



GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

## SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

### NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATIONS DUE BY MARCH 31, 2019

Name of Nominee: William H. BENSON

Name of Golf Course/Club: LAURELWOOD GOLF COURSE

**Contact Information of Nominee:**

Email: laurelwoodgolf@gmail.com Phone: 541-914-9842

**Please include with completed form:**

- 1) Brief outline of Nominee's past employment history.
- 2) Basis for nomination ( i.e. current course conditions, major projects, work ethics, significant accomplishments, work performance, etc.

**Nominator Information:**

I certify that the information in these nomination papers is true, accurate and complete.

Nominator Name: Dennis Santilippo Position: Men's Club

Email: dennis.santilippo06@gmail.com Phone: 541-~~577~~<sup>255</sup>-7735

Signature: [Signature] Date: 3/20/2019

**We ask that this nomination form be co-signed by another representative from your club or company or by another member of the Oregon Golf Course Superintendents Association.**

Co-Signer Name: Rob Bressi Position: Pro Shop

Signature: [Signature] Date: 3/20/2019

**SUBMIT NOMINATIONS BY MARCH 31, 2019**

MAIL TO: OGCSA

P.O. BOX 1556

OREGON CITY, OR 97045

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## **Oregon Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America**

### **Superintendent of the Year**

#### **Nomination for Will Benson**

##### Background & Employment History

Following an extended career in landscape and construction, Will Benson teamed up with partners to manage and operate Laurelwood Golf Course in Eugene.

Will taught himself the basics, then, self-studied to become accredited in organic methodology. Finally, he enrolled, studied and earned his designation as a Class A Superintendent from the OGSA.

##### Basis for Nomination

Vision. It's an intangible. Ethereal. But, to the visionary, it is as solid as granite. And Will Benson had a vision for Laurelwood Golf Course from the moment he saw it. This could be a great golf course. This could be a dream realized—for me, for the city of Eugene, and for golfers who have played this venerable course since 1929.

And now, more than a decade after his vision appeared, it is now realized.. And it is for that vision—and the tenacity, perseverance and sacrifice it took to realize it—that I heartily nominate William Benson as Superintendent of the Year.

Quite frankly, Will has qualified for this award every year since arriving at Laurelwood. No superintendent has worked harder. He has single-handedly transformed a tired muni into a fresh, exciting, challenging and rewarding golf experience. Year by year, underfunded, underappreciated and under management stress, Will held to his vision.

Starting with an eco-friendly approach and building to a grand drainage and re-routing project, Will meticulously strode, step by step into an uncertain future. Finally, two years ago, he went beyond taking steps to taking a grand leap of faith (professionally and financially) and took over management of the golf facility.

Because of the seeds he planted along the way—all those little steps—he was able to reap a harvest of verdant fairways, firm, fast greens, and most importantly, a new and productive relationship with the city of Eugene.

Poor drainage, causing standing water in the low spots and mushy fairways, had plagued the course for decades. Solving the problem was seen as virtually impossible—and impossibly expensive. But a visionary sees past the problems, ignores the obstacles and eschews the pessimists.

Convincing the City that the golf course was a viable entity and a community asset, he was able to obtain the proper funding for the drainage project—a complex system of French drains, catch basins and rivulets that Will designed—that would finally allow the course to manifest itself as the rolling, tree-lined beauty it is. This remarkable achievement, alone, is worthy of recognizing Will.

Infrastructure in place, Will then sought the final piece—a re-routing of the last three holes. This was a long-held vision, but one he had to keep compartmentalized in the back of his head until the time was absolutely right. And that time was now.

The par 3 ninth was a challenging hole, but errant shots could find the clubhouse windows. And ending on a par 3, while not unknown, is still unusual. Will looked at the course with new eyes and saw how it could be changed. He sketched it out, talked to some regulars, took some shots from imaginary tees to imaginary greens and realized it would work.

Next, he consulted with golf course architect Dan Hixson and confirmed his ideas: A new tee box and fairway routing for the par 4 7<sup>th</sup>, a new tee box and green to create a new par 3 8<sup>th</sup>, and a new tee box, fairway bunker and new green to create a dramatic par 5 finishing hole. It could be done. It should be done. And it was done.

As I write this, I gaze upon a snow-covered Laurelwood golf course. It sleeps under this blanket of snow peaceful and serene. But when the snow begins to slowly melt, it will reveal a new course, and a new era will dawn, born in a dream and seen in a vision.

Dear ladies and gentlemen of the committee, admittedly, I tend to wax poetic. But it is because I have been truly inspired by the work Will Benson has done.

I have played Laurelwood for 30 years, and have been a golfer for more than 60. I have played great courses here and abroad. Laurelwood is not one of them—nor will it ever be.

But what Will Benson has done is take a 90 year old golf course—a course used and abused--revived it and infused it with love and respect. With pride and purpose. With affirmation and acumen. He has taken his position as superintendent as seriously as it can be taken. My friends, he has earned, and deserves, the recognition as Superintendent of the Year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dennis Sanfilippo & Rob Bressi















