

# 2024 Golf Executive of the Year Candidate Bio Form

Please send this form back no later than **Friday, September 29, 2023 at 4pm.**

The respondent's email (**cwhitten@gam.org**) was recorded on submission of this form.

Email \*

cwhitten@gam.org

Name of Nominee: \*

Chris Whitten

Facility Employed at: \*

Golf Association of Michigan

Year Elected to Membership: \*

2009

Number of years in your Executive Management position (50 word limit): \*

5

**Describe your service to the local Section and Association (250 word limit): \***

By nature, the GAM serves PGA Professionals every day. I lead a team to provide the services and training that professionals need relative to USGA services – Handicapping, Course Rating, and the Rules of Golf. Tournament Management (Golf Genius) support is also a critical service for many section members and their members/customers.

As a PGA Professional, I recognize the value of a PGA member in bringing success to his or her facility. I highlight the role of PGA Professionals to all 89,000 GAM members.

Under my review and direction, the GAM Foundation has taken several steps to support Michigan PGA Programs: grants to winners of the Michigan PGA Player Development Awards; grants for the Golf in Schools program; grants for PGA Hope; and a recently developed educational scholarship available for students enrolled in the PGM Program at Ferris State University.

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**Describe your leadership ability and how you inspire other golf professionals (250 word limit): \***

I serve the GAM with a “general manager” focus and skill, political awareness, a detail-oriented yet strategic approach, and a vision of “what could be” for the Association, and more broadly, the game in our state.

I demonstrate a positive, inclusive leadership style at the GAM. In a not-for-profit organization with so many stakeholders, I believe that an environment that welcomes participation, feedback, and ideas is important for success.

I strive to communicate well with all GAM stakeholders, starting with staff. By clearly defining objectives and expectations and giving team members the needed tools and direction, GAM creates a positive, team-oriented culture.

Overall, I represent the GAM, the Michigan PGA, and the game of golf with integrity and professionalism. I am a second-generation PGA member originally from Michigan. I grew up respecting those who played the game at a high level and served others in the game from a position of club leadership. I feel PGA professionals are my peers, but also GAM’s customers.

The GAM is a state-wide, public-facing entity, and, in my role, I hope to inspire enthusiasm for those who play the game – both amateurs and professionals.

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Describe how you support leadership and growth of the game initiatives within the industry, community and the Section (250 word limit): \*

In my five years at GAM, I have led various initiatives to support widespread access to golf in Michigan:

- The GAM Foundation aims to make golf affordable and accessible to the widest possible audience through programs and grants, led by Youth on Course Michigan.
- Advancement of Youth on Course Michigan to help over 34,000 junior players in Michigan play 84,000 rounds of golf for \$5 or less. To make this possible, the Foundation has raised over \$700K for participating golf course subsidies since 2017.
- Spearheaded GAM tournament support of the John Shippen Invitational, a PGA and LPGA Tour qualifying opportunity for black golfers.
- Provided tournament administration support on-site for the 2023 Michigan Adaptive Golfers Championship
- Participation in USGA Golf Advocacy National Working Group
- Member of "Team USA" working group for USGA's pilot junior development program
- Participant in the collective effort of Michigan Golf Alliance during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to advocate for safe golf and the reopening of facilities across the state
- In a culmination of these activities, GAM is the fastest-growing USGA Allied Golf Association in the US by percentage over a four-year period (40%+ membership growth since 2019)

List any other PGA Section or National Awards you've received and the year(s) you received them (50 word limit): \*

None

This form was created inside of PGA HQ and sections - all Google users.

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