

## **PRESIDENT'S PLAQUE**

*This award bestows special recognition on a PGA Professional for exemplary contributions and achievements in the area of Player Development and for extraordinary efforts in conducting and/or supporting Play Golf America initiatives. This award considers the PGA Professional's growth of the game leadership commitment at the Section and National levels, plus the impact made at his/her own facility.*

### **Ray Richardson, PGA**

*Dick's Sporting Goods, Fairfax, Virginia*

Ray Richardson was born on July 25, 1971 in Muncie, Indiana to Wendell and Gale. Completing the Richardson family is Ray's sister, Raquel. Both of Ray's parents were avid golfers and would take him and Raquel to the golf course with them on occasion. Wendell was a U.S. Marine and employee of General Motors. Gale worked in government service for various agencies under the umbrella of the Department of Agriculture for 40+ years. Both parents encouraged their children to participate in extracurricular activities and Ray attributes their examples of sacrifice and giving to the next generation as what motivates him to participate in programs aimed at growing the game of golf.

Ray's parents claim that he was playing his first rounds of golf at the age of two; however his first memory of the game is around the age of four. The Richardson's would play golf every day with a group of friends at Maplewood Golf Club. Ray says his father was the greatest influence in his decision to make golf his profession.

Ray attended Winchester Community High School where he played on the golf team all four years. The team was very successful, making their way to State Regionals three times during Ray's high school experience. His first golf-related job was during his high school days working at Beeson Park Golf Course in Winchester, Indiana as a golf shop attendant. After graduating high school in 1993, Ray received a scholarship to the University of Evansville where he was a member of the men's golf team and specialized in training and instructing physically handicapped and severely wounded players.

He turned professional in 1994, working as an Assistant at Polo Fields Golf & Country Club in Louisville, Kentucky. Ray then moved to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina where he worked as an Assistant at Port Royal Golf Club from 1997-1999. Shortly before he joined the Middle Atlantic Section, Ray worked as an Assistant at Gettysvue Polo Golf & Country Club in Knoxville, Tennessee.

In 2000, Ray became the Assistant at Green Hill Yacht & Country Club in Quantico, Maryland and was elected to PGA membership in 2002. He worked as Head PGA Golf Professional at Upland Golf Club in Denton, Maryland in 2004, as well as Swan Point Yacht & Country Club in Issue, Maryland from 2004-2005. In 2007, Ray joined the staff at Dick's Sporting Goods in Fairfax, Virginia where he currently manages the golf facility. Since its inception, Ray has been involved with Jim Estes' PGA Wounded Warrior program. He says that there is no more humbling and yet gratifying endeavor he has ever participated in as a PGA Professional.

He and his wife Susan Spofford have been married for eleven years. They met on Hilton Head Island while he was employed there. Ironically, if not for a friend of his “hitting on her”, they would have never met. From the beginning of their relationship, Susan has understood the demands of the golf industry on the PGA Professional and his family. Never once has she shown anything other than full support and encouragement of Ray’s choices for his career.

Ray has been blessed to work for many excellent mentors, each of whom he has taken something from that he later put into action. However, one gentleman, Mike Robinson, PGA Head Golf Professional at Gettysvue Polo Golf & Country Club, embodies the elements of sacrificing personal gain for the benefit of his club. In the time he spent with Mike, it never ceased to amaze Ray how Mike would constantly come up with new programs, clinics, games, etc to continually grow interest in the game. Mike taught him that part of being a PGA Professional is to find new ways to make the game fun. If your members are constantly coming to you with suggestions for participation, then you’re not doing your job! Don’t get stale. Along the way, some programs will be well received and others will not. Don’t let the fear of failure stop you from trying something new. Whether at a private or public club or in the retail arena, always ask yourself what you can do next.