

# Distinguished Indeed

After 38 years of service to the Association and golf in the Met Area, **Jeanne McCooey** will receive the MGA's 2015 Distinguished Service Award.

BY JAY MOTTOLA

Service. Service is at the core of everything the Metropolitan Golf Association and its charitable Foundation do. As a non-profit organization our mission is simple: to provide service to clubs, golfers, and the game here in the Met Area. Our Association has been fortunate to have benefitted over many years from the leadership of a dedicated group of volunteers who have given freely of their time in giving back to the game. We have also been fortunate to have a talented and hardworking staff that keeps the Association focused on that mission every single day. For the past 38 years—yes, 38 years!—no one at the MGA has embodied that culture of service more than this year's Distinguished Service Award winner, Jeanne McCooey.

Jeanne grew up in Brooklyn and graduated with a teaching degree from Hunter College. After a short stint substitute teaching, a friend encouraged her to apply for an assistant's position in the communications department at the MGA. Despite not having a background in golf, she was hired by David Fay, who at that time was the MGA communications manager. Since that day in 1977 she's seen the office move from Manhattan, to Mamaroneck, to our current Golf Central home in Elmsford, N.Y.; worked with 20 different MGA presidents; been part of the creation of our charitable Foundation; and seen the staff of the MGA triple in size. Over that time there has not been a job too big or too small for her to tackle and she has had a major influence on everything the Association and the Foundation have accomplished during that time. Given her enthusiasm for the job that continues to this day, and her youthful appearance, it is hard to believe that Jeanne—who will be retiring at the end of the calendar year—is the MGA's longest serving employee ever.

To say that Jeanne's talents and contributions to golf in the area have been multifaceted would be an understatement. For many years she acted as the key liaison with the Met Golf Writers, helping run their annual awards dinner, and she helped establish our relationship with the Met Club Managers Association and other client groups. As part of the MGA Management Committee she has helped this decision-making body shape every major program and initiative the Association and our Foundation have undertaken over the past 20-plus years. In addition she has been an editor/proofreader extraordinaire—something that has been incredibly valuable over the years—helping me and a host of MGA







Jay Mottola, Gene Westmoreland, and Jeanne McCooey in the early 1980s. Below: McCooey standing between recent MGA President Jeff Holzschuh and current President Stephen Boyd.

presidents sound good (no small feat!) and effectively communicate the Association's message. But she has been much more than that, she's been a friend and trusted advisor, someone who was always willing to challenge me on a decision or direction to be sure we got it right. With her input, we usually did.

Above and beyond these contributions, there are two areas where her service has been truly extraordinary and has had its most profound impact. For more than 25 years she has headed the MGA communications department; [www.mgagolf.org](http://www.mgagolf.org), media guides, annual reports, our centennial book, live scoring, eNewsletters, mobile apps, *Met Golfer Extra*, and this magazine, our flagship publication *The Met Golfer*, have all thrived under her watch. Over that time with Jeanne at the helm we have done much more than just keep pace with the rapidly changing media landscape, the MGA has always been ahead of the curve and set the standard for communications among regional and state golf associations across the country. We have set the pace not just by having publications and products but with their quality.

Examples – when *The Met Golfer* was first published more than 30 years ago it was immediately recognized as the best regional golf publication in the country and yet, every year since, Jeanne has pushed the bar higher and made the magazine better.

Today, while most print publications are struggling to survive, *The Met Golfer* is healthier and looks and reads better than it ever has.

A few years ago I got a call from our publishing partner, Rick Summers, whose firm does an excellent job in executing the production of the magazine, and he said, "Do you know that Jeanne McCooey has sent back the layout for the latest cover to our art director seven times with corrections?!" Then he said, "I love it – she nailed it and it looks perfect." For 30-plus years that's what we've come to expect from Jeanne. If it had the MGA name or logo on it, Jeanne always



set the bar high and then exceeded expectations—that's the level of quality she demanded and what we've all come to enjoy.

The other area is the MGA's charitable Foundation. With a plate that was already overflowing, Jeanne was instrumental when the Foundation was created in 1992 in getting it off the ground. She played a key role in early fundraising, helping craft a successful Capital Campaign, and in perhaps her biggest contribution she was the driving force behind GOLFWORKS. Jeanne not only helped formulate this innovative student intern program, she nurtured it from a brand-new concept with a dozen participants at six clubs in 1994 to what it is now, the Foundation's cornerstone program and one of the most successful junior initiatives in all of golf. GOLFWORKS was and is Jeanne's baby. This year more than 250 students worked in meaningful summer jobs at more than eighty MGA member clubs. Since its inception, due largely to Jeanne's efforts, more than 3,000 young men and women, most of them minority and underprivileged kids, have had the course of their lives positively influenced by the program. Talk about providing service to the game! Think of all the lives she has touched through the program – what a wonderful legacy she leaves through GOLFWORKS.

When told about the award by the DSA Committee, she hesitated and tried not to accept the recognition. "The award is for volunteers, I don't belong on a list with names like Robert Trent Jones, David Fay, and Jim Nantz," she protested. Sorry, Jeanne, but we beg to differ. As noted by Jeff Holzschuh, chair of the DSA Committee, "I've been involved with the selection process for a number of years and I can't remember an easier choice. On behalf of everyone at the MGA, I am honored that Jeanne agreed to be the 2015 recipient. I can't imagine a more deserving person to receive the award. Jeanne has been a role model to so many young professionals over the three decades of service to the MGA and golf in the Metropolitan Area."

For her truly distinguished service, to the Association and to the clubs and golfers in the Met Area over so many years, the MGA is proud to present its highest honor to Jeanne McCooey, and to add her name to the impressive list of past DSA winners. It's recognition she richly deserves and it's a list—among those who have given so much to the MGA and the game—where her name truly belongs. ■