

## 2026 Patriot Award Candidate Bio Form

Please submit this form no later than **Monday, October 6, 2025 at 5pm.**

Email \*

prokberg@aol.com

Name of Nominee: \*

Karen VandenBerg

Facility Employed at: \*

Battle Creek CC

Year Elected to Membership: \*

1994

Please describe your involvement in the promotion and development of targeted player development programs at the club level and within the community for military personnel and Veterans in 250 words or less: \*

I am so blessed to participate in the Battle Creek PGA HOPE Program. I am even more thankful for the generosity of our Members at Battle Creek Country Club. For many years, Doug Kreis always talks about the HOPE Program and my involvement in helping our Veterans out at the local VA hospital. I believe having a local VA with a HOPE Program hosted at the facility, our members are more inclined to donate to the program. This is especially important as our program (Battle Creek) lost our funding from the National PGA. Now that funding was reduced for all HOPE programs, we are pressed to fund raise. At BCCC, we would typically collect donations from our membership for Patriot Day and send the money to the Folds of Honor. This year, the money we collected was designated to go to our Battle Creek HOPE program through our Michigan PGA REACH.

Please describe your contribution to programs and events including PGA Hope and Patriot Golf Day which supports the Armed Forces and Veterans in 250 words or less: \*

I have been involved with the PGA HOPE Program since its inception in 2012. We had to be one of the first few programs initiated in the country. We have held 1-2 sessions each year at the Battle Creek VA/Custer Greens Golf Course. I am part of a team of 4 core and incredible PGA members that have dedicated their time and passion to helping our Veterans. The other 3 members haven't missed a year and I'm very lucky to be a part of their team again these past 3 years. I had a conflict with my work schedule that made it impossible to attend the sessions for a short period of time but I'm so glad to be back! We've been lucky enough to have others help in multiple sessions but the core team are always involved. I'm so fortunate to be able to participate again in this wonderful program for our Veterans. As I mentioned above, I fund raised through our membership and was able to collect around \$5000 to go specifically to our Battle Creek HOPE Program! With an expense of around \$220 per Veteran at Battle Creek, this money can very helpful in covering some costs associated with the program.

Please describe your image, service and leadership in the area of support for the military, its personnel and Veterans in 250 words or less: \*

Every year, we collect used golf clubs, golf bags, golf shoes, and golf balls from our membership. We even have people stop to drop items off because they have heard we take donations to the VA/Custer Greens Golf Course. I just brought a bag full of shoes to our class last week and the Veterans were excited and appreciative to find a pair of golf shoes that fit! We have in the past also brought over our old range balls to donate to the course for the Veterans to use.

Please describe how you inspire fellow PGA Professionals in his/her support and contributions to the Armed Forces in 250 words or less. \*

I would like to think that I inspire other PGA Golf Professionals to get involved just because they can see how meaningful helping our Armed Forces is to me. We always say we get more out of doing these 6 week classes than the Veteran gets out of it! With almost doubling the number of programs in Michigan this summer, the need is still there to add programs and get PGA members certified. Recently, I've had a couple PGA members tell me they are going to get certified thanks to me talking about the program. We have a different situation because the majority of the Veterans we are helping are patients at the BC VA. Just knowing that we are helping someone that is certainly struggling at this very moment can be very emotionally rewarding. They all are always thanking us for OUR TIME! I can only hope that I'm making a small difference in their life by teaching them a sport I love!

Are you PGA HOPE certified? \*

☒ Yes

☐ No

Please provide any additional information you would like to share in support of your nomination for the Patriot Award including awards or recognition you've received in conjunction with your support of the Armed Forces and Veterans in 250 words or less: \*

I'm very honored to have been nominated for the Patriot Award. There have been a long list of extremely worthy recipients of this award that have made a huge difference in the lives of Veterans! I'm always humbled by the sacrifices our Veterans have made for us and our Country. I'm also very honored that I could even make a difference in their lives by giving them the chance to enjoy life outdoors with some other Veterans and maybe some peace for a few hours!

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

Michigan PGA Assistant Golf Professional of the Year 2009

Michigan PGA Assistant Golf Professional of the Year 1998

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