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MEET THE 41ST PGA PRESIDENT

Suzy Whaley



PGA LEAD Develops Leaders

Q&A with PGA Professional Rich Jones

By Ryan Adams, PGA



and attract new talent to our business. My inspiration to apply for PGA LEAD stemmed from the lack of a diverse workforce and leadership. Fortunately, the PGA identified this issue, and created PGA LEAD to help address those concerns. PGA LEAD is preparing us to be leaders, as well.

PGA Magazine: How will PGA LEAD make you a better PGA Professional?

Jones: By providing key resources, tools and an invaluable network of support, PGA LEAD enabled me to become a key decision-maker that keeps diversity a priority. It also provided needed mentorship and guidance, which, in turn, we will be able to provide to incoming PGA LEAD participants. The program also offered inclusion training, which not only reinforced the importance of inclusion to our corporate culture, but also empowered participants to identify and respond to needs within their own organizations.

PGA Magazine: What is PGA LEAD's impact on the golf industry?

Jones: The demographics of our nation are changing. In order for a business to be effective and motivate citizens to contribute to its growth, leaders must capitalize on a more diverse workforce. We need to expand our outlook on the skills of that workforce—our most important resource—and use creative strategies to be successful in today's golf industry. That's where PGA LEAD steps in. It reflects the value our Association places in diversity, and how imperative it is to develop a number of PGA Professionals who are pro-

ductive and effective leaders with a sustainable competitive edge in the long-term. A bevy of PGA LEAD members are being elected to officer and board of director roles in their Sections already.

PGA Magazine: Who has inspired you in your career as a PGA Professional? Why?

Jones: My mother continues to be my greatest inspiration. We had a very humble upbringing but through her work ethic, pure determination and sacrifices, she has shown me the value of hard work. She sacrificed her entire life to provide every possible opportunity for my brother and me. Without her, I would not be where I am today. Other people who have inspired me in my career have been Harvey Palmore, the late George Williams and the late Oscar McFadden. These names may not be recognizable to most, but as a group of African American educators, all three were paramount in motivating me to be a PGA Professional. They encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone and take the chance on making golf a career. Because of their experiences in life, both on and off the golf course, they guided and influenced my outlook on the contribution that I could make within this industry someday. ■

Rich Jones is the PGA Director of Instruction at Pine Ridge Golf Club in Coram, New York, and Golf Galaxy in Bay Shore, New York, and a member of the Metropolitan PGA Board of Directors.

Hooked in an instant at age 23, Rich Jones remembers the first time he ever laid hands on a golf club.

But also in that moment, he probably never could've guessed what the game would give him and what he would give to the game.

Jones, born in Kingston, Jamaica, moved to Brooklyn, New York, at the age of 15 with his mother and older brother. He then attended college, graduated and began working for an advertising agency, where he was invited to play golf in a client outing. Cue the "my golf moment" for Jones, who immediately became determined to master the game.

After becoming a PGA Member in 2003, Jones held roles as a PGA Assistant Professional, PGA Head Professional and PGA Director of Instruction at various facilities on Long Island, honing his craft and becoming a trailblazer for the area's junior golf scene. His diverse programs in Suffolk County have introduced more than 3,000 juniors to the game. Jones was recognized as the 2010 Metropolitan PGA Youth Player Development Award recipient, and a U.S. Kids Golf Top 50 Kids Teacher.

A member of the PGA LEAD Class of 2017-18, Jones strengthened his passion for teaching youngsters in 2012 by earning a master's degree in Adolescent Education. He also serves on the Metropolitan PGA Board of Directors.

PGA Magazine recently caught up with Jones as part of a new series profiling PGA LEAD members.

PGA Magazine: What inspired you to apply for PGA LEAD?

Rich Jones: The need to create a pathway to diversify the PGA membership is crucial to our ability to grow participation

