
100 YEARS OF THE CPGA



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Onward & Upward

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PGA HOPE Charleston - Wescott GC led by PGA Professional Perry Green at the PGA REACH Carolinas HOPE Cup

Growing the game? This might be the ultimate example.

Multiple times since he's been teaching golf to military veterans the last half dozen years as part of the PGA HOPE program, Perry Green, PGA has heard from participants that golf has, literally, given them a new lease on life.

"We have had countless people tell us they are alive today because of PGA HOPE," says Green, director of instruction at the Golf Club at Wescott Plantation in Summerville, S.C. "One is a PTSD-affected participant who said he used to get up in the morning and think if there was a way he could take his life without it having a major effect on his family.

"He later told me, 'After a year of PGA HOPE, I get up in the morning and think of how I could sneak in another nine holes without my wife getting mad at me. That's a pretty good trade.'"

HOPE is an acronym for "Helping Our Patriots Everywhere" and is a program that provides free adaptive clinics for veterans. It's part of a

larger initiative that falls under the PGA REACH Carolinas Foundation umbrella with a goal to introduce golf and develop new players in three pillars falling under the categories of youth, military and diversity & inclusion.

“We’ve had 1,700 graduates since the program was launched,” Green says. “We are saving their lives but we are changing the lives of the PGA members involved in the program. It’s the most emotionally rewarding program I’ve ever been involved with.”

With the Carolinas PGA on the brink of its second century of operation (it was founded in Greensboro in 1923), programs such as these are the heart and soul of its mandate.

“The PGA of America will say it has two missions – to grow the game and to serve our members,” says Jeff Abbot, the CPGA executive director since 2015. “I see the Foundation as our vehicle to grow the game, and the Section is how we serve our members through a variety of services and programs.”

The Carolinas Section is at an all-time high with over 2,200 PGA Professionals and Associates. The Section administers over 80 events annually and has added extensive programming



Jeff Abbot & PGA HOPE Ambassador Colton Hensley

and education at the chapter and section level. The Section boasts over 80 corporate partners, and its cash and investment fund has nearly tripled over the past eight years. Since the inception of the PGA REACH Carolinas in 2017, its foundation budget has grown to \$1.3 million annually, serving thousands of youths and veterans.

The CPGA has long been known for its February trade show and running major championships like the Carolinas Open and the Carolinas PGA Professional Championship. But more and more in recent times it has turned attention and resources to creating and managing more programs on local levels. What were once known as “areas” are now “chapters,” and they have been carefully rebranded to reflect the varied geography from the mountains to the coast and how golf

schedules and programs vary from one corner of the region to another. There are 10 chapters: Mountains, Palmetto, Lowcountry, Piedmont, Sandhills, Greater Charlotte, Grand Strand, Cape Fear, Triangle and Atlantic.



The flagship initiatives of PGA REACH Carolinas

The PGA of America over the last 20 years has amped up its focus on career development and improving the professional lives of its members. Career consultants assist with such areas as resume writing, contract negotiations and benchmarking. Player engagement consultants are available to help with growth of the game initiatives and youth programs. There is also a deferred compensation plan where

professionals can build a pension plan by volunteering in various initiatives to attract newcomers to the game and help their experiences evolve into lifelong commitments to golf.

The PGA of America and the Carolinas PGA are also committed to making the game more accurately reflect the makeup of the national population by attracting new golfers and industry professionals across all genders, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.

One important component of that priority is the creation of the Sunny Harris Hutchinson PGA WORKS Fellowship. Sara Harris was the daughter of Johnny Harris, an avid



Jessica Everett (Asbury), the first S. H. H. PGA WORKS Fellow

golfer, Charlotte businessman, president of Quail Hollow Club and the visionary behind Quail hosting the annual Wells Fargo Championship on the PGA Tour as well as the 2017 PGA Championship and 2023 Presidents Cup. She went by her popular nickname of “Sunny” and had significant contributions to the golf world and the Quail Hollow events before her death in 2018 at the age of 43.



Jordan Young & Caroline Riggs, the two most recent S. H. H. PGA WORKS Fellows

The Fellowship serves as a lasting tribute to her loving memory, as well as her admiration for the game of golf. It provides entry-level employment opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to garner

experience in all facets of the golf industry.

Beyond bringing youngsters, people of diverse backgrounds and retired veterans to the game, a major challenge remains attracting newcomers across all classifications to become golf professionals.

“This is a challenge facing all industries – finding good help,” Abbot says. “Golf is booming post-Covid, and our directors of golf and head professionals are well-poised to take it on. But they need assistant professionals, and so it has been a challenge to sell young men and women to work on holidays and work on weekends.”

The Section has hired recruiting specialists with a mission to meet golfers from the junior ranks, high schools and colleges and pitch the idea of a career in golf, not just as a club pro but as a sales rep for an equipment manufacturer, for example, or as an instructor.

“Find a passion, find some area of the game you absolutely love and pursue it as a career,” Abbot says. “If you play your cards right and work hard, the game and the PGA provides endless career opportunities.”



LEE PACE is a Chapel Hill-based golf writer who has written about the history, architecture and great golfers of the Carolinas over four decades. He has written more than a dozen club histories and in 2021 released along with UNC Press his book, "Good Walks--Rediscovering the Soul of Golf at 18 Top Carolinas Courses."



PGA

Carolinas Section

100 YEARS

★ 1923-2023 ★