

FOREGROUND

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Steve Smith
Memorial Tournament



The Links @ Union Vale

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Association Motto

To promote interest and good will in the Association, encourage good relations between members and the clubs they represent.... And to keep up with the current developments in turf and related work.....

Bill Smart

HVGCSA Mission Statement

The Hudson Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association exists to inform, educate and serve members within the Hudson Valley and surrounding areas.



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President's Message



I hope everyone has survived the rain and humidity this summer has brought. Cooler nights and aerification season is right around the corner. July was no fun at Patriot Hills with just over 14" of rain. For those who were able to make it to our Nine and Dine at Shawangunk Golf Course hosted by Tom Wright, he put on a fun day for all those that attended. That evening we recognized our 2026 scholarship recipients.

Be on the lookout for announcements coming soon for a **Walk and Talk** hosted by the Empire State Golf Alliance this September locally. Back in June the ESGA hosted an extremely successful Walk and Talk up in the capital region at Mohawk Golf Club. The Alliance's support is quickly growing and becoming a powerful voice for the New York Golf Industry.

The Hudson Valley Board is beginning the process of putting together a **membership survey** that will be put out this winter. Recently, GCSAA conducted a similar survey, however, their results only included 9 participants from the Hudson Valley. We are hoping that our membership will take advantage of this survey to use as a resource for themselves and their facility.

Next on tap for the Hudson Valley is the **NYSTA Challenge**, hosted by Chris Strehl at the Links at Union Vale. In September we will be returning to **Quaker Hill**, where Andrew Carrol will host our 2026 Worthington Cup. Due to our **Hudson Valley Cup** being rained out in June, we have rescheduled for **Monday, October 19th**. Don't fear, Mike Aube has promised the goats will still be there. In fact, I have heard rumors that there may be more as their family keeps growing!

Evan Weymouth

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NYSTA Challenge/Steve Memorial Tournament

Hosted by Chris Strehl at The Links @ Union Vale

Monday, August 17, 2026



This year's NYSTA Challenge/Steve Smith Memorial Tournament will be back at "The Links at Union Vale" after a three-year hiatus. The tournament will be held on Monday, August 17th. Our host is Chris Strehl. Chris has been at "The Links" since its inception.

Last year's tournament generated \$6,630.00 in revenue. That brings the total monies raised in the 25-year history of the NYSTA Challenge to \$259,230.00. Sponsored by NYSTA and the HVGCSA, the proceeds of this worthwhile event help to support turfgrass research and legislative endeavors in Albany. Last year's receipts were donated to 2026's Turfgrass Advocacy Day, NYSGIC (NYSTA's Lobbyists), and the New York Farm Bureau Agricultural Alliance.

NYSGIC (New York State Green Industry Council) lobbies on behalf of the turfgrass industry in both the NYS Assembly and Senate. We have a great lobbyist in Todd Vandervort. Pretty much all of current proposed legislation is looking to restrict and, in some instances, ban the use of certain pesticides, limit water use on golf courses, and reduce the amount of nitrogen in granular fertilizer. NYSTA and the NYSGIC fight on your behalf in Albany.

"Turfgrass Advocacy Day", an event held annually in Albany, enables turf professionals to meet and speak to members of the NYS Assembly and Senate on behalf of the industry. "TAD" has always been great opportunity to impress our lawmakers with the professionalism and care for the environment exhibited by superintendents on their golf courses.

NYSTA needs your help in supporting this tournament and being a member of the organization. If you're not a member, please consider joining. We need you.

The Links @ Union Vale

"The Links" was once a farm owned by the late Karl Ehmer, the "King of Quality Meats". The farm was acquired by the Irish Golf Association (IGA) in the mid-nineties and this Stephen Kay "links" style design began construction in 1998 under the watchful eye of the Burton F. Clark Company. The course opened for play in June of 2000. It's not an easy layout to score on, playing some 6,900 yards from the championship tees.

One hundred and one bunkers dot the course with beautiful native areas framing the distinctive rolling fairways. There is not a lot of primary rough and the wind blows all the time. There are some very challenging holes to conquer. The 15th is a 460-yard par 4 with out-of-bounds left and #14 is a monster par 5 measuring 603 yards in length. It always makes a fun scramble!!

About Chris

Superintendent Chris Strehl began his career as an intern at Ridgewood CC after graduating with a bachelor's degree in Plant Science from SUNY Cobleskill. When he finished his internship at Ridgewood CC, Chris left for an assistant's gig at Orange County CC to work with another Ridgewood alumnus, Tim Garceau. When Tim moved on to the Tuxedo Club, Chris followed to serve as his first assistant.

In 1998 Chris was hired by the IGA to grow in "The Links". 2026 marks Chris's 28st year at the golf course. Despite the challenges of the current golf economy and a tight budget, Chris manages to keep the "Links" in great shape. Notwithstanding having a small crew to care for this huge property, Chris carries on with a fearless determination. That's just the way Chris rolls, he keeps plugging away and moving forward. No excuses!!

The best thing that ever happened in Chris' life is his soulmate Debbie. Debbie and Chris tied the knot in 2004. Together they have built quite a life and family.

We look forward to seeing you on the 17th!!

Kevin Collins



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Hudson Valley News of Interest

By: Kevin Collins



*Morefar's Rob Dorsch and Patriot Hills' Evan Weymouth have formed their own consulting firm for golf course superintendents. The new venture is called Dormouth Partners LLC. Rob explains, "For a long time now, Evan and I have felt that Hudson Valley and Met area superintendents have been underserved by the golf industry consulting companies available to them. We don't give a rat's ass about agronomics or placing assistants. The only thing that matters to Evan and I is the happiness and job security of the superintendents that subscribe to our services. We are equipped to deal with any threat to the happiness and job security of our clients by making those problems disappear, immediately, without a trace". To that end, Dormouth Partners LLC are offering the following services. (1) Greens Chairman Elimination Program (2) Club President Elimination Program (3) Club Member Elimination Program. All pertinent information and program fees are included in the Dormouth Partners LLC 8-page color brochure which is available upon request on their website, www.dormouthpartnersllc.com.

*Metro's Matt "The Big Sexy" Topazio will be appearing in this summer's Waterbury Community Theatre production of "Little Red Riding Hood". The play will run from August 10th through September 3rd. Along with Matt in the title role, Abdul Ghani will play the "Big Bad Wolf" and Cat Swett, in her acting debut, will play the "Grandmother". Break a leg Matt.



*Putnam National's Jeff Newell looked completely flummoxed at the "Log Cabin Restaurant" in Mahopac, NY this past weekend. Jeff became a little alarmed when, after returning from the men's room, he found his dinner was attempting to walk out the front door. After subduing his prime rib, Jeff sprinkled salt on it until it passed out and was ready to be eaten.

*Stony Ford's Rob Bressler and Hickory Hill's JJ Kozala staged a hot dog eating contest (with toppings) at a recent Yankee game. It was neck and neck until Bressler, during the seventh inning stretch, finished his 40th hot dog and JJ screamed uncle. Bressler commented, "when you're coming for the king, you best not miss, and JJ, he missed." Long live the king.



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Growing Great Turf Starts with Growing Great People

By: Kevin Doyle, GCSAA NE Representative

Employee Recognition: The Most Underused Tool in Golf Course Management



Golf course superintendents are responsible for far more than turf quality. You lead teams that work long hours, often in challenging weather conditions, with much of staff effort occurring behind the scenes and before the first tee time. In today's competitive labor market, retaining skilled employees has become one of the greatest challenges facing golf course operations.

One of the most effective—and least expensive—ways to improve employee retention, engagement, and job satisfaction is consistent positive recognition.

Research consistently shows that employees who feel recognized for their contributions are more engaged, more productive, and more likely to remain with their employer. Recognition helps employees understand that their work has value and that their efforts contribute to the success of the organization.

For golf course maintenance teams, recognition is especially important because much of their work goes unnoticed by golfers. A freshly striped fairway, smooth putting surface, or successful tournament setup often reflects hundreds of hours of dedicated effort. When supervisors acknowledge those contributions, employees are more likely to feel pride in their work and commitment to the team.

Studies have found that employees who do not feel adequately recognized are significantly more likely to consider leaving their jobs, while meaningful recognition is associated with higher engagement, stronger club loyalty, and improved well-being.

The good news is that recognition does not require a large budget. Research suggests that the following low-cost approaches can have a meaningful impact:

- Provide specific verbal praise immediately after a job well done.
- Recognize accomplishments during crew meetings or morning assignments.
- Share positive golfer, member, or management feedback with the entire team.
- Present certificates or informal awards for outstanding performance or safety achievements.
- Celebrate milestones such as work anniversaries, certifications, or attendance records.
- Increase responsibility or leadership opportunities as a sign of trust and recognition.
- Create a culture of frequent recognition, with supervisors providing sincere appreciation on a regular basis.

Recognition is most effective when it becomes part of daily leadership rather than an occasional event. Employees want to know that their work matters. A superintendent who regularly notices effort, celebrates accomplishments, and expresses appreciation creates a culture where employees feel respected and valued.

When employees feel appreciated, they experience greater job satisfaction because recognition fulfills needs for competence, belonging, and purpose. The result is a more motivated team, lower turnover, improved morale, and ultimately better playing conditions for members and guests.

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Hello everyone, I wanted to take some time to go over a few observations I've made on my golf course, as well as other courses I've played, over the last few years.

The first observation I've made is that we have been very busy. Our Tee Sheets have been packed on a

daily basis, which bodes well for the health of our industry. I still see the "regular" golfers that I've seen for years, but I've noticed a shift in the demographic. A good portion of our patrons are in their late 20's or early 30's, which again is a great sign for the future of our industry.

That leads me to my next observation. With this shift in demographic to a younger crowd, there has been a shift in the golf etiquette that I was brought up with. This shift has not always been bad. I like that there is more tolerance for noise from equipment and music from Bluetooth speakers on carts. This newer generation of golfers seems more inclined to share the course with the maintenance staff and view us as a necessary and integral part of the golf experience. Whereas, when I was coming up, the best compliment was being told that they never see us. Along with these good changes, there have been some "bad" ones as well. No matter how many ropes, stakes, and signs I put out, I constantly see people in areas they shouldn't be. I've put at least 3 rakes in every bunker, but no one seems to use them; and even worse, golfers are walking the straightest line to the flag, from the bunker, often walking right up the steepest slope of the bunker. I've also observed golfers walking through a bunker, that their ball isn't even in! As always, fixing ball marks on greens is virtually nonexistent with any generation of

golfer, but it's a good thing we have a few conscientious people who fix their ball marks and a few others, as they go.

With all of this said, I like the direction that our industry is going in. I do believe it's on us, as stewards of the game, to stop and educate (in nice way), the newer generation of golfers on the proper way to enter/exit and maintain bunkers, fix ball marks, and follow signs. This will help with the new symbiosis that I've observed between the golfers and maintenance staff. Let's face it, if we don't educate the golfers, no one else will.

Robert Bressler

Stony Ford Golf Course

MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations to Steve Whipple, CGCS on successfully passing his certification exam for Golf Course Superintendent. This achievement reflects his dedication, knowledge, and commitment to excellence in the profession.

Well done Steve!!!





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Tom Wright and Shawangunk Hosted the HVGCSA July Meeting

By: Kevin Collins

The HVGCSA July meeting was held at Shawangunk CC in Ellenville, NY on Tuesday, July 14th. Shawangunk opened in 1927. The nine-hole dual-tee course was designed by Otto Lang, one of the club's early professionals. The club is named for the Shawangunk mountain range that borders the property on the east. It plays 5,621 yards from the middle tees.

Our host, Tom Wright, who might be the longest tenured superintendent left in our association, had the course in fine shape. It was a good turnout and Tom overcame the clubs' lack of a food & beverage operation by ordering in food and beverage for the players to enjoy after the golf. Adapt and overcome!! The golfers had a blast playing this fun and challenging 9-hole venue.

About Tom



Tom was born in Kingston, NY some 63 years ago. He was raised in New Paltz where his parents, Barbara and Everett, owned a commercial apple farm. Tom's parents ended up selling the farm to fund their retirement years. But, before that, Tom and his brother and sister had to chip in and work on the farm.

"I didn't get into golf until college," said Tom, "I attended Clarkson University in Omaha, NE where I majored in Chemistry. I started working at the Mohonk Resort to earn money during the summer months. I left Clarkson and started working full time on the crew at Mohonk's golf course under Pat McNamara. The whole McNamara family, Pat and Pat's father Ray and brother Mike, were mentors to me. In 1989, Pat left and I was offered the superintendent's position. I continued as superintendent until 2006. At that point I was promoted to Mohonk's Parks and Grounds Superintendent, now being responsible for taking care of the entire property."

Tom ended up leaving Mohonk after being recruited by a Sullivan County land management company. It didn't work out and Tom spent about a year unemployed. At that point, Tom secured a position as a landscape foreman. That lasted about 4 years until the position of superintendent became avail-

able at Shawangunk. The Village of Ellenville took over the property in 2020 when the private club went bankrupt.

The budget is a little challenged. Tom works with three part-time employees. "I divvy up about 60 hours a week for the three guys," Tom laughed, "but the club still does okay. We have money at the end of the year to invest back into the property. I love this place. It's a cool little golf course."

Tom was always one to volunteer his time and energy to give back to the industry. Tom served on the HVGCSA Board and was the association's President from 2004-2005 and again in 2007, replacing George Pierpoint 4th, who had left the area for a superintendent's position in South Jersey. Tom also served on the NYSTA Board, chairing the membership and education committees during his tenure.

Tom has been married to his wife Karen for 35 years. They met at Clarkson University. You probably remembered the Wrights cutting a rug during the association's Christmas parties at Powelton Club back in the day. Both Tom and Karen love ballroom dancing. They live in Pine Bush.

Thank you, Tom, for all your contributions to the HVGCSA and the industry.



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Nine & Dine at Shawangunk...Recap

Thank you to everyone who came out to support Tom Wright at Shawangunk on July 14th for our Nine & Dine event and Scholarship Awards presentation. While it was a very steamy afternoon, we were fortunate to have a nice breeze that helped keep everyone comfortable.

Tom and his crew had the course in great condition, providing a wonderful scenic setting for our event. We appreciate all who attended and our sponsors that helped make the day such a success..

Highlights

Winning Team—Format Scramble: Dyroff, Newell, Hewitt & Topazio

Long Drive: Wyatt Thompson

Closest to the Pin #2: Matt Topazio

Closest to Pin #7: Chuck, guest of Team Beekman



Nine & Dine / Scholarship Awards at The Gunk





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Expect the Unexpected

By: Jay Werbalowsky



It's the middle of July, its hot out, its humid out, sun is blazing, grass is melting away, disease pressure building, insects "bugging" you, etc., etc., etc. So many times, we draft articles about the current weather patterns, irrigation issues, employee issues, budget issues, equipment issues, again etc., etc., etc.

This article today will be a little different than normal. I am going to fill you all in, (at least those who read this), on a situation that took place here at Wallkill on Monday, July 6th at 6am. It was a rainy morning, finally some much needed relief, and I told most of my crew to stay home, me included, as most of us could use a day off. Mondays are my normal day off anyway. The only crew I had scheduled that day was my Assistant, equipment manager, and one seasonal employee. That being said, the unthinkable thing happened.

My assistant, Greg Bandura, was making his way around the course moving cart signs to set up the course for Cart Path only when he stopped at the 12th hole to move the signs mother nature decided to play a trick on him. He stepped out of the cart and the next thing he remembers is waking up on the ground wondering what had happened to him. Greg then noticed a tree that fell and hit the cart and him. The tree was dead, about a foot in diameter at the base, and the branches were about 3-5 inches in diameter that hit him. Greg was knocked out for a few seconds. I was on the phone with my Equipment manager Nick, when he clicked over to take the call from Greg who called him to say he was hit by a tree. Nick clicked back over to me and said Greg was hit by a tree, and he hung up. I called Greg immediately and stayed on the phone with him until Nick went out to get him. They called 911 for an ambulance which was there in about 8 minutes, I hurriedly got dressed and raced to work to meet up with Greg and Nick.

When I arrived, the paramedics already had Greg in the ambulance and were about to leave. I quickly told Greg I would see him at the E.R. I talked to the police officer to give a statement, talked to the 2 employees I had on that day and then headed over to the E.R. I am happy to say that Greg was not seriously injured. He did suffer a mild concussion, about a 4-inch gash on his head that required 8 staples, and an exceptionally large bruise on his upper right arm. He is incredibly lucky to be alive and breathing. It is not quite to the extent of being hit by lightning, but the odds of getting hit by a tree; I mean what are the odds in that happening. Then being able to say you walked away from it is even more impressive. He was even released the same day.

I guess when all is said and done, mother nature always has the final say and that July 6th day was not Greg's last day. Greg is truly fortunate to have had Nick here to get him and make that 911 call. I always like to have at least 2 people working in case of emergencies, and in this instance, it paid off for sure. I am still trying to figure out if Greg has a black cloud over him or an angel watching over him. Perhaps it's both, but what I do know is I am grateful that Greg is ok and has since come back to work.

Oh yeah, one last thing, did I mention that Greg's Mom, Dad, and sister were all in Italy when this happened. His 2 other brothers were also not in NY. One is interning in Seattle but thankfully his oldest brother was in CT. Although the odds were stacked against Greg, he still somehow made it out in one piece. Stay safe out there, and I guess we need to sometimes remember to expect the unexpected.

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Brewster, NY 10509
John Apple: 845-278-7766
www.wtractor.com

Westchester Turf Supply, Inc.

"Serving the HVGCSA Since 1976"
Bob Lippman: 914-447-6257
Dave Lippman: 914-447-5192
info@westchesterturf.com

Congratulations to our 2026 Scholarship Recipients

Thanks to the support of our members and the generosity of our sponsors, the HVGCSA has awarded a total of \$5000 to our 2026 recipients. **\$72,500 in scholarships** has been awarded since 2003.



Wyatt Thompson

School: Penn State University

Major: Turfgrass Management

HVGCSA Member: Brent Thompson, Silo Ridge Golf Club



Kylie Dudones

School: SUNY Cortland

Major: Education

HVGCSA Member: Dave Dudones, Westchester Country Club



Avery Eick

School: Elon University

Major: Biochemistry

HVGCSA Member: Andy Eick, First Turf & Ornamental



Macy Whipple

School: Penn State University

Major: Psychology

HVGCSA Member: Steve Whipple, West Point Golf Course



Daniel Wickes

School: Cornerstone Aviation

Studying to be a Commercial Airline Pilot

HVGCSA Member: John Wickes, Davey Tree Expert Co.



Upcoming Meetings

NYSTA Challenge
The Links @ Union Vale
August 17th

**September Meeting
& Worthington Cup**
Quaker Hill Golf Club
September 16th

**Met Team
Championship**
Century Country Club
October 13th

HV Cup
The Powelton Club
October 19th

When: Monday, August 17, 2026

Where: The Links at Union Vale
153 Parliman Road
Lagrangeville, NY 12540

Times:

10:30 Registration
11:00-12:15 Lunch Buffet
12:30 Shotgun Start - 4-Man Handicap Scramble
Spikeless shoes required - Proper golf attire
5:30 Buffet Dinner & Prizes (includes 1-hour open bar)

Tournament Fee: \$225 per person / \$85 Dinner Only (includes open bar)

Includes:

- Greens Fee
- Cart Fee
- Buffet Lunch
- Water on Carts & On Course
- Buffet Dinner
- 1-Hour Open Bar

◇ Soda & Beer Available for Purchase on the Course

To Register:

Please contact Sue at NYSTA
sue@nysta.mobi
518-783-1229