

PGA/PGM Students Know the Importance of Giving Back

Par for The Cure makes annual donations to breast cancer research

By Tony L. Starks

The human impact of The PGA of America is greatly felt in many sectors of life beyond the game of golf. The Association is proud to promote the fact that its aspiring members, Professional Golf Management (PGA/PGM™) students at universities across the nation, are learning how to carry the torch of altruistic excellence.



Through the ardent dedication of student president Reese McCall and program director Chris Cain, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) PGA/PGM program has helped grow the philanthropic cause of the Las Vegas-based charity, Par for The Cure.

"The UNLV PGM program, in addition to focusing on the student's matriculation through academics and acquiring PGA membership, exposes the students to community outreach and the importance of giving back," says Cain, a graduate of the Penn State PGA/PGM program. "Brian Esposito has had Par for The Cure here in Las Vegas for a few years now and it was a natural fit for our students to get involved."

Esposito, a PGA Professional, originally founded Par for The Cure in 2003 after his mother was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. Since its inception, the program has raised more than \$465,000 for breast cancer research.

PGA students at UNLV are actively involved in fundraising for Par for The Cure, which benefits breast cancer research.

Penn State PGA/PGM students continue fundraising legacy

The Penn State PGM Student Society continued its legacy of charitable fundraising by organizing a concert/dance event called Rock-ATHON, held this winter at the State College High School Gym. More than 100 students were served fully-catered meals including appetizers, entrees, beverages and desserts donated by local restaurants. Thanks to the sponsors' donations, all proceeds from ticket sales were donated directly to THON: the two-day, no-sitting, no-sleeping Penn State Dance Marathon that has raised more than \$46 million for charity in the past 35 years.

"The PGM Program at Penn State makes every effort to help our community and represent the values of our program," says Megan Padua, senior representative and lead coordinator of Rock-ATHON. "We feel that becoming PGA Professionals is about much more than completing the work and gaining work experience. In the process we will do what we can to grow the game, help our surrounding community and set the bar for all PGM schools across the country. It is our hope that other PGM Programs will join us in our efforts and do their part to make a difference."



Esposito and Cain were fellow graduates of the PGA/PGM program at Penn State in 1997. Their pre-existing friendship acted as the catalyst for the UNLV PGM students' involvement with Par for The Cure. In 2006 the students came onboard with the initiative to take fundraising efforts nationwide. Spearheaded by McCall, in 2007 the initiative expanded to include the PGA/PGM programs at Coastal Carolina, Mississippi State and Campbell Universities.

For 2008, McCall aspires to grow the fundraising campaign to be inclusive of even more, if not all 20 PGA/PGM universities. "The PGA members we look up to have their own initiatives, such as military and disabled golf programs, as well as Play Golf America," explains McCall. "We wanted to start our own PGM initiative to help out, get the word out and get all the PGM universities involved. It's something that hasn't really been done before, having all PGM universities working toward a common goal, and what better initiative to start with than Par for The Cure."

As added incentive, the PGA/PGM university that makes the greatest contribution to Par for The Cure will win a trip to Las Vegas for three students and their director, as well as entry into the annual Par for The Cure Celebrity Classic Golf Tournament, held in October.

The celebrity golf tournament is the organization's main source of fundraising. The worthy cause has attracted many well know figures such as PGA, LPGA, Champions and Nationwide Tour players, Major League Baseball and NFL players, Olympic gold medalists and actors/performers.

The PGM students act as the facilitators for the tournament. Says Esposito: "The UNLV PGM students have added a level of professionalism to our event. They also serve as the ambassadors of the game and enforce all the rules of golf in addition to being an intricate part of the fundraising process."

Visit www.parforthecure.com for more info on the organization or to find out how you could make a contribution to fight against breast cancer. ■