetrain systems
- electrical systems
- engine technology
- hydraulic systems
- metalworking and fabrication
- spray systems
- fundamentals of turfgrass operations

You can choose to take one exam or work to complete the entire program by successfully completing all eight exams in any order. Level 2 follows completion, with a Certification opportunity upon finishing both levels.

You will spend countless hours with decision makers at your facility this winter preparing for improvements to the grounds to ensure a successful 2021 season. Be sure to have those discussions with your team, allow them the opportunity to shape the culture for success (SCOR analysis), and challenge them to use certificate resources available for your people to succeed in 2021 and beyond.

GCSAA Resources and Deadlines you Get Cool Stuff from your Association Already Las Vegas update

The 2021 Golf Industry Show is going virtual. Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, GCSAA announced that the annual education conference and trade show will be presented in a virtual format instead of the previously planned in-person event in Las Vegas.

Take a tour and see the amazing interactive capabilities at :

www.golfindustryshow.com/home



Registration is now open!!

Again, if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Kevin Doyle
GCSAA Field Staff

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Thoughts from the Northshore *By Eric Richardson*

Dear Member,

The Newsletter Committee, which I am on, has assigned me the glorious duty to summarize 2020 for the final edition of this year's edition. Watching reruns of the 2020 Red Sox season, yes, there was one, would be more enjoyable. If you ever wondered what a major league baseball team would look like if all the starting and bullpen pitchers forgot how to throw a baseball, I would suggest tuning in. 2020 threw us curveballs, sliders, knuckleballs, and gyroballs from start to finish. With every new and complex challenge, Turfgrass Managers and our association persevered.

It is interesting how sports impact the culture and fabric of our country. Who would have thought that NBA postponement of their season in March would lead to immediate and unparalleled local, state, and federal government restrictions? Scholars and historians will debate and dissect the government's actions for decades. We all have strong views on the matter, and I assume, like me, they have evolved throughout the year as new information became available. Unfortunately, until this pandemic is well in the rearview mirror, we cannot fully grasp the long-term health and economic ramifications of 2020. Every decision we have and continue to make as managers of people and as an association has unintended consequences due to the simple fact that, like most of the world's population, we lack the complete understanding of all the complexities regarding operating during a once a century health crisis. Fortunately, we have tremendous local leadership. We will remember, in perpetuity, the efforts of Jesse Menachem (Executive Director/CEO Mass Golf), Peter Rappoccio (GCSANE and NERTF President), Don Hearn (Executive Director GCSANE), and many others during the pandemic. Tireless hours of work

continue to this day as they navigate a path for us through the troubled waters of this health crisis. As Don likes to say, they are the tip of the spear for golf. Trust me; the spear is still sharp and continues to work diligently on our behalf.

As we continue to move through the holiday season, positive cases are increasing exponentially, and for some of us, the crisis is now for the first time this year, hitting close to home and our inner circles. There are two people close to me, not in my household, currently battling for their life due to COVID. One person is your typical older person with preexisting conditions, while the other is in his mid-thirties with no preexisting condition. I am sharing this solely as an example of the unknowns and variability of COVID. Please protect yourself, your family, and all of those that work with and for you. Implementing extremely cautious protocols during this period will slow your productivity as an operation and hinder your ability to gather with those close to you; I do not see another option from my soapbox.

Over the last few months, there has been a rash of job openings in our industry. I have no idea if the turnover rate exceeds or is on par with previous years, but it appears that COVID burnout is a factor. Please take care of your mental and physical health during these challenging times, and reach out to those in our industry that need support. A simple text or phone call goes a long way.

I hope you and yours have a safe and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,
Eric Richardson

The logo for Atlantic golf & turf features the word "Atlantic" in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. To the left of the "A" is a stylized green grass tuft. Below "Atlantic" is the phrase "golf & turf" in a smaller, green, cursive script font.

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The Promise of Tomorrow by Steve Keating

Every year holds its own set of lessons. Those who study history know that the years teach us many things that a single day will never know.

I don't think we'll need much history however to understand some of the lessons from the year 2020. For too many families around the world one of those lessons is that tomorrow is promised to no one.

No one can know if their own tomorrow will actually arrive. But we also know that if our tomorrow does arrive we have much more control over it than we often choose to take. Many people let their days unfold as if they have no say whatsoever in the events of that day. They let the day happen.

The happiest and most successful people never let a day happen "to them." They make the day happen "for them."

They may not be able to choose each of the "events" that come their way each day but

they are able to choose exactly how they will respond to them. They choose very frequently to respond with a positive attitude.

That positive attitude allows them to take something good from every experience. It allows them to learn from even their least favorite event of any given day. It allows them to constantly be looking forward to the promise of an even better tomorrow.

You have the same choice. The only question is whether or not you'll actually make it.

I know people who make the choice of a positive attitude 100% of the time. They are happier than me. I am happier than people who make the choice of a positive attitude less frequently than me.

I know people who choose to look for opportunities in every problem 100% of the time. They are more successful than

me. I am more successful than people who look for opportunities in problems less than I do.

It is very clear that happiness and success come from our choices and no choice we make is more important than the choice of a positive attitude. Choosing to look for opportunities inside problems is a close second.

Yet I'm tempted to tell you it's not possible 100% of the time cause it seems impossible to me. Yet I know people who prove me wrong. It's not only a possibility for them, it is a reality. So I'm going to keep trying to make it my reality too.

The promise of tomorrow doesn't wait. You need to go get it. Your choice of a positive attitude is the fastest ride to those promises you'll ever find. You willing to hop on board with me?

Reprinted from his blog LeadToday.



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