

Park Views – February 21, 2019 Column

Oak Knoll Golf Course Swings into Action

By Patrick Oropallo, Certified PGA, Golf Course Manager

Fond memories of long, lazy summer days at Oak Knoll Golf Course are swimming in my mind as I return to this lovely place. Growing up in Ashland and learning to play golf at Oak Knoll Golf Course was a privilege that I am eternally thankful for. I am excited to be home and make a positive impact at a facility that I care about so much. After 13 years as General Manager & Head Golf Professional at another wonderful facility, Eagle Point Golf Course, I chose to join the team at Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC), because of my roots in the community, my love for the facility and the tremendous opportunities that exist at Oak Knoll Golf Course (OKGC). After becoming a Class A PGA Professional in 2014, I chose to further develop my career by becoming a Certified Professional in General Management, a designation that just 8% of my fellow PGA Professionals achieve. Recently, my passion has shifted to player development, a perfect match for many of the programs we are offering at Oak Knoll Golf Course. Needless to say, I have the necessary qualifications to improve the financial performance, community involvement and perception of Oak Knoll Golf Course.

What you can expect...

We have a tremendous array of programs planned for 2019. For youth golfers we have “PGA Junior League Golf,” a wonderful program for boys and girls ages 7-13. I have begun “Free Lesson Fridays,” a complimentary golf class for new/beginning youth golfers ages 7-13. We have partnered with SOU Youth Programs for summer golf and foot golf classes. Don’t forget APRC’s Summer PlayGuide! We have a “Youth Get Golf Ready” course this summer as well. We have many adult programs such as “Adults Get Golf Ready” and “Swing, Sip & Giggle,” a socially focused class where we learn some golf, taste some wonderful local wines and snack on some delicious food.

What if you don’t golf?

I am excited to begin a Summer Concert Series right here at OKGC. The free summer concert series will feature one, hot, local band for one evening in the months of July, August and September. Our first concert is featuring “The Brothers Reed” Band on July 12, from 7-10 p.m. at the OKGC Clubhouse. Ever consider OKGC for birding? We have a wonderful array of birds to view. Don’t forget we encourage dog walking and fitness walking at OKGC as well. We are even working on a “Paint and Sip” class during early spring and summer. We can provide something for most everyone!

OKGC Clubhouse, the best venue you never heard of!

Did you know you can host your special event at OKGC? We welcome all inquiries including, but not limited to weddings, celebrations of life, family/class reunions, team building events, family birthdays and corporate meetings/gatherings. We are able to provide light catering and full catering, as well as beer and wine.

What does the future hold?

I am determined to spearhead the effort to make OKGC a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for golf courses. This special program reflects a golf facilities commitment to the environment through wildlife and habitat management, chemical-use reduction, water conservation, water quality management and outreach/education. We want to be one of the most environmentally responsible golf courses in Oregon and plan to achieve this designation by the end of the next biennium.

I plan to begin the process of historically renovating OKGC. As OKGC celebrates its 91st birthday, I think it is important to understand and share the story of this fine, old golf course with community members and visitors alike. This renovation includes an accurate historical understanding of OKGC, a naturalization of the golf course features such as bunkers and water hazards and accurate equipment experience with hickory golf rental equipment. This process is critical in differentiating our facility from others in the area and gives OKGC a competitive marketing advantage in Southern Oregon.

Finally, I intend to tackle the financial performance of OKGC head on. My strategy is simple, increase rounds, events and therefore revenue while identifying opportunities for expense-savings and efficiency. This is not a simple task and will require daily effort, and one that I am committed to.

Then what?

I have a simple goal for Oak Knoll Golf Course. I want Ashland residents to be proud of our golf course and see OKGC as a recreational asset for our community. This will take hard work, time, commitment and results. I look forward to celebrating this achievement with all of you one day!

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