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Message (excerpt) from GCSAA

Superintendents are proven stewards of water, nutrients, and plant protection products. At the same time, we find ourselves responding to public narratives in which uninformed opinions, sensational claims, and questionable science can spread more quickly than verified data. As GCSAA seeks regulatory flexibility and certainty for our members regarding pesticide applications, we need tangible evidence that our industry not only supports BMPs in principle but actively implements them in practice. Between now and May 4 (National Golf Day in Washington, D.C.), we are asking all facilities to adopt BMPs. It only takes a GCSAA member a few minutes to finalize a BMP facility manual. The upgrade is designed to tailor these manuals to reflect your management approaches to your golf course. Those changes can be made at any point now or in the future.



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PPGCSA 50th Anniversary Fall Meeting & Trade Show, October 13-16, 2026

Mont. & Wyo, Scholarship/Edu. Golf Events - TBA

Private Webcast, PPGCSA - January 2027, TBA

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room - Red Fish Grill, New Orleans, LA, , January 20, 2027

PPGCSA "Almost" Spring Meeting - March 1-2, 2027, TBA

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Year four and going strong! Five members shared experiences during the 2026 “Almost” Spring Meeting, under the session titled, “We Made it Through 2025.” Thanks to (pictured below): **Dustin Nelson, Buffalo Hill Golf Club; Ryan Blechta, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club; Caleb Johnson, Canyon River Golf Club; Mark Lyon, Teton Pines Resort & Country Club; and Bob Popp, Laurel Golf Club.**



“Peaks & Prairies GCSA is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”

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Number 1



“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”

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President's Message

Pat Nowlen, Polson Bay Golf Course, Polson, Mont.

It was great to see such a strong turnout at the “Almost” spring meeting. After a winter of no snow, equipment rebuilds, planning, budgeting, and the occasional shop debate about which project we should have finished in January, getting together with fellow superintendents and industry partners was a welcome reset.

Most of us are used to a break during winter to get caught up on the little things, like sleep. But what happens when there is no real winter and therefore, no real break? After a few conversations at the spring meeting about hand watering greens, January tee times, and city mainlines going through the course, I'm concerned. I know it's a normal thing down south to go hard at it for 365 days, but I think a lot of us are up north because we love to hate our winters. If we are not coming out of winter rested and ready for the season ahead, do we have a greater potential for burnout? Are our courses that have been played all winter going to recover this spring as well?

Lots of questions that I don't have any answers for. But I think that we need to be aware of what a lack of winter can do to ourselves and our staff as well as our turf. Most of us didn't choose this career because we wanted a predictable 40-hour

work week. We chose it because we love the game, the land, and the challenge of producing great playing conditions. But that passion often comes with long hours, early mornings, late nights, and the constant pressure of weather, budgets, equipment, golfers, and expectations that don't always line up with reality. Historically, working 60-plus hours a week has been common in the profession, particularly during the golf season, when weekends and holidays are some of the busiest days on the course.

Even when we're not at work, many of us are still thinking about irrigation systems, disease pressure, staffing, or tomorrow's schedule.

One of the things we don't talk about enough in this profession is the stress that comes with being a golf course superintendent or just being in this industry. And if we're honest, a lot of the pressure comes from ourselves. Superintendents tend to chase perfection, even knowing it's impossible to achieve every day. That dedication is one of the traits that make this profession special, but it can also make it hard to ever truly turn work “off.” One of the best ways to manage that stress is by building strong teams. When you surround yourself with capable assistants and crew members and trust them to take ownership, the workload—and the mental load—doesn't have to fall entirely on your shoulders. Delegation isn't weakness; it's leadership. The idea of “work-life balance” gets thrown around a lot. But in this industry, it's rarely a perfect balance. There are stretches of the year, especially in the heat of summer, when the course demands more of us than we'd like. The key is to recognize that while the job is important, it can't be the only thing in our lives. At the end of the day, the course will still be there tomorrow. The same can't always be said for the time we miss with family, friends, and the people who support us through the long seasons.

One thing that stands out about our chapter is how willing members are to share ideas on crew management, equipment setup, and operational strategies. Whether it's a quick phone call about a mechanical issue, advice on a spray program, or comparing notes on new technology, that willingness to help each other out is a real strength of our association. As the season gets busier, those connections become even more valuable. When things inevitably get hectic in midsummer, it's nice to know there's a network of colleagues just a phone call away who understand exactly what you're dealing with. The dedication and professionalism I see across our region is impressive, and it's an honor to be part of such a strong group of superintendents and industry professionals. It's also important for us as an association to look out for one another. Sometimes the best support is simply talking with someone who understands what it's like to manage a golf course through a heat wave, a broken irrigation main, or a tournament that suddenly became the most important event in the club's history.

As we move out of this so-called “Winter” and move into the busier times, try to find some extra time to relax, recharge, and enjoy life. Take care of your course, take care of your crew, and just as importantly, take care of yourself.



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Planting the Seed

Russ Grover
Buffalo Hill Golf Club, Kalispell, Mont.

Last spring, Dave Phipps reached out and asked if I would be interested in hosting a Montana FFA Educator event here at Buffalo Hill. His enthusiasm was contagious, so how could I say no? He explained the event would be similar to a First Green field trip but would

focus specifically on introducing ag instructors to golf course maintenance as a meaningful and rewarding career path for their students.

The idea was to help expand awareness of our industry within schools, start building a stronger workforce pipeline, and potentially develop the next generation of superintendents. In an industry where we are facing labor challenges, any added exposure and resources can only be a good thing.

So, we got to work preparing for the event. Since my staff and I had recently presented to high school students at the H.E. Robinson Ag Center here in Kalispell, we had already learned what topics resonated most and what sparked their interest. That

experience gave us a solid foundation as we planned a field day specifically for educators.

On June 10, 2025, we welcomed the group to Buffalo Hill and kicked things off with an overview of our profession and an introduction to what is required to keep a golf course operating from day to day. I shared how our industry aligns with students' interests in plant science, mechanics, and technology, and how golf course maintenance offers opportunities that differ from the typical ag pathways while still being rooted in agriculture science.

I also highlighted our involvement with local ag classrooms and encouraged the educators to connect with courses in their own communities. We discussed some of the workforce challenges facing not only our industry, but agriculture as a whole, and how opening doors to alternative career paths can benefit everyone.

One of the most impactful parts of the presentation was hearing directly from three students currently on our staff: Logan, a high school golfer; Tanner, a homeschool student; and Cameron, an ag student. Each shared their experiences

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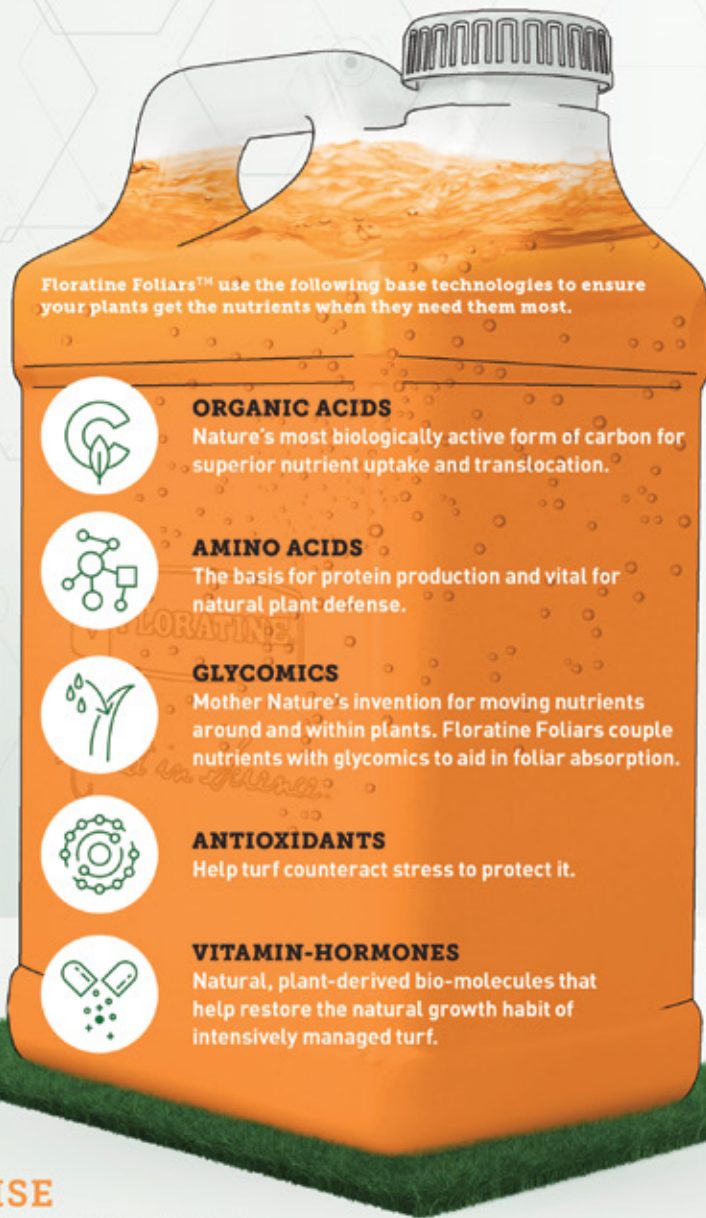
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Planting the Seed


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working on the course. They talked about what drew them to the job, the skills they had developed, and what they enjoyed most about the work. Interestingly, all three said they enjoy raking bunkers. Sometimes the simplest tasks bring the most satisfaction. Rather than just telling them what we do, we wanted to show them how the machinery and technology are used in our daily operations. After our discussion, we broke into small groups and rotated through equipment stations where we had a variety of equipment set up for them to see up close and experience firsthand.

On display were a fairway mower, greens roller, STEC DryJect machine, and several technical greens management

tools, including a Stimpmeter, TDR moisture meter, and firmness meters. We encouraged them not just to look at the equipment, but to try it themselves and get a real feel for how modern turf management relies on both technology and practical application. It did not take long for the greens roller to become the clear winner of the day.

The field day was well received, and the positive feedback from the group was encouraging. A few months later, in November, Dustin Nelson, assistant superintendent, was able to attend the Montana FFA State Convention in Billings alongside Dave, Jeff White (Past GCSAA President), and other superintendents from Peaks & Prairies. Together, they connected with students from across the state, introduced them to the technology we



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use, and highlighted the career opportunities available within our profession. It was another meaningful step forward in building interest and momentum among students for a future in the golf course maintenance industry.

Overall, the experience was rewarding, and I am thankful we had the opportunity to be part of it. It helps open the door to future collaboration between superintendents and FFA programs while

reinforcing the importance of advocacy and education within our industry. My hope is that our experience inspires others to reach out to their local schools, begin building relationships with educators, and start “planting the seed” that will grow the next generation of superintendents.



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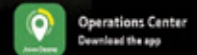
We were incredibly saddened to share the very unexpected passing of a 15-year Peaks & Prairies GCSA member, Kory Bakkum, GCS, Old Baldy Golf & Rec, Townsend, MT. He was only 63 years old when he passed away on December 2. Peaks & Prairies GCSA donated \$500 to the Bakkum Memorial Scholarship Fund.





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Dr. George Evans

Dane Gamble, Bridger Creek Golf Course, Bozeman, MT

Wy-Mont Golf Course Superintendents Association (PPGCSA today) was extremely fortunate at its founding, early development, and emergence into the professional organization it is today, to have had the support of Dr. George

Evans, Montana State University Professor of Horticulture.

Dr. Evans was our local connection to the world of turfgrass science and golf course management. From our first meeting in 1976 to our 10th Anniversary, and to his retirement in 1996, George was either speaking or quietly in attendance, until questions arose. Our emphasis on education led us to bring in top turf research scientists from across the nation. All of our presenters knew their stuff. They also knew there was someone, Dr. Evans, in the room who would corroborate or challenge the applicability of the science to our regional situations. We also knew there was someone, Dr. Evans, whom we could go to for further explanation, clarification, and understanding.

Looking back at the agenda for Wy-Mont's 10th anniversary, we get a sense of the quality of our education program. Roger Thomas, V.P Jacobsen Manufacturing; Jim Latham, USGA Green Section Agronomist; Jay Folk, President, Arapaho

Pumping Sales; Ron Read, USGA Western Region Director; Dr. Paul Rieke, Michigan State University; Dr. Jim Watson, V.P., The Toro Company; and in the middle of it all, Dr. George Evans, Montana State University. As a part of Wy-Mont, George fit right in.

Many early members received instruction from Dr. Evans while attending MSU. Many benefited from his outreach and extension activities, especially as they included strategies to prevent desiccation and to control snow mold. There are a select few who may have participated in, and far more who benefited from, his research. The few research participants stem in large part from the fact that, early on, George's experiments were taking place, literally, in a closet! MSU's Plant Growth Center and related laboratory facilities didn't open until a decade after the founding of Wy-Mont GCSA. Dr. Evans was already well into his research on snow mold control and dwarf bluegrass breeding efforts. From a closet in Johnson Hall to the expanded Plant Growth Center, Dr. Evans' dwarf bluegrass varieties MT 483 and MT 683 were eventually entered into the NTEP trials.

Dr. Evans passed away at the age of 93, thirty years into retirement. In a true illustration of GCSAA's founder John Morley's belief that "We depend on each other," Peaks & Prairies depended on and benefited greatly from George's expertise and perspective in the first two decades of our existence. He helped put us on the path of quality education and support for research, a path we continue on to this day.



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Our Winter of Discontent

Mark Lyon, Teton Pines Resort & Country Club, Jackson, Wyo.

“Is there any ice on the greens?” This is a question I heard more this winter than ever before. This was my 22nd winter in Jackson Hole and over that period, I have seen a pretty wide range of what Mother Nature can throw at us. From winters that started the first week of November with a foot of snow and kept up until April, to years when the snow didn’t come until Christmas or New Year’s. The only constant has been that eventually the snow will come and it will be significant. This winter was a different animal for sure.

As most people in the mountains know, the best way for putting greens to make it through winter relatively unscathed is for the temperature to drop, grass to harden off and then a foot or two of nice light snow to fall on top of them. Safe to say, that was not our experience this winter. High temperatures in November and December were up about 12 degrees from historical averages. This made for several cycles of snowfall, then rain, followed by freezing temperatures. The first of these came on December 17th. We went out to scout greens in the morning and saw that the rain from the previous day had indeed made it down through the snow to the grass surface and puddled. Since the temperatures were forecasted to drop drastically that night,



we immediately began to remove the slush and water from the greens. We assumed that winter was about to finally show up, freeze all that water into ice and then bury it under feet of snow. After only making it through four greens before

lunch, we went up to the clubhouse to enlist the help of anyone willing. After making it clear that this was a serious situation, a small group of helpers came out including the head golf professional. In the time it took us to clear four more greens, Mother Nature intervened with a windstorm that thankfully melted/dried the remaining greens, but also dropped a tree onto our clubhouse.



After that very exciting first dose of winter, this pattern repeated itself about three more times (minus the windstorm). Each time, we assumed that winter was about to show up, and we needed to get the water and ice off the greens. We used several techniques including snow blowing, shoveling, and melting to clear the greens. This culminated on December 31st with us bringing out the greens aerifier with solid tines to try to break up the last of the ice, a process I had only done once in the last 20 years.

This was about the time that questions about the snow and ice began to ramp up among coworkers and members. Questions like, “How much ice is out there?” or “When are you going to go back out and get the ice off?” became commonplace when I ventured up to the clubhouse. I found myself getting frustrated, mostly because the honest answer was “I don’t know.” I didn’t have a crystal ball to see how much snow was going to fall, or when the temperatures would start to come up. I had the standard replies about annual bluegrass vs bentgrass and how long they can survive under ice, but nothing concrete to tell people who were looking for black-and-white answers. Experience told me not to attempt to remove snow and

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Winter of Discontent continued from page 10

ice in January or early February. The days are short, and even if the temps rise high enough, you end up getting almost melted. The temperature drops, and then you have puddles that re-freeze and cause more damage. This line of reasoning seemed sound until the forecast for the first week of February came out and they were calling for a solid week of temperatures in the mid-40s. We decided to roll the dice and went out once more to get all the snow and ice off the greens. It turned out to be the right decision as we had around 40% ice coverage on the grass surface. Over the week, we were able to remove all the ice and standing water save for a small corner of a green that was heavily shaded. After two months of stressing about snow and ice, it was nice to finally turn the page and start looking toward spring and how we will remedy any damage that might have occurred over the winter.

Throughout this whole ordeal, I made a point of keeping the



golf professional, the general manager, and a number of members in the loop regarding our efforts and the possible outcomes of all this work. I guess the main lesson learned after this crazy winter was to never take the “easy” winters for granted. When it comes down to it, it really wasn’t an unreasonable amount of extra work or stress to deal with the snow and ice. One thing I did realize, however, was how conditioned I had become to getting that significant winter break from the everyday stresses of running a golf course. I didn’t really notice how it was affecting me until the Christmas holiday week when I found myself anxious and agitated for no good reason. It’s amazing how just changing the timing or context of our work can affect us in ways that might be surprising.

As I look outside today, the sun is shining and the grass is starting to show through. Any other year, I would say that winter will probably come back with a vengeance for the next month or so. This year, however, I will choose to follow the lead of this crazy winter, buck the trends, and look forward to an early spring.

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Shop Story

James Gamble

Bridger Creek Golf Course, Bozeman, Mont.

Original plans for Bridger Creek Golf Course never prioritized a maintenance facility. It was more of a distant afterthought than a foundational element of the design.

Jump forward 32 years, and the course has become one of the busiest facilities in Montana. Partly due to the organic growth of Bozeman

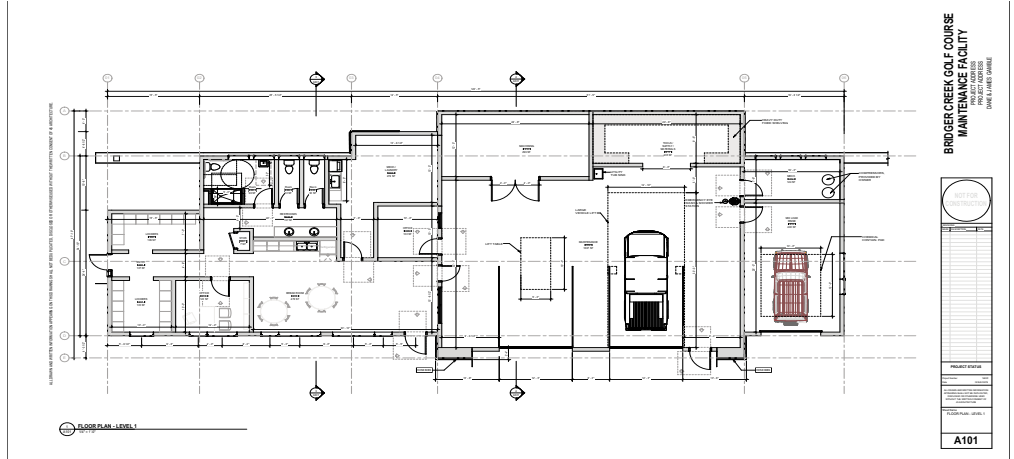
shop is a pole barn built in the 70s, with minimal insulation, no running water, no office space, one porta-potty, and it's not on the golf course.

We used our imagination as we searched for a new maintenance shop location on the property. Unfortunately we didn't find any viable location. Floodplain issues, access to city services, and size constraints halted those efforts. We even tried partnering with a neighbor to realign some property boundaries, but their development efforts fell flat.

Tearing down the old building isn't a great option; keeping continued page 18

and post-pandemic surge in golf popularity, but also the consistent quality condition of the course. From before the sun rises to sun-down, we are packed with golfers every day. These demands were never imagined at the outset. A larger equipment fleet to get tasks done faster, more morning staff, and room to maintain the fleet and a proper maintenance shop have become a necessity.

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Shop Story continued from page 16

it gives us affordable cold storage for equipment while allowing our new construction to be slightly smaller to help reduce project costs.

We were left with a skinny 1+ acre lot and an old pole barn in the neighborhood adjacent to the course. Current efforts have gotten us annexed into the city, a requirement for development on lots that border city limits. This allows for city services so we can have running water and bathrooms. However, it limits our lot building envelope as the city has significant ingress and egress separation standards, storm water control requirements, and street setback buffers for new construction.

Creative problem solving required us to see what other facilities have done. I'd like to thank Bob Clarkson,

Mike Valiant, and Ryan Blechta for touring us through their facilities. Chatting with other superintendents and equipment managers helped us dial in the important golf-related details that a building architect could overlook. For example, a properly sized and located grinding room, equipment lift position, sprayer storage and fill area, and how employees flow through a facility are unique to each golf course.

After hundreds of amateur layout sketches, calls with golf course consultants, and brainstorming sessions, we were ready to hire a local architecture firm. They've handled the heavy lifting in the annexation process and project planning knowledge. Though architects are experts in design, they are not experts in golf maintenance. Providing very specific golf maintenance operation info was critical in the program planning phase. Items



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like having double doors into a grinding room which is adjacent to ample work space or the right amount of work space around a full-size lift. This guided the design team and refined our wants and needs which focused the project into two primary components:

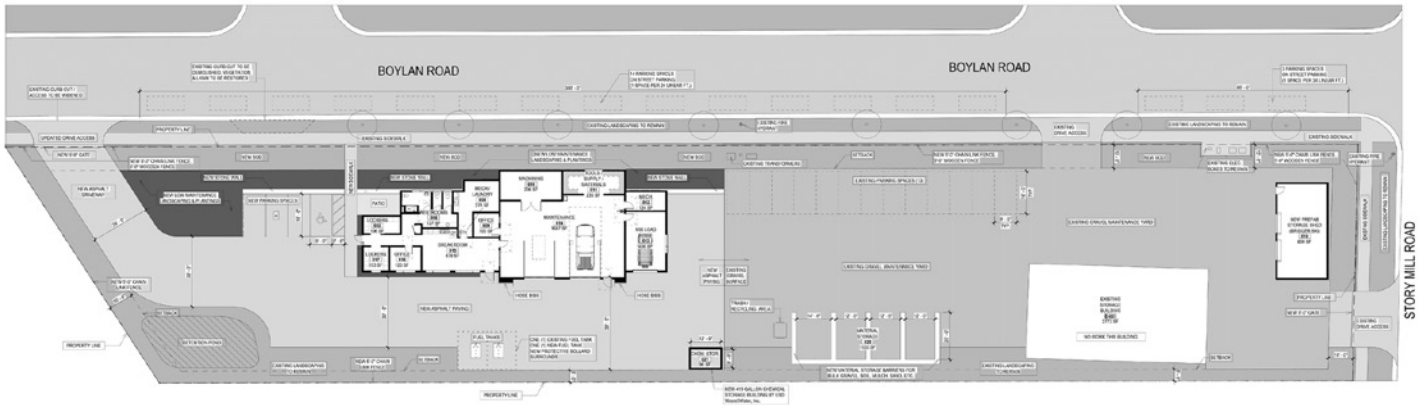
The People Side – locker rooms, restrooms, offices, a kitchenette, and a breakroom/meeting space designed to support team culture and daily operations.

The Mechanical Side – two large repair bays, a full-sized equipment lift, a dedicated grinding room, a parts room, and an

attached garage specifically for sprayer storage.

While the site comes with its share of compromises, we're fortunate to be making this long-overdue investment in the maintenance department and have worked to maximize every opportunity within its constraints. With any luck, we'll break ground this fall. Development in Bozeman rarely moves quickly, but this project represents a long-overdue investment in the people and equipment that keep Bridger Creek performing at a high level every day.

A follow-up progress report will be written when construction estimates and timelines are firmed up.





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Mrs. Lori Russell
Mr. Jason Busch
Mr. Mike Kitchen
Mr. Larry Newlin
Mr. Danny Rez

Dear Members of the PPGCSAA Voting Committee,

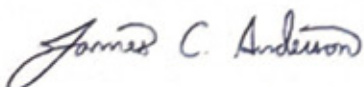
I would like to start off by thanking all of you for your selection of me as a recipient of the 2025 Peaks and Prairies GCSAA scholarship. Being a student in this great industry, I am so grateful to be able to continue learning because of your decision to select me for this scholarship award. This opportunity has allowed me to gain further knowledge on modern practices, technologies, products, and further agronomic information that this industry has to offer.

I have just recently completed my two-year 'Professional Golf Turfgrass Management' degree at Rutgers University. As a two-time PPGCSAA scholarship recipient, there is no doubt in my mind that I couldn't have been as successful as I was in that program if it weren't for this organization's selection of me for these scholarships. The benefits that these scholarships have provided me include: having the most up-to-date research materials and textbooks, transportation and living expenses while I was at school, having the opportunity to build my network by attending seminars and conferences where the best turfgrass specialists in the business are, and many more!

I am very proud to be a part of the Peaks and Prairies chapter of the GCSAA. This organization's dedication and drive to support the upcoming generations of professionals is remarkable. These efforts to promote excellence in golf course management speak volumes to the importance of this ever-growing industry. The recognition and support from the PPGCSAA have been so vital in my academic and professional journey. And for that, I am forever grateful.

By believing in me for these last two years, I am forever grateful for the experiences, opportunities, and invaluable education you all have supported me through. The first scholarship I received in 2024 alleviated financial burdens and allowed me to get involved in the industry. The second scholarship, which was received in 2025, has further solidified my commitment to the field and has given me the confidence to pursue my dreams. I am so thankful for the faith you have all expressed in myself, and the other recipients. I'm very excited to make the most of the opportunities ahead, and once again, thank you for this incredible honor.

Sincerely,



James C. Anderson
Assistant Superintendent
Yellowstone Country Club



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**We Regretfully Share the Passing of
Scott Woodhead, Past GCSAA President**

Scott was an active and longtime Peaks & Prairies GCSA member, a past GCSAA President, and a GCSAA team member for 15 years. He was dedicated to the industry throughout his career. In December, Scott passed away in Yuma, Ariz.

In addition to his Peaks & Prairies leadership, we will always remember his quick wit and dry sense of humor (and booming voice!).

We offer our condolences to his wife Val, and his family. Scott passed away If you would like to reach out to his family...

Valerie Woodhead
10247 S. Frontage Rd. Site 215
Yuma, AZ 85365



Punky Aisenbrey was the equipment manager at Yellowstone Country Club, Billings, Mont., and father of Robert Aisenbrey.

Your kind and thoughtful expression of sympathy will always be remembered and deeply appreciated

The family of
Dale Aisenbrey
"Punky"

Donna, Robert, Adam and family

*Thank you so much for the dish garden. I have given the care to a member of GCSA our son Robert and Laura. They will take great care although I am a plant lover. Thank you!
Blessings to All
Donna*

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Tips on Networking from a True Introvert

Mike Bednar, GCS, Chapter Delegate
Palouse Ridge Golf Club - Pullman, Wash.
(*Turf's Up, Winter 2025, IEGCSA*)

For introverts, the thought of networking can be intimidating, as it often involves meeting new people and engaging in conversations in a social setting. I have always dreaded most social situations where there are large numbers of people I have never met. My happy place is still sitting on a fairway mower out ahead of play, or better yet, in a duck blind. I have become a better socializer and developed an adequate network over my career by continuing to force myself outside my comfort zone. I still prefer to be by myself or sometimes try to “be invisible” in a large room of people. With a few modifications, you can make networking a more comfortable and effective experience.

Here are some tips for introverts to network effectively:

1. Focus on Quality Over Quantity: Rather than attending large events and trying to meet as many people as possible, consider attending smaller, more intimate events or reaching out to a few people individually. This way, you can have deeper, more meaningful conversations.

2. Prepare Ahead of Time: Before attending an event, research the attendees and identify the people you want to connect with. This way, you'll feel more confident and focused when you arrive.

3. Find Your Niche: Look for networking events or committees that align with your interests and professional goals. This will make it easier for you to find like-minded individuals and have more enjoyable conversations.

4. Be Yourself: Don't try to be someone you're not. Introverts tend to be great listeners, which can be a valuable asset in networking. Allow yourself to be authentic and use your natural strengths to build relationships.

5. Follow Up: After meeting someone, be sure to follow up with them by sending an email, handwritten thank-you card, or connecting with them on social media. This will help keep the connection alive and open the door for future opportunities.

I value all the relationships and connections I have made in this industry over the years. Early in my career, I had an “I can do it all by myself” way of thinking. Now, after almost 30 years in the industry, I understand how valuable a network is and am very thankful for mine. I have grown as a person and a superintendent by being active in both the local Inland Empire chapter and the national GCSAA and continuing to volunteer for committees whenever possible. Remember, networking is a long-term process and doesn't have to be uncomfortable. It can get easier with time. By finding events and people that align with your interests and being yourself, you can build valuable relationships and advance your career. If you see me at a future event, come over and say hello.

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