



PGA

Kentucky Section

2017 KPGA GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NOMINATION

Name of Nominee: Eric C.C. Gilliland
Facility Name: Audubon Country Club
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Nominee E-mail Address: golfshop@auduboncc.org

1. Please describe the nominee's overall performance as a Golf Professional.

Over the past two seasons, Audubon Country Club has witnessed changes in the general manager, golf course superintendent, assistant general manager, controller, and food & beverage director positions. Although the club is in a strong membership and financial position, with all the turnover, we were in jeopardy of losing some direction and historical perspective. It became incumbent upon our department to step up and provide continuity until a new leadership team could settle in and perform at a high level.

In an effort to keep the club running smoothly I served as co-interim general manager for just shy of four months. During that time I focused upon team building between departments, calming the uncertainty that inevitably comes with new management. Operationally, we continued to perform well, significantly outpacing budget each of the past two years. This was especially challenging as each event was "new" to every other Audubon department. Despite the lack of continuity, all major events were very successful, each with a waiting list to enter. Over the past two years, we have experienced a 31% growth in unique junior golf participation, implemented live scoring to our tournament program, and initiated a master planning process for the club.

I have tried to embrace the challenges presented by the change at our facility and have asked my staff to embrace the opportunity to shine

individually and as a department. I have enjoyed the collaboration with my team other local professionals to make each of us more valuable to our respective facilities.

2. Please briefly describe the nominee's service to the local Section and to the Association.

Since joining the Kentucky Section as a member in 1996 I have served three terms on the KPGA Board of Directors. During my terms I served as the chairman of both the Sponsorship and Tournament Committees. Additionally I have served on the Assistants/Apprentice, Communications, and Membership Committees. I am proud to have worked closely with Steve McMillen and Erin Horn to hire Kim Shafer as our PGA Director for Player Development.

I make regular contributions of best practices and sales data to PGA Magazine.

Most recently, I have partnered with Lindsay Williams to pilot a national initiative to bring together the families of PGA members and apprentices. Our desire is for PGA Connect to become an entity within which PGA spouses and families can find support and common interests to mitigate the hardships placed upon them by the business of golf. We envision a time in the near future in which PGA spouses and family are working together to support Kentucky Section PGA charitable initiatives.

PGA Golf Day – In four years of playing 100 holes for the Colon Cancer Prevention Project and Kentucky Golf Foundation I have raised \$26,815. This year my daughter Libby and I partnered with my assistant, Chris Wilson, to raise our highest total to date - \$10,915.

Colon One Golf Scramble – In 2015, I approached the CCCP about developing a golf event to raise funds and awareness for our cause. Next year will be our third event at Audubon Country Club. Net proceeds from will exceed \$30,000 after the 2017 event.

3. Please briefly describe the nominee's leadership ability.

This spring I attended a PGA Magazine Insider Conference with a member of our board of directors. In discussing our limited practice facilities, it was recommended by a PGA Magazine staff member that I speak to an architect out of Richmond, VA. His areas of specialization are historic properties and re-imagining limited space. Recognizing that

Audubon was in need of a unified direction and a cohesive long range plan, I invited the architect to visit the club. The relationship evolved into the club's board of directors commissioning him to construct a master plan for Audubon Country Club. The process will involve multiple focus group meetings along with presentations to the board and membership. I am excited to see the club move forward with a progressive and inclusive approach to long range planning and am proud to have been the member of our leadership team to initiate the process. I believe in our association's message that we must be the most valuable person at our facility. I work hard to be that person every day and to espouse that philosophy to each member of my staff.

4. Please briefly describe how the nominee inspires fellow Golf Professionals.

I take great pride in that eight of the twelve assistant professionals I have employed at Audubon Country Club have achieved PGA membership. Six of them currently serve the lead PGA Professional in their current roles. My assistants have been honored with the KPGA Assistant Professional of the Year award six times and have served the section as president of the Assistants/Apprentice Division six times.

I believe that the success that these current and former assistants have had speaks to our emphasis upon section participation and achievement. Additionally, I am hopeful that my community involvement and pursuit of continuing education inspires my peers to utilize their gifts and resources for personal and professional growth.

5. Please briefly describe how the nominee grows the game of golf at the facility, in the community and throughout the Section.

I believe that as PGA professionals we are ambassadors for the game of golf whether we are working at our facilities or our in our community. Prior to this year, I used 15 years of coaching grade school basketball to develop relationships with parents and children. It was extremely rewarding to see these relationships develop into memberships at our club as well as instruction relationships for my staff and other local professionals.

With my children all now out of grade school, I accepted an opportunity to become the assistant golf coach at Presentation Academy in downtown Louisville. I greatly enjoyed the challenge of developing the games of aspiring young women golfers. With the significant loss of young women to other sports in their early teens, I believe I have the opportunity to

personally grow and retain golfers in this segment.

Within our facility, we have seen significant growth in junior participation each of the past two years. This is especially encouraging considering overall membership at the club has been flat over the same time period. Through flexible programming, early and thorough communication, and a focus upon on-course instruction, our program grew from serving 85 unique juniors in 2015 to 102 unique juniors in 2016. With the expansion of our PGA Junior League programming, we expect to grow another 10% in 2017.

Our Get Golf Ready Fore Women program was a huge success in 2016. A late spring session, followed by a mid-summer session served a total of twenty-one beginning golfers. The program evolved into an informal evening league in which almost every GGR participant enjoyed playing in a scramble format. The retention of our female participants was so significant that the board of directors has recognized this programming as a “key opportunity” in our business planning for the upcoming season. I applaud them for recognizing the importance of the GGR program in retention and recruitment of members.

6. Please list any Section or National awards the nominee has received

2016 Kentucky PGA – Deacon Palmer Award (National Finalist)
2014 Kentucky PGA – Co-merchandiser of the Year, Private
2013 Kentucky PGA – Merchandiser of the Year, Private
2010 Kentucky PGA – Bill Strausbaugh Award
2008 Kentucky PGA – Horton Smith Award
2005 Kentucky PGA – Bill Strausbaugh Award
2004 Kentucky PGA – Golf Professional of the Year
2002 Kentucky PGA – Merchandiser of the Year (National Finalist)