

James A. Fitzgerald, PGA
Chevy Chase Club
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Jim's outstanding and continuing contributions to developing and improving education opportunities for the PGA Professional both Nationally and on a Section level, and his contribution to building the image of the PGA Professional and PGA of America has earned him the 2019 Horton Smith Award.

Jim was born August 30, 1956 on Long Island, New York to Arthur and Edith Fitzgerald. Jim grew up in a large Catholic family with six sisters: Patricia, Kathy, Irene, Sharon, Mary, and Karen. In 1965, Jim's father, an engineer, was hired by IBM and the family moved to Maryland. At age 11, Jim caddied for his father Saturday mornings at Falls Road Golf Course in Potomac, Maryland, and began playing golf regularly when he was thirteen years old at the Potomac Valley Country Club (now Poolesville Golf Club) in Poolesville, Maryland.

Jim graduated from Gaithersburg High School in 1974, where he played on the golf team. Jim played on the University of Maryland golf team for three years and graduated in 1978. Prior to graduating, Jim worked summers in the Lakewood Country Club bag room for PGA Professionals Dick Wilson and Jerry Hogge. While working, Jim continued to compete, winning the Bubby Worsham Championship in 1976 and qualifying for the 1973 & 1974 US Junior Amateur Championships and the 1977 US Amateur Championship. Jim turned professional in 1978 after graduating from the University of Maryland.

From 1978-1979, Jim worked as an assistant golf professional at Montgomery Village Golf Club in Gaithersburg, Maryland. He moved on in 1980, to Columbia Country Club, as the Teaching and Playing Professional. It was there that Jim had the privilege of working for the esteemed "Coach" Bill Strausbaugh. He was elected to PGA membership in April of 1982 and in that same year, accepted the Head Golf Coach position at George Washington University. He coached for two years and also worked as the PGA Visiting Professional at Sandy Lane Golf Club, a five-star resort, in Barbados, West Indies, in the winter seasons from 1982-1987. During this time, Jim accepted a position as head PGA Professional at Sankaty Head Golf Club in Nantucket, Mass, where he served for three seasons, 1985 to 1987. In the fall of 1987, Jim was selected to his current position as the head PGA Head Professional at Chevy Chase Club.

Jim's service to his facilities and to his Section has been recognized by his peers. While working under Coach Strausbaugh, he was honored as the Middle Atlantic Section's Assistant PGA Professional of the Year in 1981. Later, in 1996, he was selected as the MAPGA's Teacher of the Year. In 2004, he won Merchandiser of the Year (Private Category) and in 2011 Jim earned the Section's highest active recognition of Professional of the Year. Coming full circle in 2013, Jim received the Bill Strausbaugh Award for his dedication to becoming a better professional and helping others see and fulfill their potential.

In 2015, Jim presented twice during the PGA Show for Golf Business Network and in 2017, presented along with his fellow board members on a new opportunity/venture for golf professionals. Previously he has presented on panel discussions of best practices within the industry and led Q & A sessions afterward. Jim has hosted and presented on a broad range of topics at Section Town Halls and meetings and has organized and presented at the last two MAPGA Employment Summits; leading mock interviews of assistants and discussing the process of "Preparing for Retirement". Jim's dedication to education doesn't stop with PGA Professionals, he has also presented before 5 PGM schools on his experience in the golf industry and becoming a successful PGA Professional.

In 1998, Jim co-wrote an instructional book with Dave Gould titled "Precision Wedge & Bunker Shots" and has shared his "Personal & Professional Keys to Success" with many professionals visiting his club and those attending the last two MAPGA Employment Summits he's helped coordinate. Jim has served on the Advisory Board of the DC Chapter of the First Tee for over 15 years and has assisted three young men from the DC First Tee Chapter into the only remaining caddie camp in the country, Sankaty Head G.C., with one young man receiving an Evans Scholarship to Penn State in 2018.

Jim cares deeply about the golf profession, his role as a PGA Professional, his staff, and his membership as is evident through his mentoring of 19 Assistants who have moved on to take Head Professional or Director of Instructor positions. Jim tries to lead by example and embraces the responsibility he has toward his assistants, to train & mentor them to be successful in the golf industry. Jim feels fortunate to be able to spend his career doing something he enjoys so much. He tries to be consistent every day and treat everyone the same. Jim continually strives to improve personally and professionally and adapt to the changing times and technologies.

Jim and his wife Jane have been married for 34 years. Jim and Jane met at Columbia Country Club when Jim became her instructor in 1983. Jane has enjoyed an outstanding amateur career; a highlight being advancing to the finals of the USGA Women's Senior Championship in 2012. Jim and Jane have two adult children, Kelly and James.