

MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

These awards bestow special recognition on those PGA members who have demonstrated superior skills as merchandisers in the promotion of golf. This award is given for excellence in golf shop operations in three categories: Private, Resort, and Public/Municipal/Military/Semi-Private.

Resort Category

J. MICHAEL MAYER - Wintergreen Resort (Stoney Creek GC and Devils Knob GC)

Wintergreen Resort has 45 golf holes — an 18 hole course and a 27 hole course separated by 13 miles. As Director of Golf Operations, Mike Mayer is faced with the challenges of not one golf course and pro shop, but two. With 350 full time resident families and 2800 members, over half the 56,000 + rounds played annually at the resort are from members. Along with his strong merchandising skills, more than a little imagination and a whole lot of creativity are required for Mike to meet the daily challenges of running two successful golf shop operations. While he does not personally own the golf shops, he runs them as if he does. His merchandising philosophy is to inspire his staff to have the same passion for developing a positive sales experience for Wintergreen's customers that he has. *"The sales experience is multifaceted and takes an endless amount of year round effort to be successful. Sales bonus plans and establishing a sense of ownership through involvement both help to make an assistant want to dust a display or fold shirts between customers more than working on his putting stroke."* Mike believes customer service should begin with a caring smile and offering knowledgeable assistance, free of high pressure sales tactics.

Mike's parents are Bob Mayer and Mary Goodwin. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and has one brother and two sisters. He holds a Bachelors Degree in Economics from The University of Virginia. David Jimenez, the first Head Golf Professional at Devils Knob Golf Course, introduced Mike to the game of golf at age 15. Mike has spent his entire career at Wintergreen Resort, beginning as a cart attendant at Devil's Knob when he was 16 years old. He has held every golf management-related position at the resort, progressing to his current position as Director of Golf. He earned his PGA membership in 1985. In addition to his busy schedule at the resort, Mike also coached a local high school golf team in Nelson County, VA in 1995-1996.

Mike's successful merchandising begins with monthly sales and inventory analysis which he uses to develop a buying plan for each season. Using an Excel spreadsheet, he developed a plan to calculate the "open to buy" and spread it by month, with allocations to about 45 different classes of merchandise. Each class is then divided by the number of units to purchase at different price points. This has proven to be a great guide for purchasing and for maximization of inventory control, while allowing for the flexibility to change if hot items are discovered. Mike maintains a professional relationship with his vendors, whom he treats as partners in success and in failure. Because he pays all invoices on time, he is able to take advantage of all terms available to achieve the best possible margin. Mike believes that effective merchandising and display techniques determine the image and identity of the shop, while stimulating sales. In both shops,

which are kept clean and well organized at all times, he strives to create image displays that grab customers as soon as they enter his shop. He displays merchandise with props that create a theme while flattering the merchandise group. Mike also sets up merchandise “departments” on the shop floor, segregating vendors as much as possible. He feels he has discovered a special niche with women’s apparel. *“Not only is it more fun to buy, it is absent from most golf shops, and when women find a nice selection that is displayed well, they buy it.”*

Mike’s formula for success is, *“Respect your customers and your co-workers and do your best every day. You must be extremely versatile and flexible, and be willing to work 100 hours a week.”* He also credits a strong PGA education and most importantly, a wife who understands. There is no doubt Mike has all of these ingredients. Mike’s wife Brenda, who earned her PGA membership in 1998, is an Assistant at Stoney Creek GC.

In addition to juggling their very hectic schedules at work, Mike and Brenda are the proud parents of two daughters, Megan Leigh, eight years old, and Andi Marie, five years old.