

**BILL STRAUSBAUGH/CLUB RELATIONS AWARD**

*This award bestows special recognition on a PGA member who has distinguished himself/herself in the field of  
Employment and Club Relations  
by promoting and enhancing improvement in employment conditions  
in the mid-Atlantic region.*

**ROBERT S. BALDASSARI - River Run Golf Club**

Bob Baldassari first swung a golf club when he was just 15 months old, under the direction of his PGA Golf Pro dad — Bob H. Baldassari. Throughout his childhood, exposure to the game of golf was a constant for Bob. Born in Ossining, NY, his father and mother, Claire, moved to Tarrytown, NY, when Bob was quite young. It was here that he and his two sisters, Theresa and Lisa, were introduced to the game of golf by their father. As his career advanced, the elder Bob eventually became the head professional at two golf courses simultaneously, one in Boston and the other in Florida. Because of this, the Baldassari family spent a great deal of time on the road, enjoying summers in New England and winters in Florida.

Each year, Bob and his sisters would start school in Boston, and then around Thanksgiving, they would transfer to Sebring, FL for the remainder of the school year. They did that for about ten years! “I couldn’t have imagined a better childhood,” Bob commented during an interview earlier this year. Bob's father is currently a Quarter Century PGA Golf Professional who is still active in the New England Section PGA.

Bob loved being around the golf course and he started working in his dad’s golf shop when he was 13 years old. It didn’t take long for him to become addicted to the game. Throughout high school and college he received a number of amateur awards and titles. He continued to work and learn from his father at Hillview Country Club in North Reading, Massachusetts during summers, while he earned his degree in Journalism/English at Walsh University, in Canton, Ohio. This is also where he met his wife, Pam.

In 1987 Bob declared his professional status. He entered the PGA apprentice program in 1988. Bob continued working with his father during the Massachusetts' golf season, and spent two winter seasons working as an Assistant Professional at JDM, the original home of the PGA of America in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. There he had the opportunity to learn from different golf professionals throughout the country. In 1988 Bob took a position as Head Assistant Professional at The Congress Lake Club in Hartville, Ohio. In the absence of the Head Golf Professional, Bob managed all aspects of golf operations. In the 1988 winter season, Bob took a position at Indian Creek Country Club in Miami Beach, Florida. In 1989 he went back to Massachusetts where he accepted a position as Head Assistant Professional at The Weston Golf Club. Then in 1992, Bob accepted his current position as the Head Professional at River Run Golf Club & Community, a Gary Player signature design, 18-hole resort facility.

Bob's commitment to his profession and his leadership abilities were evident early in his career. He served as Secretary of the New England Assistants Association in 1990 and went on to serve as President of the New England Assistants Association in 1991 - 1992. He was elected to PGA membership in 1991, when he was also selected as the New England Section’s Assistant of the Year. Bob’s service to his association continued after moving to the Middle Atlantic Section. In 1995 he was elected the Northern Chapter Secretary, and is currently a member of the MAPGA Section Board of Directors. In 1997 he received the section’s Merchandiser of the Year (Resort Category) award. Under his guidance and supervision, five of Bob’s First Assistant Professionals have been chosen for Head Golf Professional positions.

Bob also has an accomplished playing record which includes being selected for the New England Assistants' Wilson Squire Cup Team three consecutive years, 1989 - 1991, and being a member of the 1990 - 1991 Florida Winter Golf Tour. In 1993 he won the Middle Atlantic PGA Pro-Director, in 1994 he was winner of the Mid-Atlantic Pro-Superintendent and in 1995 he won the Chesapeake Classic in Annapolis, Maryland.

In addition to his accomplished playing record and strong management and merchandising skills, Bob's contributions to his community are exemplary. He has served on the Maryland Governor's Economic Development Committee for Ocean City, Maryland every year since 1993. In 1999, Bob was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Maryland Water Advisory Committee, which was established as a result of the devastating effects of the previous year's drought conditions on the state's economy. The advisory committee developed a state-wide drought preparedness policy which included identifying sound water conservation practices and providing ongoing public awareness and education. Additionally, he has coordinated charity golf tournaments for the Gary Player Foundation, and since 1993 Bob has conducted an annual "Santa's Open" with the proceeds going to the Ocean City, Maryland JAYCEES Christmas Toy Program and since 1998 to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations. In the eight years since its inception, this program has raised over \$250,000 in donations. In 1996 Bob was the lead instructor at a golf clinic for the Maryland Governor's Tourism Industry Conference. On the local level, Bob serves on his daughter, Olivia's School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) which works with the school administration and the County Board of Education on facility upgrades as they pertain to the learning environment. A recent accomplishment was getting the entire school wired for computers. Additionally, Bob serves as an "unofficial" assistant coach to the local high school's golf team. River Run GC is the team's home course, and Bob provides free lessons as well as equipment for team members.

As Chair of the section's Public Relations Committee, Bob has worked diligently to increase public awareness of the role of the PGA professional. He has developed many personal relationships with various media representatives as a result of his own involvement and service to his community. Bob is a regular contributor to *Golf First Magazine* and the "Tee-to-Green" section of the *Maryland Times Press*; both of which are Gannett Corporation publications that are distributed to thousands of readers throughout Maryland, Delaware and Virginia. In addition to writing articles, Bob is the official "golf source" for these publications. Bob has been instrumental in the section's participation in Bobby Vermillion's *Mid-Atlantic Golf Show*, which airs weekly on *Home Team Sports* and regularly features PGA professionals from the section. He also initiated a co-op arrangement with *Pros & Hackers* to produce an advertisement to be aired on *Sports Junkies Radio Show*. The section has made tremendous strides in the public relations arena, thanks in great part to Bob's tireless efforts.

Bob's professional objective is to be accomplished in all phases of the golf business and to exemplify the highest standard of professionalism. Bob himself summarizes it best in the following quote: "I have known golf as long as I've known anything. Growing up in this game with your dad as a PGA professional offered me an intimate and unique view on golf, life, and the special people I have met and the friendships that have resulted. The joy of the game now is as strong as when I tagged along with my dad to the club each morning. The times and circumstances have changed, but I still have the desire to arrive at my club and be witness to generations, new and old, and their enjoyment of the game of golf."

Bob is a devoted husband and father. He and Pam have three children — Olivia, Victoria and Robert, Jr., who, like his father before him, was introduced to golf before he was two years old — and the Baldassari legacy lives on. . . .