

ALL-INCLUSIVE

— The industry pursues diversity initiatives —

By Margaret Hepp

The route to Clearview Golf Club is as steeped in American history as the course itself. U.S. 30, known as the Lincoln Highway, is the oldest paved transcontinental highway in the country. Built in 1913, it runs right through the heart of East Canton, Ohio. Pass Jim's Auto and Truck Repair Shop, pass a little diner called Patty's Place and you've nearly reached the historic landmark, 1 mile straight ahead, tucked neatly into a valley off the throughway. A narrow gravel road leads down to the heart of the course, where an American flag is rooted beside a bronze sign: Ohio Historical Landmark, Clearview Golf Club, 1946. "Putting the fair in fairway."

Clearview has created its own rich history – American tradition at its proudest and best. William Powell, who opened the course in 1946, served in World War II as a U.S. Army tech sergeant. Daughter Renee is an award-winning LPGA pro who recently received an honorary doctorate of laws from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. And son Larry, who's worked on the golf course from age eight, has more than 30 years experience as a superintendent.

"We used to maintain the golf course without a lot of equipment," Larry Powell says. "Without

all the bells and whistles, it comes down to timing and respect for nature. People think they can control and somehow change nature. They can't."

It's a paradox that part of our country's history is rooted in strict separatism – of race, of class, of territory. But while you can't change nature, you can change a nation, and America was established to provide new opportunities for freedom and prosperity.

In a flat market, the golf industry is clamoring for just such a change. William Powell introduced a novel golf course to East Canton, one that would provide an experience for any and all golfers and would distance the game from the prejudice he experienced as a participant. In so doing, he created an unprecedented leadership opportunity for himself – officially, he's the first black American to open a golf course in the U.S. – and his children.

"Renee and I were privileged," Larry Powell says. "We were brought into an opportunity our parents provided."

An accounting and business management student at Walsh University in Ohio, Larry Powell acquired all his golf course expertise through practice.

"You can get education anywhere," he says. "I'm constantly learning. But it's harder to learn by osmosis. Basically, superintendents come from schools. We have to get diverse students into turfgrass study programs."

While the GCSAA has reached out to minorities in the industry recently, the percentage of nonwhite, nonmale superintendents in the association still hovers around 3 percent – 142 of 14,604 members are female and 374 are American Indian/Native American/Alaskan, Asian, Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino, according to the GCSAA. The nation and the industry are evolving, but hard work and success are deeply embedded in the history of American golf, and this remains constant as diversity in the nation and the industry is broadened.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

It's been three months since Gary Myers, CGCS, began accepting applications for a new management addition to the golf course staff at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla. He has more than enough candidates to choose from, but he's waiting to begin the interview process.

So what's the hold up? When it comes to



hiring, Myers is a businessman. You might say he has an agenda, then, but he has no ethnic or gender quotas to fill. He wants to hire the best person for the job. Still, he believes in a fair application process, and as an equal opportunity employer, he keeps each position open until he's accumulated a diverse candidate base.

"Diversity is an issue that needs to be pursued and addressed," Myers says. "I don't think any of us is doing as much as we should."

As part of a male-dominated industry, he says, employers at golf courses should actively recruit women and nonwhite men for management positions, for a start. Following the interview process, if Myers is left with two equally skilled candidates, he'll allow his desire for a diverse staff to tip the scales – though he emphasizes that candidates shouldn't be selected based on background alone.

"We're not going to hire someone based on their ethnicity or gender," he says. "But we do want to open opportunities that might not be there otherwise."

Maintaining a well-rounded staff has been a process of trial and error for Myers. Several years ago, he hired a young – and inexperienced – female employee to fill a foreman's position.

"That was a mistake," he says. "I learned then not to push the issue."

Quality – not quantity – comprises the most effective work force, and Myers now feels he has a solid crew that's both diverse and skilled, including a female and an Asian-American assistant superintendent and a Haitian-American foreman.



HISTORY, HER STORY

Shelia Finney studied speech communications and theater before she decided in the summer of 1985 that she wanted to work outdoors. At the time, she says, she was hardly an outdoors kind of girl, and it was an unprecedented career choice in her family. But she faced the challenge head on, mowing greens and raking bunkers on the crew at Richland Country Club in her hometown of Nashville, Tenn. She was hired on the spot by then-superintendent Jim Kirkley.

"When I started working on the golf course, I had never even run a Weed Eater before," she says. "Jim pushed me very hard. He was an extremely demanding boss, but if not for him, I wouldn't have the knowledge I have. He focused on training me and giving me the skills I needed to progress in the profession."

By the time Finney left Richland, she'd become landscape manager, though she also worked on the golf course, where one of her responsibilities was helping operate the irrigation computer system. She'd become an expert with the technology, which was new at the time.

"I was the only one in Tennessee who knew how to program it," she says. "I was training everyone in the territory."

"My gender's not a big deal, and I don't have to prove myself. I don't have to be better than a guy."

- SHELIA FINNEY

The knowledge propelled her to a job as assistant golf course superintendent at Gaylord Springs Golf Links, located on the Gaylord Opryland Resort property, which also is in Nashville. Even as an assistant, Finney immersed herself in the industry, becoming heavily involved in associations and working to fill in the gaps.

Finney never felt her opportunities in the industry were limited because of her gender because she believes the necessary skills for success transcend sex and ethnicity.

"It's very important to be organized and have a plan," she says. "You have to be extremely flexible, because Mother Nature can change your plans. I try to have a plan A, B and C to anticipate what could happen."

Finney also describes herself as inquisitive, and believes that to be an important and inherent quality in a good superintendent.

"I always have to know how things work and why," she says. "And I know how to find the answers."

As the U.S. population becomes more diverse, Finney sees need for increased diversity in the golf world.

"For the industry to remain healthy and whole, it needs to replicate the society around it," she says. "If not, it's stagnant. To attract society to a golf course to take up the game, you have to be able to show them it's something they can relate to on a personal level. Forcing new golfers outside their comfort zone makes it even more difficult."



2008 GCSAA diversity task group

Rafael Barajas, CGCS, GCSAA member

Jan Beljan, ASGCA

Kent Schescke, Future Farmers of America

Earnie Ellison, PGA of America

Mark Lowry, The First Tee

Rafael Martinez, The Green Magazine

Margaret Bell, Syngenta

Antonio Montez, GCSAA member

Lee Pahcuddy, Haskell Indian Nations University

Bud Stallworth, University of Kansas

Ashley Futrell, National Recreation and Park Assn.

Sean Hoolehan, CGCS, GCSAA member

Gary George, c.e.o. of Wildhorse Resort

Simone Herrera, CGCS, GCSAA member

Raymond Chester, golf course owner

Betsy Clark, LPGA

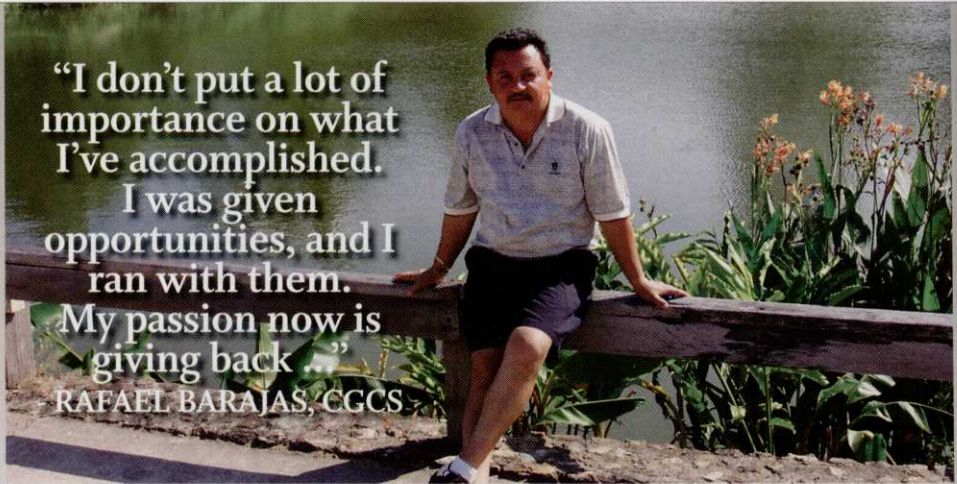
Lawrence Powell, GCSAA member

FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Rafael Barajas, CGCS, experienced that discomfort as a young golfer in California. Before he and his friends played a round of golf, they'd flip a coin to determine who had the unpleasant task of entering the pro shop. Thirty years later, it's hard to imagine Barajas afraid to walk through any door. He's worked hard to gain the confidence he's known for now, and it's been a long road.

At 16, Barajas moved to California from Mexico to help support his family. His brother hired him as a crewman, and after two years, he landed a job as assistant superintendent at Mountain Ridge Golf Course in Monterey, Calif. Long hours on the golf course developed a passion for the sport, and soon his entire life revolved around the industry.

"As I played more golf, it really developed into a career," he says. "I got hooked, and I figured if I moved up the staff ladder, I'd have a better opportunity to play more."



"I don't put a lot of importance on what I've accomplished. I was given opportunities, and I ran with them. My passion now is giving back."
RAFAEL BARAJAS, CGCS

Young, but with almost five years in the industry under his belt, Barajas was hired by American Golf as golf course superintendent at Recreation Park Golf Course in Long Beach. Having started from the bottom and worked his way up, he acquired his fair share of knowledge – but he knew he still had a lot to learn. Barajas took every opportunity to attend business and person-

nel seminars and eventually became a certified superintendent at age 27. Then, in 2000, he received a certificate in turfgrass management from UC Riverside. Presently, he's the superintendent at Hacienda Golf Club in San Diego and is on the board of directors of the Southern California chapter and California GCSA. With almost 30 years of industry experience, Barajas

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Embrace diversity

By Mark J. Woodward, CGCS, GCSAA c.e.o.

Everything we've learned and experienced points to the need to diversify - to sustain and grow stronger. Those in golf and outside the industry have noted the absence of diversity in the game. It's quite clear untapped markets provide an opportunity to grow the game.

Only recently has organized golf dedicated the necessary resources to make the game more inviting to nontraditional golf targets: women, minorities, juniors and people with disabilities. The concept is simple - a more diverse customer base will strengthen the game's economics.

But have there been barriers for these groups? In some cases, there has been overt exclusion. But for the most part, golf has displayed what Steve Robbins, Ph.D., calls unintentional intolerance. While not speaking specifically about golf, Robbins says groups oftentimes exclude without being aware. He doesn't point fingers but challenges individuals and organizations to be more mindful and intentional about inclusion.

By having this perspective, we are likely to attract others who can make us stronger. Growing the number of golfers certainly is a sign of strength. But, including a diversity of experience, backgrounds, perspectives and talents also creates a stronger team. A stronger team makes better decisions and is more focused on success. That's the reason the GCSAA has begun to dedicate resources to enhancing diversity where it has influence. From an association staffing perspective, we're making every effort to tap a diverse pool from which to draw talent.

The GCSAA also has done the same in attracting individuals to the golf course management industry. We've called on our members and others inside the industry with experience in fostering diversity to help us toward achieving this goal. This fall, our diversity task group (see page 21) will meet to continue our goals of identifying barriers to entry and developing programs to attract these individuals. The end result will be a stronger industry and association.

We've identified two measures to start us down the path: one pertaining to females and the other to individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We're introducing both groups to golf course management through a variety of outreach vehicles. We would like to see representation that puts them on a career path that takes them to an assistant position and then as golf course superintendents.

There are no illusions that such a process will be achieved in a short time frame. We know it will be a deliberate process. The ultimate goal isn't to have a specific number of new members representing diverse backgrounds. While we will have targets, it's just as important our efforts result in a different way of thinking that will impact our planning and operations. We will declare victory if our efforts attract a diversity of people and if the process results in a more efficient and effective organization. The execution might be complex, but we're confident we're on our way to a stronger industry and association. GCI



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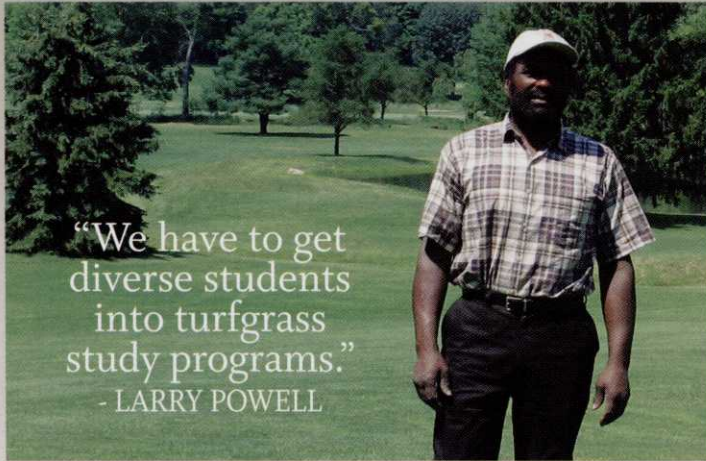
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“We have to get diverse students into turfgrass study programs.”
- LARRY POWELL

doesn't rest on his laurels. He looks ahead.

“I don't put a lot of importance on what I've accomplished,” he says. “I was given opportunities, and I ran with them. I try to stay humble. My passion right now is giving back to the associations that have given a lot to me and my family.”

Barajas has four children, who are a big part of his commitment to diversity in the industry: increased opportunities for young, minority candidates to become successful leaders.

“I'm a big time proponent of diversity,” he says. “The country's diverse. The work force in the industry is very diverse. With a little help and education, we can get staff to be assistants and golf course superintendents.”

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Finney believes physical presence is an important component of a campaign for increased industry diversity. She makes a daily effort to be as visible as possible on property.

“No matter how many computerized systems and gadgets and tools you have, you still have to go out and look and probe,” she says. “A lot of golf course management is still your gut feeling. I'm out every morning, while the guys are out getting the golf course ready.”

Finney's customers are surprised when they find out she's a woman, but they're not amazed.

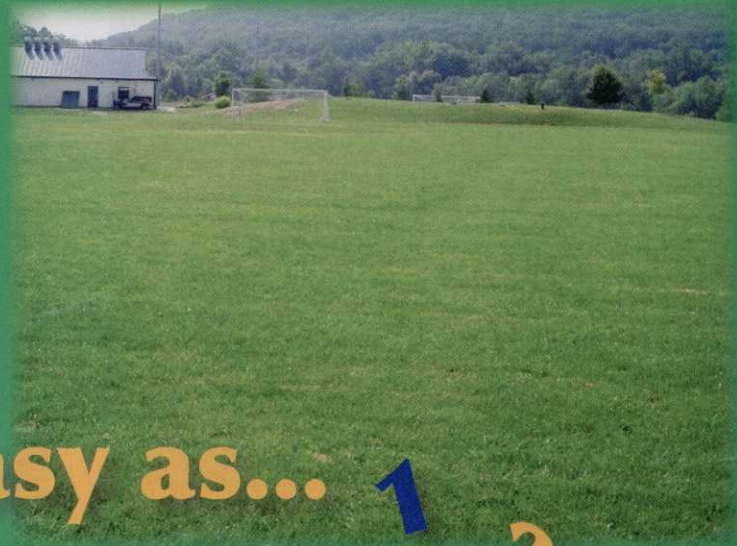
“The industry's changed throughout the years,” she says. “I can remember going to national conferences where everyone would turn around and stare at me because I was the only woman. There still aren't many women in the association, but there's not as much surprise in the GCSAA as there

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used to be. That's a lot more comfortable for me. My gender's not a big deal, and I don't have to prove myself. I don't have to be better than a guy."

Finney's glad to let her work do the talking. Gaylord Springs has hosted the BellSouth Senior Classic (now the AT&T Classic), and each year Finney fielded the same question during tournament prep: How is it different for you, as a woman, to prepare for a senior PGA event?

"For the first few years, I tried to come up with something fancy to say," she says. "Then I finally said, 'You know, the grass doesn't care. The Tour officials don't care. They care about the turf. They care about the condition of the golf course. It's not any different for me than it is for a guy. Judge me by the golf course, not my anatomy.'"

Sometimes, though, anatomy is a necessary consideration. When Nancy Miller, CGCS, was an intern at Oakmont Country Club in Pennsylvania, the facility offered no living quarters for women at all.

"I was in a position where I could afford to take a room for a few months, and I did because I really wanted to work at Oakmont," Miller says. "But the industry could attract many more women by providing those amenities."

Miller is now the superintendent at Maple Leaf Golf and Country Club in Port Charlotte, Fla., and is one of a mere handful of minority chapter delegates in the GCSAA.

"When I'm at chapter delegate meetings, I think: This isn't America," she says. "The industry isn't a true cross-section of the country, and you wonder why not. You wonder why more women and minorities aren't drawn to the industry, especially the agronomic side of things. I don't know the answer, but the GCSAA diversity task force has been working on it."

A few short decades ago, career opportunities were limited for women and nonwhite men, and almost nonexistent in the golf industry.

"Women were expected to be nurses and teachers," Miller says. "We weren't even aware of all the possibilities."

Still, Miller says it never crossed her mind that there'd be discrimination against women as superintendents, and so far, she hasn't been terribly disillusioned, though occasionally she's been discouraged.

"It can be intimidating to be the only woman in the room," she says. "But what I've done is just gotten involved. I figured the best way to get over my intimidation is to get to know these guys, and that's gone a long way. I've gotten to know each person, so I'm not walking into a group of men but a group of individuals."

It's a feeling Larry Powell knows well.

"There's not much diversity in the industry at all," he says. "That's the way it's always been. The majority of our players at Clearview – over 90 percent – are white. But everyone's welcome." GCI



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