

# E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS, Receives Distinguished Service Award

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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:

To preface this, two thoughts come to mind: The objective in all education is to share knowledge with students and guide them to the point where they can leave the University and function productively in the real world, represent us well and develop their talents and skills on their own; and, it is said that the best way to evaluate a teacher is by evaluating his students. In Paul's case then, I will have to be careful not to give myself a big head because Paul deserves all the credit.

He always was an industrious, conscientious self-starter who got things done. One of the most rewarding things for me was observe him grow in the profession while developing his leadership skills. These talents coupled with Paul's abundant energy level set him apart. He is serious about his professional growth and he



E. Paul Eckholm CGCS

tives. 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

*"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

is generous with his commitment to service to the University and Industry. We have all benefited greatly by his initia-

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

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## Eckholm—

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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 relations chair and thus earns our appreciation as a leader.

*"Paul has been a great supporter of the turf program at the University of Minnesota. He has been instrumental in the development and fundraising for the TROE Center and recently served on the search committee to hire Dr. Eric Watkins. Paul's energy to transform the turf program into a beneficial entity for all superintendents across Minnesota is contagious."*

- Dr. Brian Horgan

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.



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