E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS, Receives Distinguished Service Award

BY RICK FREDERICKSEN, CGCS
Woodhill Country Club

E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS was presented with the MGCSA Distinguished Service Award during a ceremony at the March Mini Seminar.

The award was given for his contributions as a leader, mentor and a person with vision that has represented our professional community. Paul's insight and organization led our association through issues at the state capital and to develop a turf research center at the University of Minnesota.

Our Distinguished Service Award recipient began his career as a junior in high school, when he took a horticulture class to fill out his schedule. Enjoying the class he took a summer job working at a greenhouse for Vern Bushlack. Paul was thinking this was where the sun would rise and set for him and thus he enrolled at the U of M in greenhouse management.

Through Vern Bushlack, Paul met Kurt Erdman, then Superintendent at Rochester Golf Club, and was hired for an internship where he did course set-up, picking the staff up for breaks and injecting Elm trees. Finding that he preferred turf to flowers, Paul switched majors soon after to turfgrass science where Dr. Don White was his advisor at the U of M.

The following is an excerpt from Dr. White’s letter of congratulations:

"As my first long-term assistant, Paul and I grew together in the industry. We conquered many challenges during those early years. Through that time and to this day I have great respect for him and his abilities as a turf professional and leader in our industry."

- Jack MacKenzie, CGCS

Paul joined the MGCSA in 1985 while an Assistant Superintendent at North Oaks Golf Club. After the 1990 season he pursued and attained the Superintendent's position at Grand Forks Country Club in North Dakota.

In 1995 Paul interviewed for the Construction Superintendent position at Heritage Links. Since they were in the process of completing their government regulation work, Paul would not be able to start until February of 1996 when he began the construction of Heritage Links. Paul is currently both the Superintendent and General Manager of Heritage Links.

In 1997 Paul Eckholm was elected to the Board of Directors. He has served as the legislative chairman, research initiatives. This has been especially prominent with the TROE Center, and his contributions as our representative at the legislature. He has been a major spokesman for the industry throughout the contentious times associated with the phosphorus legislation.

In short Paul is a distinguished leader well deserving of any recognition we can give.

Dr. Don White

Bob Reihe
Cell: 612-363-0999
Northway Irrigation
Office: 763-786-4379

Golf Irrigation Installation
Also we install:
- Club lawns and special areas
- Residential Irrigation
- Commercial Irrigation

With our irrigation experience we can advise you on your irrigation questions

We care about your irrigation project!

Hole Notes April 2005
chairman, public relations chairman and human resources chairman, as well as the President of the association in 2000 and 2001.

The Board noted early on his ability for detail and his passion for the industry. Within a year he was appointed the government relations chair and soon found himself testifying at the capital for proposed phosphorous legislation. He made over 70 trips and devoted countless hours attending conference committees, testifying at the capital and behind the scenes lobbying on the association's behalf.

Paul was able to convince legislators that the golf course industry was a steward for the environment and handled phosphorous in a responsible fashion so as not to impact the balance of the natural ecosystem. His commitment is the reason superintendents today can continue to use phosphorous-based fertilizers. In 2002 Paul was nominated by the MGCSA for the GCSAA Excellence in Government Relations Award for his outstanding dedication (please see accompanying letter). Although not a winner nationally, Paul continues to serve as our state association government relation's chair and thus earns our appreciation as a leader.

In 2000, the Association Board passed a motion to discontinue funding of out-of-state research and support the University of Minnesota in doing local research. With Paul's input, Dr. Brian Horgan was hired at the University as Turf Extension Specialist. Dr. Horgan's immediate need was an area to do field trials and conduct research. Under Paul's guidance the MGCSA and the MTGF began talks with the University to locate a potential site. A 16-acre plot was allotted to be used for the new Turf, Research, Outreach and Education Center. Paul saw an opportunity to get the MGCSA involved in helping with the new TROE Center. He started a program called the Drive-for-the-U that would enable Superintendents and their clubs and vendors to be able to donate equipment, services, or supplies to help. His cultivation and solicitation of funding resulted in over $170,000 of in-kind services and supplies being donated.

He invested an enormous amount of energy and time into a project that he felt could help today's students and superintendents as well as the future generation of turfgrass managers.

Paul was asked how many trips and time he had invested in working on the TROE Center. He apologized for not having a better tally but confessed that he had never thought to keep track and added "it took what it took and I didn't give it another thought".

Paul's philosophy seems like a great way to approach life.