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**Smith, Comer, Kinloch and Musket Ridge Honored
2014 NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Innovation Awards**



Haymarket, VA - The 2nd Annual NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Innovation Awards were presented today at the Association's annual meeting at Bull Run Golf Club. **MSGA Executive Director Bill Smith** was honored with the **Mid-Atlantic Golf Leader Award** "in recognition of leadership in the golf industry in the Mid-Atlantic, as evidenced by long-term business achievement and/or service to the industry." **The Kandi Comer Golf Academy** received the **Public Golf Leader Award**, "in recognition of an outstanding marketing program executed within the past year for a public access facility." **Kinloch Golf Club** received the Private Golf Leader Award "in recognition of a private club for an outstanding marketing or member recruitment program." **Musket Ridge Golf Club** received the Sustainability Award in recognition of incorporating sustainability and environmental stewardship into operating practices.

Mid-Atlantic Golf Leader Award



Bill Smith of Baltimore is Executive Director of the Maryland State Golf Association, a position he has held since 2002. He began his service to the Maryland State Golf Association in 1985 as a member of the board of directors, and he was elected President in 1994. During his tenure, the association has shown substantial growth in service to clubs and golfers in Maryland.

Formed in 1921, the MSGA was created as an association of private country clubs, and the organization maintained status quo until the hallmark year of 1997. That's when the board ushered in a new public course initiative to broaden its service across the state. Boosted by Smith's leadership, the association grew substantially is now comprised of 60% public courses among its 125 clubs and 39,000 golfers.

It was in 2002 that the board recruited him to take over the Executive Director duties. At the time, there were no fulltime employees -- now there are 4. During his tenure many new services appeared: the Patron Member program, the Player-of-the-Year race, MSGA Play Days and the eClub designed to attract players not affiliated with a club. The tournament program expanded and they started an academic scholarship program. They successfully integrated new services in partnership with the Women's Division of the MSGA. A current goal is continued outreach to new golfers through the Patron Program, eClub and Play Days, which have become very popular.

Smith is a 1963 graduate of Bradley University with a degree in Civil Engineering. He worked as a civil engineer in southern Illinois until 1974, when they transferred him to the east coast to open a new office. He retired as CEO in 2000, which put him in position to take the MSGA job two years later. Smith recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary to Sharon, and they have two children, Angie and Bill.

Public Golf Leader Award



Kandi Comer is a well-known golf celebrity in Virginia, as a former Curtis Cup player who later found a career in growing the game for future generations. A Charlottesville native, Comer is the principal behind the Kandi Comer Golf Academy, which is recognized for this year's Public Golf Leader Award. Her school is based at Old Trail Golf Club in Crozet, VA.

Comer has been mentoring players of all skill levels by providing them with a firm knowledge of the basic fundamentals of the game, with a special emphasis on the short game and course management. Kandi is recognized as a top 5 best golf teachers in Virginia by *Golf Digest*. She has been recognized four straight years as a National Top 50 Teaching Professional by *Golf for Women*, and she has been nominated several times for *Golf Digest's* National Top 100.

To show the scope of her program, in rural Crozet, Comer has 100 children enrolled in her fall junior program! "I like to start them at age 3," she said, "and then I always have a new level to step into as they progress." Why start so early? "I want to get them before soccer gets them," she remarked.

Comer started a PGA Junior League team (like little league for golf), and she was hoping to get 12 players – she ended up with 35 – thus she had a travel team and two developmental teams. They went undefeated in their league and finished second in the regionals.

Comer also uses the SNAG system, with its colorful over-sized clubs and balls. “The kids love it – and I come up with fun games to keep them interested and having fun,” she said. She gets a kick out of kids hitting water balloons to develop a “feel” for shots.

Comer is well-versed in social media to promote her programs, using Facebook, Twitter and email marketing to reach new people and establish a presence in the community. And while she loves working with kids, she also helps grow the game as a source for physical therapy for seniors. She also does women’s clinics and encourages family golf through the use of family tees and parent-child events. In just one year she has built a regular women’s program at Old Trail.

“There is potential to get the game growing, but we must change the mentality. Before there were too many rules – golf needs to be fun!” said Comer.

Comer played on the women’s team at the University of North Carolina and represented the United States at the 1986 Curtis Cup Match. She has played in 5 US Women’s Opens, with a best finish of 15th in 1987. In 1992 Comer took the Director of Golf job at the new Glenmore Country Club near Charlottesville. She remained there for 18 years, leading the golf program for a large membership. Later she created her golf academy and established it at Old Trail in April of 2013.

Private Golf Leader Award



Kinloch Golf Club in Manakin-Sabot, VA is the number one rated course in Virginia by *Golf Digest*. But that is not why the club earned the “Private Golf Leader” award; rather, it was a bold investment in new member amenities that maintained the health and stability of the club through the recent recessionary period.

The establishment of high quality on-site lodging over the past decade has been a tremendous boost to Kinloch. In 2005, the club opened its first cottage to provide comfort and convenience for its national members -- by 2007 it was over-subscribed for the year. So responding to demand, the club opened another luxury cottage in 2009, doubling the number of beds. Almost immediately the new one was also over-subscribed. A third cottage opened in 2011, and traffic has remained high ever since. This service helped the club grow and maintain its national membership, a key component in the club’s success.

“The cottages are like a double edged sword,” remarked Kinloch GM Phil Owenby. “Not only does it boost lodging, but also food and beverage, event participation and much more.” Cottage guests rarely leave the property, as the chef generally prepares all meals. “Our staff loves the opportunity to excel and create unique experiences,” Owenby added.

National membership at Kinloch continues steady, and operating revenues remain solid, aided by the lodging component. A challenge is to balance the number of rounds with the demand created by the national members. Last year the club played 15,500 rounds, which is substantial based on the standard of maintenance set by the club, which is ranked in the top 10 in the US. "Our focus is to maintain the Kinloch experience to a high level," said Owenby.

Kinloch opened in 2000 to high acclaim, quickly moving up the ratings charts to #1 in the Commonwealth. Owenby came on board from the start following a successful run at such clubs as Farmington, Hunting Hills, Boonsboro and Roanoke CC.

Sustainability Leader



The NGCOA Mid-Atlantic's newest award is the *Sustainability Award*, recognizing the ability to incorporate sustainability and environmental stewardship into operating practices. Musket Ridge Golf Club in Myersville, Maryland is the winner of this inaugural award.

Musket Ridge is the first Zero Food Waste golf course in the United States. All of the food waste generated from events, the Lock, Stock & Barrel grill room and the kitchen is composted into fertilizer using a Japanese process called Bokashi. Musket Ridge estimates that it keeps 8,000 pounds of food waste out of landfills annually with its zero food waste initiative, and its efforts have inspired other golf facilities to follow its lead.

Musket Ridge is also embarking on a program to reduce water and chemical use by utilizing new technologies and Best Management Practices. Their new water and nutrient program will greatly reduce the impact that the golf course has on its local ecosystem, including the Chesapeake Bay.

Musket Ridge Chef Kyle Roberson and Golf Course Superintendent Vince DiStefano were recognized by the club as leaders of this initiative. Encompassing more than 150 acres of breathtaking Maryland views, Musket Ridge Golf Club is the final gem designed by the late Joe Lee and is known as one of his best golf courses, joining the ranks of Doral and La Costa.