

## James Keith, CGCS -N-



*Golf course superintendent Jim Keith will host the Illinois Turf Foundation – MAGCS Spring golf outing in the scenic Fox Valley at St. Charles Country Club on May 12. This past month I had a chance to meet with Jim and learn not only about the history of St. Charles Country Club and his role as the superintendent, but also about himself and his family.*

Architect, Tom Bendelow, designed St. Charles Country Club in 1924 along the Fox River. It became known as one of the finest golf courses in the western suburbs along with its well-known signature hole, the 18th, an uncommon rounding ending par 3. In the mid 1980's, St. Charles was offered a rare opportunity to build a new clubhouse, acquire additional land and build seven new golf holes through a land acquisition with Arthur Anderson Consulting (AAC). AAC desired the club's property along the Fox River for development of a professional learning center for the consulting firm's once thriving business. The club agreed and in 1987, the club opened its new facility and seven new golf holes that were designed by David Gill, a member of St. Charles Country Club. After David Gill's passing, the STCCC then worked with Rodger Packard until David Esler was hired in 2002 to design six new holes on undeveloped property that the club owned. These holes are currently used for practice until a complete Master Plan is implemented in the near future. Along with new routing changes over the years, the course has undergone other improvements that include a new irrigation system in 1998 and a complete greenside bunker renovation on Tom Benelow's original design in 2000. Future plans include a possible clubhouse addition in 2009 with a complete golf course renovation to begin shortly thereafter. Jim Keith, CGCS, has been the steward of St. Charles Country Club since taking over in 1994.

Jim was born and raised in central Illinois where he was the youngest of six children. It did not take long before Jim was working in the green industry. By the age of 10, he was already push mowing yards and in the summer of 1984 at

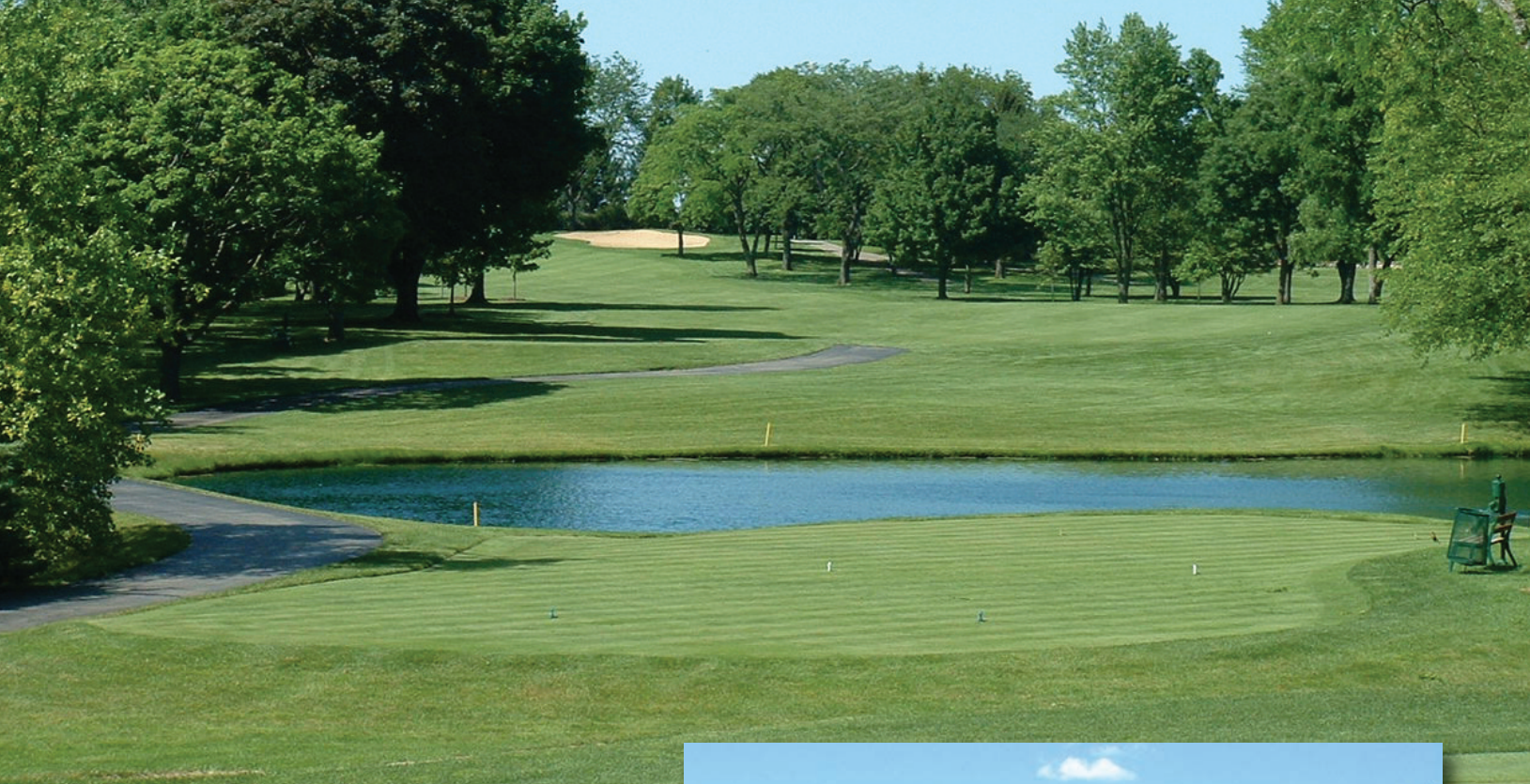
the age of 14, he began working for the Christ family who owned Snag Creek, the local golf course in Washburn, Jim's hometown. Since his first day at "Snag", Jim has never looked back. After graduating from the University of Illinois in 1993, it was then on to St. Charles Country where he started as the assistant superintendent.

With work keeping him extremely busy, Jim still finds time to volunteer in the community, serving on the board of directors for the Elburn and Countryside Community Center as well as coaching teams for Elburn baseball and softball. He is currently serving as a director for the MAGCS. In his free time, Jim enjoys hunting, golfing and spending time with his family. He and his wife Melanie have been together since grade school and now reside in Elburn. Melanie is currently working for Edward Jones Investments. Their son, Dylan, is a freshman at Kaneland and has hung up the glove and bat to concentrate on football and scholastics. Not only is he a straight A student, but he also works part-time for his father and caddies for St. Charles Country Club. Madie, their youngest, is a 5th grader and loves athletics. She is currently gearing up for traveling U12 softball.



Jim Keith

In the short amount of time I spent with Jim it was clear to me that he loved his job. And it was clear the only thing he loved more than his job was his family. As I left I asked him if he had any advice to give a young assistant superintendent such as myself. He told me, "Treat people with respect, maintain a solid work ethic, and be responsible for the actions you take." Words for anyone to live by. -OC



*St. Charles Country Club, host to the ITF/MAGCS Spring Golf Day.*

*Above: The sixth at St. Charles CC is a long par 4 (450 yards) with an uphill green that makes the approach shot on this hole the most difficult on the course.*

*Middle: The eighth green is protected by an old oak on the left hand side of the green. To have any shot at the green, you must place your tee shot on the right side of this downward sloping fairway.*

*Below: The seventeenth is a short par 4 and requires a straight drive to a very narrow landing area.*

