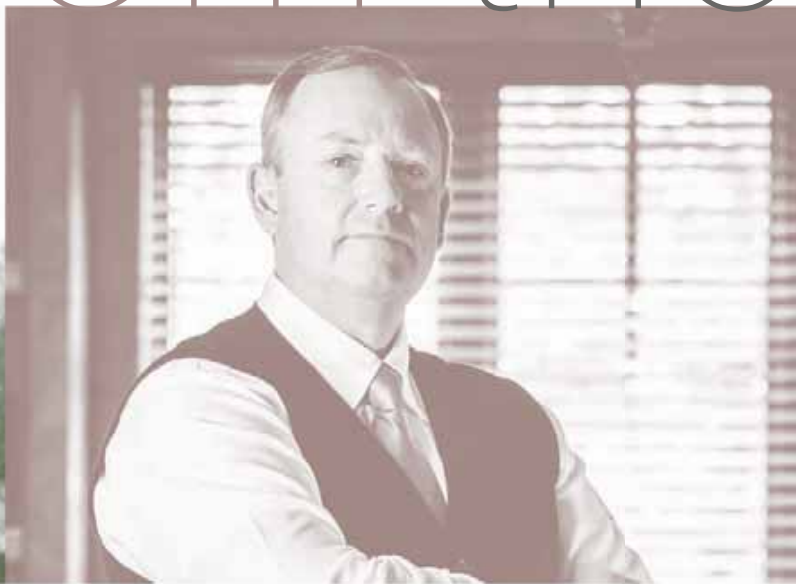
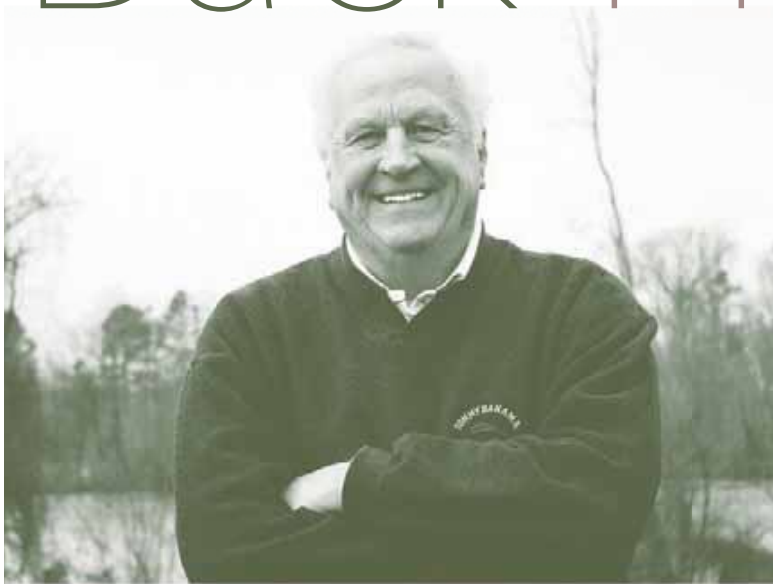


Back From the



Stories of golf course closures and bankruptcies abound, as golf's contraction cycle continues. Listen to enough of them

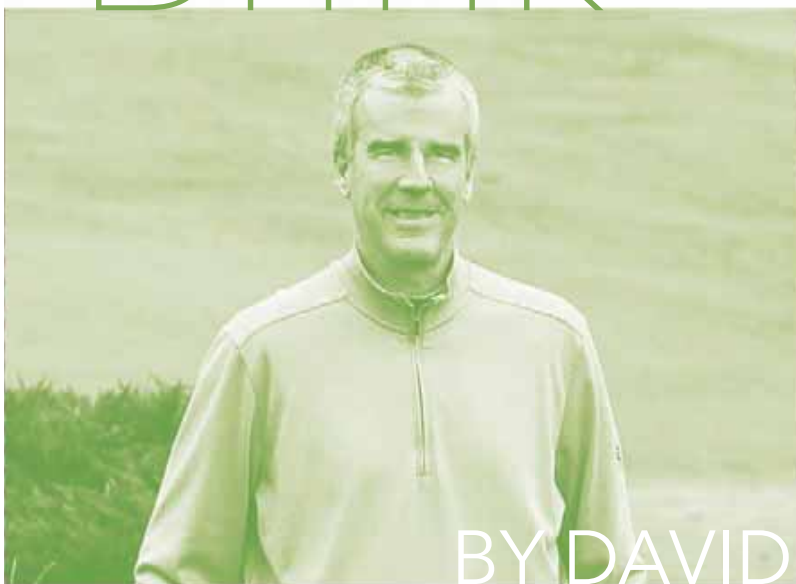
and you'll likely notice certain patterns. At times, it seems that the same four or five ill-advised strategies and reactions end up dooming the

100-plus operations that go offline each year.

By contrast, tales of courses that staved off elimination tend to all have a different theme

Brink

FOUR COURSE OPERATORS, FOUR TALES OF SURVIVAL



BY DAVID GOULD

or flavor to them. In the pages that follow, *Golf Business* profiles four facilities that were headed over the falls but managed to paddle back

toward safety. They still face the daily challenge of pleasing golfers without overspending their budgets, but lessons learned from the darkest

days are helping guide them forward. No doubt those same lessons can serve as both inspiration and caution for most any course owner.

RONNIE KELLEY

OWNER ■ RIVER'S BEND GOLF CLUB
Chester, Virginia

HOLDING ON

The comeback story of River's Bend Golf Club is still unfolding and a long way from certain, but its plot hinges on a premise that's compelling and novel enough to bear watching. Some 16 months following a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing that has kept the course in owner Ronnie Kelley's hands, work continues on a conservation easement plan that has win-win potential for the course owner and for environmentally-minded citizens of Chesterfield County, Virginia. A third win could be achieved by the county's tax collector, insofar as the multi-million dollar conservation credit that would be due to River's Bend poses a solution to Kelley's sizable property-tax arrears.

With a prominent conservation consultancy guiding River's Bend through its application process, the possibility remains for permanent donation of course development rights, which currently include a residential subdivision. "All I can say is that we are deep into the process, and our 1.5-mile frontage on the James River makes us an ideal candidate for easement status, according to the law," says Kelley, referring to the Virginia Land Conservation Incentives Act of 1999. Along with the environmental value for wildlife and waterway protection, his golf property lies across from the Henricus Island historical site, which marks the second Euro-

pean settlement in America, after nearby Jamestown.

Kelley, 62, is a golf professional who has triumphed and also tanked over his lengthy golf career. Proceeds from the sale of a course he and his late business partner owned—as part of what was a five-course portfolio—have been tapped to keep River's Bend in some sort of playable condition. Bunker repair is a particularly urgent need, by all accounts, and rounds played for 2014 totaled just more than 22,000. Kelley is hoping that a piecemeal bunker upgrade program he recently be-

gan will, along with other spruce-up work now underway, allow for a bump in per-round green fee revenue in 2015.

The magic bullet remains the conservation easement plan, which in Kelley's view has been slowed due to administrative problems in the early years, when developers reportedly snagged unduly large credits on properties that didn't deserve them. Pursuing the easement plan so relentlessly has made him so well-versed in the law that, in Kelley's words, "I could hire myself out as a consultant to other landowners."



© 2015 Photo by DJ Blomley



KEVIN O'BRIEN

GENERAL MANAGER ■ LOCHENHEATH GOLF CLUB
Williamsburg, Michigan

STAYIN' ALIVE

A golfer's online review from 2010 told the gloomy tale of LochenHeath, just before its foreclosure auction later that year: "Sad to see a once-great course deserted, overgrown and burnt out," the website blurb lamented. There were mournful feelings as well among principals in Pinnacle Arizona Development Partners, which defaulted on its mortgage covering the club and surrounding residential community and left owing \$120 million to the lender, a Wells Fargo unit. At that point, 60 of the 200 approved homesites at LochenHeath had been purchased, but less than a dozen homes were completed.

LochenHeath today is living proof that defunct golf properties can be reborn. Beautifully sited above East Grand Traverse Bay, this Steve Smyers layout had gone unplayed and unmaintained for two-plus years before devoted members acquired it. The facility had opened in 2002 as a public-access course, went private in 2004, briefly reverted to daily-fee in 2008, and soon thereafter suffered the bankruptcy that led to the shutdown.

In November 2010, the golf course and two clubhouses were purchased at auction by a 12-person syndicate composed of club members plus one professional golf manager. (The residential piece of the project is still owned by the lender.) The informal leader of the stalwart members was Al Ruggirello, one of the first to join at the beginning and whose belief in LochenHeath never wavered. Many a group of homeowners has had to watch maintenance terminated on their neighboring links. Most of them have complained and perhaps filed suit, while in this highly unusual case members toiled in the sun to physically maintain the course.

The core group was helped greatly by the efforts of Joe Ettawagiac, the former assistant superintendent who was brought back as the new superintendent. Ettawagiac oversaw the spadework that would reclaim and restore the course from near-wilderness conditions. Reportedly, one bunker required 65 man-hours of hand labor to fix, but for all that the rescue mission was accomplished rapidly, allowing for a celebratory reopening in May 2011. Another former employee—chef Joseph George—was also rehired and has proven equally important to the resurrection of LochenHeath.

Presently, the facility is managed by Kevin O'Brien and open for public play—at a posted weekend rate of \$130—and positioned to go private again by the end of the decade.

"This is really quite a story, one that we're glad to share with prospective new members and homebuyers," O'Brien says. "The members didn't sit by during the shutdown. They came out and kept the course alive—mowing, weeding bunkers, whatever they could do."

That dedication, it turns out, did not go unrewarded.



DAVID WETLI

GENERAL MANAGER ■ NORTH SHORE GOLF COURSE
Tacoma, Washington

STAYING POWER

One of the ways a golf course can disappear is through redevelopment, most often as a residential subdivision. North Shore Golf Course, a daily-fee serving golfers in Tacoma, Washington, since 1961, was ticketed for just that fate. Managers and staff—along with regular customers—endured an arduous limbo period that began in 2007 and lasted nearly five years, marked by court filings, hearings, appeals and a haze of uncertainty. The course's ownership group was committed to selling out if it could secure the necessary approvals and variances.

At a certain point, the public became convinced there would be no more North Shore. Even now, years later, general manager Dave Wetli runs into people who think the houses got built and the course is no longer there.

The drama reached its peak in April 2010, when Tacoma's city council met to hear an appeal of a longstanding zoning decree that blocked the course from being plowed up for housing. Pro-golf, anti-development forces prevailed, all but ending the controversy. Council members took every possible step to burn the decision into public memory. For starters, the hearing was broadcast live on local television and streamed live on the city's official website. Immediately afterward, a video of the hearing was posted on the municipal website and a DVD copy, plus printed transcript, was made available at the main public library.

Under these trying conditions, Wetli and his club staff hung on and continued serving golfers, feeling they had one hand tied behind their backs. "We kept operating, but in that scenario you only take

care of the short term," he says. "You don't replace mowers, you don't do any serious work on the clubhouse, not when there's a purchase-and-sale agreement that says the fairways are going to get plowed under."

Of all employment scenarios, there are few as awkward as reporting to bosses who are taking steps to eliminate the workplace where you and your staff earn your livelihoods. Odder still, some employees whom Wetli had worked closely with for years were the sons and daughters of owners, although even

among that contingent there was little inside information on the controversy forthcoming. As Wetli explains, however, the effect on morale wasn't all negative—there were unexpected positives that emerged as well.

"We make an effort to show appreciation to our customers every day in the way we serve them," he says. "We also make it a point to have the professional staff join our members club for each of their monthly tournaments as well as joining them and public golfers for golf on a weekly basis."

THREE KEY STEPS

Even when they bleed red ink for prolonged periods, public courses nestled in prosperous neighborhoods enjoy a cushion against closure. Outside Chicago, a sporty par-60 layout operated by the not-for-profit Evanston-Wilmette Golf Course Association (EWGCA) is a case in point.

"The community around this course wasn't interested in a soccer park or some other alternative use," explains Dan Wikel, a business turnaround specialist. In response, Wikel and others worked pro bono as part of a dream team to rescue Canal Shores. Their group even included the Ricketts family, owners of the Chicago Cubs.

The EWGCA replaces a previous board of directors that took a lax approach at best to its oversight responsibilities. It caught up to them finally in 2011, when the first of two consecutive money-losing seasons started the course on a tailspin. "The

operation was on the brink of collapse," Wikel recalls.

Indeed, the situation was dire. "This property spans two towns, and the water bills from both of them had gone unpaid for a couple of years," Wikel says. "Several greens were cooked, and a lot of the maintenance equipment was obsolete and unusable." There was even a lawsuit alleging misuse of funds by certain board members. The suit was a net positive because it gave a Cook County judge the opportunity to appoint a new board of residents and business leaders who would come in with their eyes wide open.

The approach the new board took has the structure of emergency medical care, involving triage, stabilization of the patient, then a course of treatment going forward. The most prominent tool deployed was a 13-week cash-flow model for the operation, to be constantly monitored over its course and then recalibrated appropriately for the ensuing 13-week period. Vendors and creditors were reassured enough by this device to set up terms and workouts until they could finally be made whole—which indeed happened in early 2014.

Along with the urgent fix to cost-side problems, the turnaround crew also pumped up revenues through sales of hole sponsorships and other fundraising activities. Chicago politics often gets a bad rap, but the Canal Shores turnaround is a glimpse of how the complex web of relationships and loyalties it's known for can lead to speedy, effective measures benefitting many. **TB**

DAN WIKEL

BOARD ADVISOR ■ CANAL SHORES
Wilmette-Evanston, Illinois



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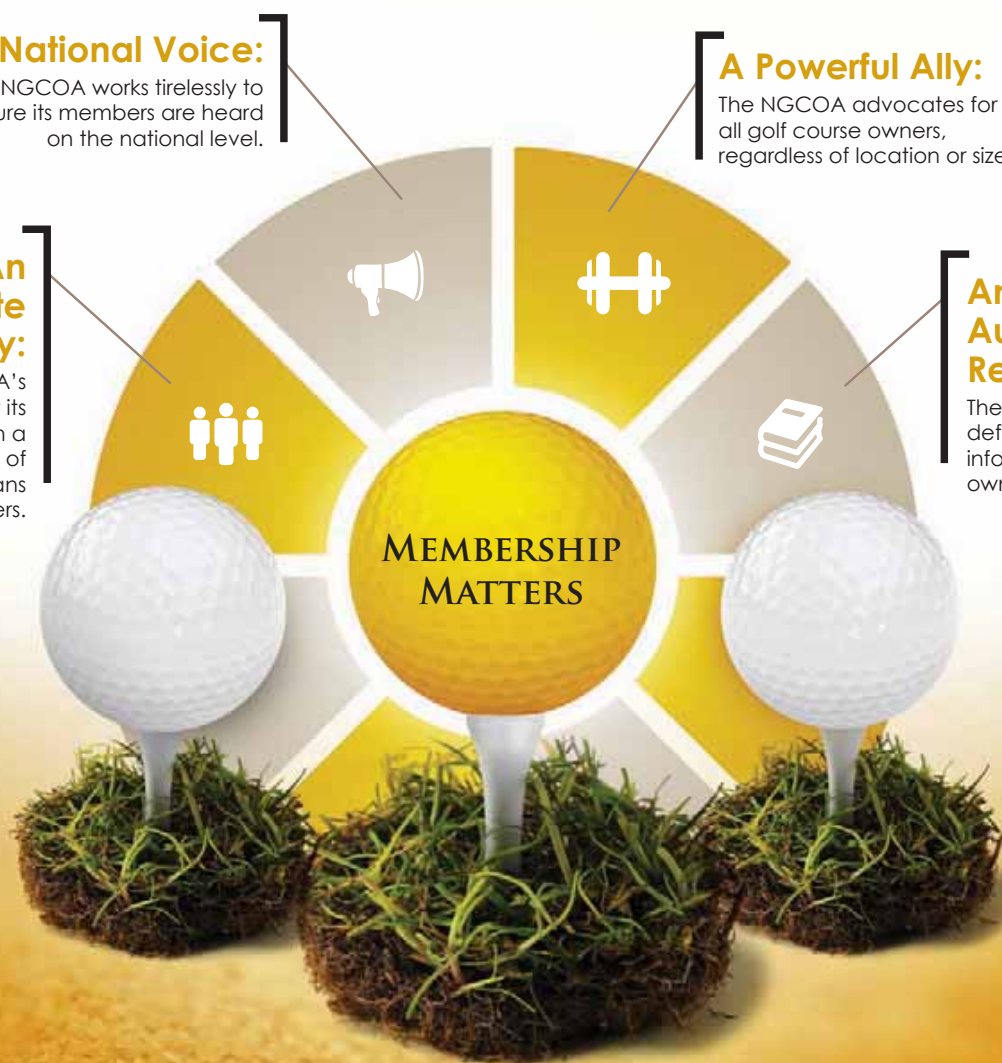
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COMMUNITY

ideas & insights that unite



Pulling Together

The National Football League has 32 teams. Not groups—teams. That's a huge distinction. All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams. Calling a group a team doesn't make it one. That's the team myth.

The team myth leads business owners and operators to think they can borrow a word or a label from sports to replace or expedite a process. Sure, you can call a group of staffers your (insert whatever department you like here) team, but that doesn't mean they'll act like one. Neither will your leadership team, your operations team or any team until they commit to these five steps needed to form a team.

STEP 1: Assemble a talented group of people. Like it or not, talent matters. But talent alone is never enough. Talent is the starting point, not the

finished product. Identify the talent you need and bring that talent together. But don't even think about calling that talent a team yet.

STEP 2: Build around clearly defined goals. All teams organize around specific objectives. On successful teams, every member knows the primary goal or goals. It's communicated thoroughly and consistently. The goal provides a direction so powerful team members know when they have drifted off course. What's the clearly defined goal or goals that will help reshape the talented individuals you have brought together into a team?

STEP 3: Create a shared success benefit for each team member. Everyone arrives at work each day motivated by his or her wants, desires and hopes. Harnessing that broad spectrum of ambitions and motives requires clarity. The success benefit for a team has to extend beyond each team member's salary and each member's individual motivations. Salary is a personal benefit. Successful teams revolve around shared benefits. What is the shared success benefit for your team members?

STEP 4: Elicit team buy-in with a specific and shared sacrifice. A team has members who sacrifice something important, some-

thing they all surrender. That surrender creates a buy-in, the foundation of a merit system. On the best teams, individuals who lead a specific category see their efforts as a way to bring their team to a higher level of shared accomplishment. Ironically, on losing teams the statistical leaders often draw more attention to themselves—it becomes an individual focus—and that tears a team apart into a group of individuals. Have the members of your team paid a price to belong? Name the price. Make it a high price. People value what they pay the most for.

STEP 5: Hold the team to a specific time period. Groups, associations and organizations are open-ended; teams are not. Teams have a specific start and end date. The first four steps help your

A team has members who sacrifice something important. That surrender creates a buy-in, the foundation of a merit system.

team reach the start date. The fifth step—the end date—helps push the team with a sense of urgency, purpose and focus. Your team needs a specific time period that drives it toward achieving excellence. Is it a month? A quarter? Six months? Two years? You decide. Just as every NFL team knows the date of next year's Super Bowl, make sure your team knows the date of its "super bowl!"

These five steps will transform your groups into teams, and your teams can transform your organization into an industry leader. But just because you embrace the team approach doesn't guarantee success. That's the last part of the team myth. Thirty-one teams in the NFL fail to win the final game of the season. And all 32 set out to build a stronger team the next year.

—By Gerry Sandusky, a speaker, corporate trainer and author of "Forgotten Sundays" (www.GerrySandusky.com)

Food For Thought

THINK TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORKPLACE IS A PRODUCTION-KILLER? Not necessarily. According to several course managers who attended the Syngenta Business Institute in December 2014, allowing employees to use their smartphones on the course is an effective way to communicate with each other and leaders. Gen-Y workers, in particular, prefer this communication tool, and it's one way to ensure you always stay in touch. So before you make a blanket rule prohibiting the use of phones on the course by employees, consider the possibilities rather than focusing on potential negatives.

Leadership for a New Era



As a small business grows and the company culture evolves with the various and shifting industry landscapes, the leadership style of its owner tends to reflect those changes. Terry Powell, founder of AdviCoach, a national business coaching and advisory firm customized for small- to mid-size businesses, offers these three tips to help lead a company forward in a new era:

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE. Employees often look to their supervisors for guidance and advice. So as long as the business owner follows the rules and guidelines that they themselves have set for their staff, employees are encouraged to follow suit. Leading by example can help shape your image as a role model within the business and the community, which can in turn lead to increased productivity and a healthier bottom line.

2 BE MORE HONEST. Sometimes, it's easier to tell a white lie rather than being blunt; however, each occurrence reduces credibility. When leaders lose their credibility, they lose authority and respect among their peers. To prevent this, be completely transparent with employees and customers. For example, if you make a mistake with a customer or employee, don't try to blame it on another factor or person. Owning fault will increase the trust that customers and employees have in the business and you as a person.

3 BECOME A SAVVY NETWORKER. It's all about who you know, and the best leaders have the most connections. Set a goal to attend a certain number of networking events. The more people you meet, the more potential customers or business partners you meet in turn. This could be a real bonus for your business.

A Tasty Offering



When the men at IMA Brookwood Golf Course & Banquet Center saw how popular an annual women's winter event had become at the Burton, Michigan, public facility, they wondered if they might get a little taste of the action themselves.

The item on the table, so to speak, was the annual Brookwood Wine, Women & Chocolate event, which for one day each year turns the course into a virtual winter wonderland and quasi-day spa. Now in its 10th season, the event features cross-country skiing (equipment provided); five hospitality tents that provide coffee, teas, cookies, hot chocolate, soup and bread; and stations offering chair massages, manicures, hair refreshers, paraffin, make-up items and more. The price to participate in this daylong pamperfest: \$50, all-inclusive.

To maintain costs, management partners with local sponsors for food and supplies, then brings things full circle by using the event as a fundraiser for the Boys and Girls clubs and IMA Recreation Group. Over

time, Wine, Women & Chocolate has evolved into a popular event that attracts approximately 300 women. It's also become a significant revenue generator, albeit one exclusively for charity.

"We raise between \$15,000

and \$18,000 net," says marketing director Diane Wojciechowski. "So, I'd say you can make money on a golf course in the winter if you're creative and you do it the right way."

After a few years of hearing about how much fun the ladies were having at Wine, Women & Chocolate, the men at Brookwood started getting a bit envious. In response, general manager Chris Allard created Burgers, Brews & Dudes, a men's-only gathering (\$35) that includes a build-your-own-burger bar, craft beer tasting, hot towel shaves, men's grooming services, two tables of poker, a raffle and two 50/50 drawings. Now in its third season, the annual event has steadily grown to 150 participants.

For those looking to try something similar, Allard offers one bit of advice: be patient. "Don't expect the world in the first year," he says. "We're up to 300 now with the women and 150 with the men. We were nowhere near that in the beginning, but we stuck to it and it grew and grew. Now it's a great moneymaker, and people have a lot of fun in the process." —Jeff Barr

Golf Industry Calendar

March 8-12

88TH WORLD CONFERENCE & CLUB BUSINESS EXPO
San Antonio, Texas
www.cmaa.org

March 27-April 1

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS ANNUAL MEETING
La Jolla, California
www.asgca.org

April 15

NATIONAL GOLF DAY
Washington, D.C.
www.wearegolf.org

July 21-23

GOLF COURSE BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA SUMMER MEETING
The Mining Exchange, a Wyndham Grand Hotel
Colorado Springs, CO
www.gcbaa.org

August 17-19

PGA FALL EXPO
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.pgallasvegas.com

September 4-7

PATRIOT GOLF DAY
Nationwide
www.foldsofhonor.org/patriot-golf-day

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Writing a new Chapter

The 2015 NGCOA Course of the Year is penning a unique story in the small hamlet of Atkinson

History isn't written quickly or in short chapters around tiny Atkinson, New Hampshire. It's quaint and quintessentially New England around these parts, and the stories typically take time to build and reveal themselves.

All of which makes Atkinson's most recent chapter stand in such stark contrast to the town's long, storied past. Ironically, it was written fairly quickly and involves a proud family and its wide-reaching, privately held business enterprise, along with a deep commitment to all members of this working-class community. And it involves golf.

Three generations of the Lewis family (see "All in the Family", January 2015) have called Atkinson home. Peter Lewis originally launched a building company with his parents Ralph and Lillian back in 1958. Along the way, the Lewis Group of Companies added lumber and building supplies, home and apartment building, land development and a private water utility serving half the town's homes and businesses. If you live in Atkinson, you know of the Lewis family.



Atkinson Resort & Country Club is the winner of the 2015 NGCOA Course of the Year.

Then out of nowhere, the family business expanded in an entirely new direction. In 1996, nine holes of golf were carved from a portion of 420 rolling acres of field and forest, and the story of Atkinson Resort & Country Club began. A second nine followed two years later, completing the par-72 course that plays 6,580 yards from the tips. In 2002, the family opened a sprawling, 75,000-square-foot clubhouse that features two restaurants, 16 overnight guest rooms, a sweeping veranda, an outdoor wedding venue and a large, elegant function space to host receptions, special events and business meetings.

A par-3 course was added in 2009 and quickly earned PGA Family Course Designation. Also that year, officials launched Willowcreek Golf

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Industry Pulse



December 2014 Monthly Average Rounds Played / Days Open Comparison

Facility Type	Average Rounds Played 2014	Average Rounds Played 2013	% Change	Average Days Open 2014	Average Days Open 2013	% Change
All Facility Types	777	766	1.4%	15.8	14.0	12.9%
Private	653	649	.6%	16.7	15.0	11.3%
Daily Fee	791	777	1.8%	14.9	13.1	13.7%
Muni/Mil/Univ	906	887	2.1%	16.1	13.9	15.8%
Resort	1,037	1,044	-.7%	19.5	17.4	12.1%

2014 Year-to-Date Average Rounds Played / Days Open Comparison

Facility Type	YTD 2014 Rounds Played	YTD 2013 Rounds Played	% Change	YTD 2014 Days Open	YTD 2013 Days Open	% Change
All Facility Types	23,312	23,653	-1.4%	266.0	271.6	-2.1%
Private	18,012	18,184	-0.9%	263.8	269.0	-1.9%
Daily Fee	24,652	25,018	-1.5%	264.7	271.0	-2.3%
Muni/Mil/Univ	28,884	29,432	-1.9%	270.8	275.4	-1.7%
Resort	23,335	23,801	-2.0%	279.4	283.6	-1.5%

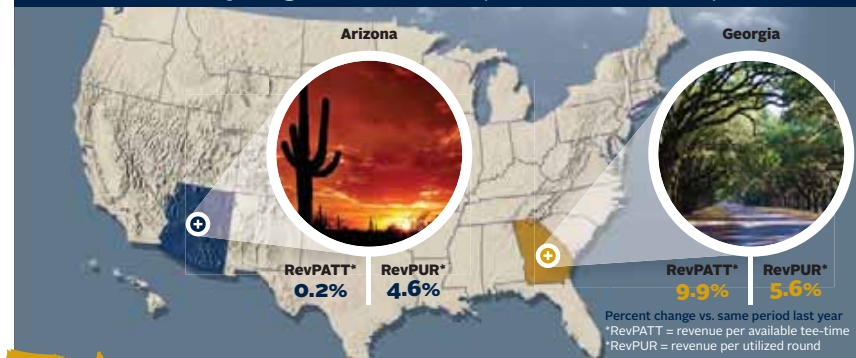
December 2014 Median Golf Fee Revenue Per Facility

Facility Type	Median 2014	Median 2013	% Change	Sample Size
All Facility Types	\$27,500	\$27,000	1.9%	965
Private	\$17,084	\$16,053	6.4%	238
Daily Fee	\$27,410	\$27,547	-0.5%	347
Muni/Mil/Univ	\$27,952	\$28,371	-1.5%	299
Resort	\$118,833	\$109,257	8.8%	81

December 2014 Median Gross Revenue Per Rounds Played

Facility Type	Median Golf Fee Revenue	Median Merchandise Fee Revenue	Median F&B Revenue	Median Total Revenue
All Facility Types	\$17.47	\$12.38	\$39.77	\$124.60
Private	\$12.96	\$28.56	\$104.89	\$306.35
Daily Fee	\$17.64	\$5.31	\$13.55	\$48.77
Muni/Mil/Univ	\$19.45	\$3.80	\$3.90	\$29.03
Resort	\$45.23	\$14.02	\$20.49	\$87.04

December 2014 Spotlight: NGCOA Competitive Golf Marketplaces



What about my state? See more details on your market by registering at www.pgaperformancetrak.com

All Rounds Played averages are starts per 18 holes. Detailed data provided based on sufficient response. Responses are from all participating facilities with 9 holes or more. Data presented was submitted by the 24th of each month for the prior month's data. Rounds Played are weighted by facility type.



Some rounds played data included in this report have been collected and supplied by NGF and Golf Datatech. Learn more at www.ngcoa.org/benchmark. For more report details, visit www.pgaperformancetrak.com.

continued from page 47

Academy, which boasts 15,000 square feet of natural grass tees, 12,000 square feet of putting surfaces, a handful of practice bunkers and a 65-yard practice hole.

Uncharacteristically for Atkinson, things were happening—and happening fast. In a mere fraction of the town's existence—13 years to be exact—a full-service, wildly impressive, year-round, public golf facility emerged and has quickly become Atkinson's epicenter. Atkinson Resort & Country Club is now a gathering point for townsfolk of all ages to play golf, dine, socialize and celebrate together. The National Golf Course Owners Association honored the club last month with its 2015 National Golf Course of the Year award, announced in San Antonio at the NGCOA Annual Conference. (Other finalists included Currahee Club in Toccoa, Georgia; Haggin Oaks Golf Complex in Sacramento, California; and The Legend at Shanty Creek Resorts in Bellaire, Michigan.)

The NGCOA bases its Course of the Year award on four factors: quality of the golf course, quality of ownership and management, significant contributions to the game of golf, and outstanding contributions to the local community. The last criterion may have been what tipped the scales in favor of Atkinson Resort because it's the people of Atkinson—including 250 full-time, part-time and seasonal employees at the club—that matter most to owner-operator Christine Lewis Morse.

"People, families are so spread out these days," she says. "So it means a lot when they come up to us after events and thank us on their way out for giving them somewhere to come together. It's flattering." The club also helps feed the local economy with \$8 million in revenue generated in 2014, coming equally from social events, restaurants and golf operations.

When harsh New England winters roll in and the courses shut down in late November through March, the

continued on next page

resort continues to operate its restaurants, serving three meals a day. Meanwhile, golfers continue to hone their skills in the club's heated hitting bays, on the winterized practice range or in an indoor gaming room that features four golf simulators installed at a cost of nearly \$800,000.

Each year, the Lewis family business donates a 45-foot Christmas tree and hosts a tree-lighting event that offers a wide variety of family-friendly activities. A local high school's golf teams enjoy unlimited practice and

play opportunities at the club, with one of the club's golf staff serving as head coach. In the spring, Atkinson Resort hosts a tournament benefiting the local Boys and Girls clubs. It's this all-around, open-arms commitment to community, and to the game of golf, that makes the club the crown jewel of the Lewis family business and a shining star among golf course owners nationally.

Indeed, an exciting new chapter in the town's rich history has been written, and it's titled "Atkinson Resort & Country Club." 🍷

A LASTING IMPRESSION

For 20 years, it seems, Anne Lyndrup didn't have a job. Rather, she had a mission in her role as director of player development and director of conference and trade show at the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA).

"Anne is one of those truly special people who was always a terrific team player," says Mike Hughes, CEO of the NGCOA. "She was never out for individual glory. It was all about moving the ball forward for the association and its members. Our mission was always foremost in her mind: to benefit our members."

Retired for two years, Lyndrup received the NGCOA's 2015 Don Rossi Award at the association's Annual Conference in San Antonio last month. The award is named for Rossi, who served as president of the National Golf Foundation and executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, and later helped found the NGCOA. It is given to individuals in recognition of significant and long-lasting contributions to the NGCOA.



During her tenure, Lyndrup created the highly successful Take Your Daughter to the Course Week, an annual program that encourages course owners and parents to get young girls off on the right foot when venturing into the game of golf. She also spearheaded the NGCOA's grow-the-game efforts, which benefited the association, its members and the golf industry in general. Perhaps Lyndrup's most significant contribution, however, was overseeing the NGCOA Annual Conference, the golf industry's largest gathering of owners and operators of daily-fee, private, resort and municipal courses.

Above all, Lyndrup was known for her role as a true advocate for course owners and carried with her the daily question, "What can I do for the members today?"

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Industry Pulse



December 2014 Average Rounds Played by State

State	Average Rounds Played 2014	Average Rounds Played 2013	% Change	State	Average Rounds Played 2014	Average Rounds Played 2013	% Change
Alabama	821	726	13.1%	Nebraska	149	124	20.2%
Arizona	2,799	2,916	-4.0%	Nevada	1,510	1,475	2.4%
Arkansas	331	318	4.1%	New Hampshire	5	13	-61.5%
California	2,362	2,831	-16.6%	New Jersey	380	326	16.6%
Colorado	424	338	25.4%	New Mexico	552	492	12.2%
Connecticut	128	95	34.7%	New York	117	84	39.3%
Delaware	367	462	-20.6%	North Carolina	973	1,041	-6.5%
Florida	2,896	2,862	1.2%	North Dakota	0	0	*
Georgia	1,125	1,005	11.9%	Ohio	153	104	47.1%
Hawaii	2,129	2,086	2.1%	Oklahoma	777	784	-0.9%
Idaho	260	69	276.8%	Oregon	689	538	28.1%
Illinois	104	45	131.1%	Pennsylvania	241	132	82.6%
Indiana	106	80	32.5%	Rhode Island	240	157	52.9%
Iowa	70	40	75.0%	South Carolina	1,361	1,387	-1.9%
Kansas	314	314	0.0%	South Dakota	30	11	172.7%
Kentucky	272	290	-6.2%	Tennessee	594	638	-6.9%
Louisiana	1,066	925	15.2%	Texas	1,454	1,379	5.4%
Maine	0	0	*	Utah	1,086	399	172.2%
Maryland	560	566	-1.1%	Vermont	0	0	*
Massachusetts	167	86	94.2%	Virginia	681	708	-3.8%
Michigan	65	19	242.1%	Washington	716	603	18.7%
Minnesota	16	3	433.3%	West Virginia	243	135	80.0%
Mississippi	710	688	3.2%	Wisconsin	1	3	-66.7%
Missouri	321	282	13.8%	Wyoming	27	4	575.0%
Montana	31	4	675.0%				

December 2014 Year-to-Date Average Rounds Played by State

State	Average Rounds Played 2014	Average Rounds Played 2013	% Change	State	Average Rounds Played 2014	Average Rounds Played 2013	% Change
Alabama	19,102	19,265	-0.8%	Nebraska	18,910	18,983	-0.4%
Arizona	36,315	35,692	1.7%	Nevada	29,838	29,236	2.1%
Arkansas	13,820	14,165	-2.4%	New Hampshire	22,163	21,935	1.0%
California	40,490	41,387	-2.2%	New Jersey	19,924	20,333	-2.0%
Colorado	24,763	24,584	0.7%	New Mexico	19,566	20,179	-3.0%
Connecticut	22,241	22,514	-1.2%	New York	17,313	17,822	-2.9%
Delaware	20,126	20,312	-0.9%	North Carolina	22,236	22,829	-2.6%
Florida	32,894	33,442	-1.6%	North Dakota	16,533	14,409	14.7%
Georgia	22,604	23,132	-2.3%	Ohio	20,831	20,863	-0.2%
Hawaii	27,760	28,570	-2.8%	Oklahoma	23,330	23,686	-1.5%
Idaho	21,742	21,480	1.2%	Oregon	25,162	26,092	-3.6%
Illinois	19,849	20,412	-2.8%	Pennsylvania	19,788	20,367	-2.8%
Indiana	17,052	17,688	-3.6%	Rhode Island	20,224	19,293	4.8%
Iowa	18,582	19,527	-4.8%	South Carolina	27,772	28,537	-2.7%
Kansas	21,604	20,262	6.6%	South Dakota	19,640	16,841	16.6%
Kentucky	17,629	18,180	-3.0%	Tennessee	21,879	22,069	-0.9%
Louisiana	19,018	19,131	-0.6%	Texas	28,596	28,792	-0.7%
Maine	17,355	17,334	0.1%	Utah	34,647	32,735	5.8%
Maryland	23,336	24,981	-6.6%	Vermont	13,763	14,411	-4.5%
Massachusetts	20,291	20,068	1.1%	Virginia	21,350	22,049	-3.2%
Michigan	18,736	19,952	-6.1%	Washington	27,634	29,212	-5.4%
Minnesota	20,696	19,990	3.5%	West Virginia	13,835	14,392	-3.9%
Mississippi	17,233	16,898	2.0%	Wisconsin	19,103	18,731	2.0%
Missouri	20,396	20,701	-1.5%	Wyoming	12,956	12,801	1.2%
Montana	18,517	19,355	-4.3%				

All Rounds Played averages are starts per 18 holes. Detailed data provided based on sufficient response. Responses are from all participating facilities with 9 holes or more. Data presented was submitted by the 24th of each month for the prior month's data. Rounds Played are weighted by facility type.



Some rounds played data included in this report have been collected and supplied by NGF and Golf Datatech. Learn more at www.ngcoa.org/benchmark. For more report details, visit www.pgaperformancetrak.

OPERATING SOLUTIONS

WHEN IT COMES TIME TO DECIDE WHAT EQUIPMENT and apparel to stock in the golf shop, management of Bay Creek Resort and Club in Cape Charles, Virginia, makes sure to get plenty of input from female members. The result has been increased sales and additional involvement by the women's groups.

Director of golf Joe Burbee gets the ball rolling each year when he sends a survey to the women who participate in the league. The survey allows the club to take stock of fashion trends and special needs or desires. "We keep it open-ended, asking if there was anything we were missing or any brands they would like us to carry," says Burbee, a two-time winner of the Mid-Atlantic PGA Section's Merchandiser of the Year award.

By asking their opinion, Burbee not only gets a clearer indication of the items of most interest to the women, he's also convincing them that the club is interested in delivering what they want. As a result, the club's female members are loyal to Burbee and purchase most of their golf attire and equipment from his shop. "We think it makes the ladies feel wanted," says Burbee, noting that revenue numbers for men's and women's apparel are approximately the same because of the support shown by the women.

Catering to this clientele also just makes good business sense, considering studies have shown that most women today control spending in their households. "If we're not doing things to treat them as equals, it really isn't very smart on our behalf," Burbee says. "They might take the family's business elsewhere."

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Champions of the Game



It's hard to tell whether legendary golfer Greg Norman has achieved greater success on the course or off. "The Shark" dominated tournament fields in the 1980s and 1990s (ranked No. 1 in the world for 331 weeks) and took that same fierce desire to succeed from the locker room to the boardroom. In recognition of his storied competitive and golf industry career, the NGCOA honored the charismatic Aussie with the association's 2015 Award of Merit for long-term and significant contributions to the game of golf.

One of the most colorful and successful golfers in the game's history, Norman used his daring, swashbuckling style to capture 90 international victories, including two majors (The Open Championship 1986, 1993) and 20 PGA Tour events. Norman is also a three-time winner of the Vardon Trophy, awarded by the PGA of America each year to the PGA Tour player with the lowest scoring average.

"We selected Greg Norman for our Award of Merit for the many, many years he has dedicated to advancing the game of golf and the lifestyle that comes with it," says Mike Hughes, CEO of the NGCOA. "Greg's accomplishments in tournament golf are well-known, but he has also been very successful in his various golf business ventures."

Norman's global business enterprise encompasses everything from course design to wine, and seemingly everything in between. He has designed more than 70 golf courses on six of

the world's seven continents, many of which have been heralded for sensitivity to ecological interests and concerns. Norman's business empire also includes a turfgrass company, a financial investment firm, and residential and land development. Perhaps his most well-known off-course business is his Greg Norman Estates portfolio of fine wines, which happen to pair well with Greg Norman Australian Prime, a line of premium steak and beef offerings.

As successful as he's been in business, the 60-year-old native of Queensland is equally adept at giving back. Norman operates the Greg Norman Champions Golf Academy and heads the Greg Norman Foundation, which focuses on advancing the game of golf by introducing school-aged youth, children with disabilities and junior members of golf clubs to the game. He also hosts the annual Franklin Templeton Shootout, a 54-hole, stroke-play event that raises money for childhood cancer.

In other news, the NGCOA honored We Are Golf and Aaron Gleason of Dynamic Revenue Services as co-winners of its annual Champion Award. The award is "bestowed upon individuals or entities that have succeeded in working on behalf of a group of owners—locally, regionally, nationally or internationally—and have garnered a significant victory for our members."

Founded in 2009, We Are Golf is a coalition of the industry's leading organizations, including the NGCOA, that was formed, in part, to help elected officials better understand the contributions the game makes to the national economy and to ensure golf is fairly represented on Capital Hill. With nearly 2 million Americans working in the industry, We Are Golf advocates for the thousands of small businesses that make up the industry. ♣

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Confidential—Kentucky Course - 18 holes, 156 acres, Well kept zoysia fairways, bent grass greens, 21,000+ annual rounds, county's only liquor license, pro shop, banquet facility, and maintenance facility. Don't buy a loser. This course makes money. Annual sales near \$900K. Asking \$1,000,000. Send buyer profile to golfproky@gmail.com, (270) 933-8320.

Confidential—North Carolina - 6,494 yard championship course recently awarded Golf Digest's coveted 4-Star rating. Par 72 with Penncross Bentgrass greens and Bermuda fairways. The manor style Clubhouse can accommodate up to 120 guests. Other amenities include a swimming pool and tennis courts. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Confidential—Coastal Georgia - Coastal Georgia signature design. Owner motivated to sell. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Durham Lakes—Fairburn, GA - 18 holes conveniently located just off of I-85 in metro Atlanta. Voted one of GA's Top 100 Must Play Courses by Golf Styles Magazine. **PRICE REDUCED.** Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Fall Branch Parcel—Murphy Township, NC - 675+/- acres next to the new Cherokee Valley Casino opening in 2015. Nine miles of roads. **PRICE REDUCED.** Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Greensbridge Golf Course—Garland, NC - \$475,000 Buys an 18 Hole Golf Course in North Carolina On 235 Acres! Owners are offering GREENSBIDGE Golf Course in Garland NC with 235 Development acres in a half-acre zone. Some homes already built. This is a firm, rock-bottom price and in-

cludes most equipment, clubhouse and furnishings, maintenance building. Carts are leased. \$375,000 buys just 18 hole GC, buildings, equipment. Make an appointment to view this one! Needs a good manager & marketer to bring to full potential. Deloris (910) 754-4529 or dgausch@atmc.net.

Honey Creek GC—Conyers, GA - An affordable, friendly, family oriented golf club located 20 miles east of the perimeter in Conyers. Amenities include a 17,000 square foot clubhouse with full-service lounge, dining and banquet facilities, two lighted tennis courts and swimming pool. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Jennings Mill CC—Bogart, GA - Ranked one of GA's top courses. A short drive from Athens. The 10,000sf clubhouse anchors the 18-hole championship Bob Cupp designed golf course and its amenities. Spectacular landscape views. A must see to appreciate. **"PRICE NEGOTIABLE"** Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Lighthouse Point Yacht & Racquet Club—Lighthouse Point, FL - 9.49 total acres; 6.69 upland. 78-slip marina, clubhouse, swimming pool, 10 tennis courts, racquet ball courts and parking lot. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Mattaponi Springs GC—Ruther Glen, VA - The only course in Central and Northern VA ranked in America's 100 Greatest Public Courses, Golf Digest 2009, 2011, 2013. Pristine golf on 330 acres, full amenity clubhouse, excellent practice facilities, lodge & conference center on-site. Convenient to Richmond, DC and Baltimore. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Osage National Golf Resort—Lake Ozark, MO - The ONLY 18 hole Arnold Palmer signature course in Missouri, with an additional 9 hole Links style course and all of the amenities. Also offering a 37 acre mixed-use tract, 100 completed Residential lots with infrastructure, 130 undeveloped acres and 17 acres zoned and partially developed for condos. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Quail Ridge Golf Club—Sanford, NC - Just south of Raleigh, north of Pinehurst is this 18 hole championship design by legendary Ellis Maples flat to rolling terrain, mature, tree lined, functional clubhouse, range, practice green, Contact Brett At Miller Management Associates, Inc., (828) 775-7765, brett@mmagolf.com.

River Pointe GC—Albany, GA - Built in 1995 on the banks of the Flint River estuary and voted "BEST OF THE BEST" in the Albany area for four consecutive years. This course plays to 6,919 yards and offers all of the amenities—clubhouse, pool, practice facilities and a newly renovated pro shop. Great

CLASSIFIEDS

turn-key opportunity. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Rose Island—Port Royal, SC - Coastal Low Country, private island, secluded yet convenient! 100+/- acre upland island with an additional 300+/- acres of Kings Grant marsh land. Existing features: One 4BR, 4BA elevated home, pool, horse barn and stables, dock, deep well, 20 sub-divided lots, permit for more docks, barge permit and landing in place and more. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Seven Lakes Country Club—West End, NC - A Peter Tufts III design; 18-Hole course with amenities. Ranked for the 6th year in a row as one of the TOP 100 courses in NC! Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Stonecrest GC—Summerfield, FL - A semi-private golf course located in the rolling hills of central Florida. The course is the centerpiece of the recreational facilities associated with the adult retirement community of Stonecrest. Stonecrest is a links style course designed by Pete Newgent. Water can come into play on eight holes of this par 72 layout that measures 6,852 yards from the championship tees. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

The Players Course at Wyboo Plantation—Manning, SC - 18-hole semi-private Earnest Wallace design nestled along the shores of Lake Marion and situated on 198+/- acres. Measures 6,969 yards from the championship tees; 25 station driving range; clubhouse includes pro shop and grill. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Totteridge GC—Greensburg, PA - Totteridge is the ONLY Rees Jones course in western PA. This 18-hole links style course has received great accolades and was honored this year (2014) by Golf Digest as the 11th best golf course in PA in addition to a 4.5 Star Rating on GolfAdvisors.com. This layout takes full advantage of the rolling hills and the breathtaking vistas. Additional land available. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

Twisted Oaks Golf Course—Beverly Hills, FL - Relaxing, picturesque setting in a rolling landscape situated in West Florida. Links-style course with year-round play. 6,773 yards from the black tees. Chipping and putting areas. Semi-private. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com.

White River Golf Course—Rochester, VT - 9 hole course on 50± acres. It is a regulation 9 hole golf course with three Par 3's, four Par 4's, and two Par 5's. The sale offering consists of the golf course, clubhouse with owners quarters, 2 apartments, and a Bar/Restaurant fully furnished and equipped. Contact Hilda Allen at Hilda W. Allen Real Estate Inc., (888) 324-5020, hildahwa@gmail.com. In conjunction with D R Symmes & Associates.

Windy Hill Golf Club—Monroe TWP, OH - 18 holes, Range, Practice Area, Catering, 5,000 sq ft brick Clubhouse, Pavilion, Additional rental income from campground and more. Some Carts and Equipment included. Beer license included. Over 200 acres. \$895K Owner's Home available separately. David Byczek@ERA.com (330) 391-1957.

Auctions

Elk Creek Golf Course—Moberly, MO - Golf Course Liquidation Auction, March 27th at 10 AM. 206 acres in 3 tracts. John Deere Equipment, Gas golf carts, tools, clubhouse fixtures, and more. LandAndAuction.net, (800) 499-6774.

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1) Do you wish to receive/continue to receive *Golf Business* FREE?

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2) Which one option best characterizes your organization? (check one only)

- 01 ☐ Golf Course Facility/Group of Facilities
- 02 ☐ Off-Course Golf Retailer
- 03 ☐ Golf Industry Manufacturer/Vendor/Distributor
- 04 ☐ Golf Course Consultant

3) What one option most closely matches your job function/title? (select one only)

- 01 ☐ President/CEO
- 02 ☐ Owner/Operator
- 03 ☐ Chairman of the Board
- 04 ☐ CFO/Financial Manager
- 05 ☐ General Manager
- 06 ☐ Club Manager
- 07 ☐ Director of Golf
- 08 ☐ Executive/National/Regional Director/Manager
- 09 ☐ Purchasing Manager/Buyer
- 10 ☐ Golf Professional
- 11 ☐ Golf Superintendent
- 12 ☐ Member, Board of Directors
- 13 ☐ Marketing/Sales Manager/Director
- 15 ☐ Other (please specify) _____

4) Which one best describes the nature of your organization? (select one only)

- 10 ☐ Private
- 11 ☐ Privately-Owned Daily Fee
- 12 ☐ Semi-Private
- 13 ☐ Resort
- 14 ☐ Municipal/State/County
- 16 ☐ Military
- 17 ☐ University/College
- 18 ☐ Driving Range/Practice Facility
- 20 ☐ Development Company
- 28 ☐ Golf Course Builder
- 21 ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- 21 ☐ Not Applicable

5) Are you affiliated with a golf course management company?

- 01 ☐ yes
- 02 ☐ no

6) How many facilities, in total, are you personally responsible for?

- 80 ☐ less than 2
- 81 ☐ 2 - 4
- 82 ☐ 5 - 9
- 83 ☐ 10 or more
- 99 ☐ Not applicable

7) What is the average greens fee for a typical round of golf at your facility? If you work at multiple facilities, please indicate the average greens fee across all facilities.

- 01 ☐ nothing/private
- 02 ☐ o less than \$25
- 03 ☐ \$25 - \$49
- 04 ☐ \$50 - \$74
- 05 ☐ \$75 - \$99
- 06 ☐ \$100 - \$149
- 07 ☐ \$150 or more
- 08 ☐ not applicable

8) What is the total annual budget or expenditures for which you are responsible?

- 50 ☐ less than \$99,000
- 51 ☐ \$100,000 - \$249,000
- 52 ☐ \$250,000 - \$499,000
- 53 ☐ \$500,000 - \$999,000
- 54 ☐ \$1,000,000 - \$2,499,000
- 55 ☐ \$2,500,000 or more

9) In which ways are you personally involved in your organization's purchasing decisions?

- 60 ☐ Determine annual budget expenditures
- 61 ☐ Authorize final purchases
- 62 ☐ Determine needs of the operation
- 63 ☐ Specify/recommend vendors or suppliers
- 64 ☐ Specify/recommend specific brands
- 65 ☐ Evaluate brands for purchase

10) Which products/services listed below do you specify, recommend, buy or approve the purchase? (select all that apply)

- A ☐ Golf Cars
- B ☐ Turf Equipment
- C ☐ Course Design/Construction/Renovation
- D ☐ Irrigation & Drainage
- E ☐ Chemicals, Fertilizer & Seed
- G ☐ Clubhouse Design/Construction/Renovation
- H ☐ Financial Services
- T ☐ Legal Services
- F ☐ Course Accessories
- J ☐ Insurance
- U ☐ Marketing Services
- L ☐ Pro Shop Apparel
- M ☐ Pro Shop Equipment
- P ☐ Food & Beverage
- R ☐ Computers/Technology
- V ☐ Furniture/Fixtures
- W ☐ Human Resources/Staffing
- K ☐ Consulting

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3

FINAL THOUGHTS

Allison George

Wizard of Fun
Toad Valley Golf Course
Pleasant Hill, Iowa

Biggest challenge you've faced in recent years

A few years ago, the main road to our course was closed, causing our golfers to travel an additional 15 minutes on a detour. It was an incredibly difficult year, and we spent the next several years digging out of the hole that it caused to our bottom line. Through creative marketing and a lot of hard work, we were able to successfully recover.

Best marketing initiative you've recently implemented

We selected a local charity. When golfers checked in to play, they were asked if they'd like to donate \$1 to it. Around our property, we also had signs posting that we would donate 25 cents for every "check in" we received on Facebook. It was a great way to give back to our community and increase our online presence through social media.

One thing that keeps customers coming back

Our overall atmosphere. There's an unmistakable charm that comes from being a family-owned and -operated business. Our laid-back demeanor trickles down to our staff, which results in a large workforce of warm employees who are genuinely happy to see each golfer.



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