

# Tim O'Neill:

## She was there as I climbed GCSAA ladder

BY THOMAS SKERNIVITZ, MANAGING EDITOR

**T**alk about sudden impact: Even before Tim O'Neill could be formally announced as the new president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, he was helping to rewrite the group's record books.

With O'Neill's parents, seven brothers and sisters, a few aunts and uncles and most of his colleagues from the Country Club of Darien (Conn.) in attendance, the Golf Industry Show attracted nearly 23,000 people.

"We were definitely responsible for improving the numbers this year at the show," O'Neill says jokingly.

None of the contingent was as proud as O'Neill's mother Joan.

"She's come to the last couple of shows as I've moved closer to becoming president," her son says. "I don't know how many mothers were at the Golf Industry Show, but mine was there."

Thirty years ago, that might have embarrassed O'Neill. But at age 47, with a wife (Jennifer) and two children (Justin, 16, and Kristen, 13), he says it's "always a thrill" to share a moment with mom.

"I'm at the age now where I'm a parent with teenagers, so I understand when my kids want me to walk about four



Joan O'Neill attended the Golf Industry Show to watch her son Tim be named GCSAA president.

feet behind them as we're walking through the mall," O'Neill says. "But I'm also at the stage — and I've been at this stage for a long time in life, actually — that I really appreciate what a mother's all about and what a mother means to you. I cherish the moment and I feel real fortunate that I was able to show my mother firsthand a little bit about what I've been into professionally for a bunch of years."

Not that Joan is new to golf. Husband Vincent is a big fan of the sport — "a lot of my mom's heroes are my dad's heroes," Tim says — and that carried over to Tim and his three brothers.

"She put up with a lot of Saturday and Sunday afternoons watching golf," O'Neill says. "She had her hands full with all of us. ... She would argue (now) that she was a golfer before she started hav-

ing kids, but she had eight kids in 10 years, so there wasn't a lot of golfing going on during that period right there."

O'Neill grew up in Rhode Island, where his parents and several of his siblings still reside. At age 19 he started as the assistant superintendent at the Greenwich (Conn.) Country Club. Only three years later he was named the third superintendent in the history of Darien, which had been founded in 1957.

"I knew what I wanted to do at an early age," O'Neill says, "and she gave me all the freedom in the world to pursue being a golf course superintendent."

"My mom means an awful lot to me. And for that I'm extremely grateful and certainly thrilled that, in becoming president, I was able to share that with my mother." ■

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TIM O'NEILL

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