



The Green Sheet

Central Pennsylvania Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume 29 Issue 2

Founded ~ April 11, 1939

May 2022

May Meeting

Overlook Golf Course

2040 Lititz Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601

www.overlookgolfcourse.com

Host - George Manos

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Registration begins - 11:00 AM

Boxed Lunch - 11:15 AM

Golf - 12:00 Noon Shotgun

Cocktails - Following Golf

Course Profile

Built by Abe Dombach in 1927, the [Overlook Golf Course](http://www.overlookgolfcourse.com) is Manheim Township's own 18 hole public golf course and driving range facility. With a mature landscape and well managed greens and fairways, the course is consistently recognized as one of Lancaster County's best public golf courses (Lancaster Newspaper's People's Choice Awards and Lancaster County Magazine). The course has a rating of 3 1/2 stars by Golf Digest as a "Best Places To Play" course and is one of the "anchor" facilities located at the Township's Overlook Community Campus.

Superintendent Profile

George Manos began his turf career, as many do, in high school with a summer job at his local public golf course. From there, he learned a deeper appreciation for the game beyond teeing it up. After 3 seasons, he decided to advance his passion for the industry and chose to attend Rutgers University to study Golf Turf Management.

After graduation, he accepted a fulltime position with Lancaster Country Club, another local favorite of his. He would spend the next 13 years experiencing everything the golf turf world had to offer. Projects that included a full greens renovation, new bunkers, state of the art irrigation install, and much more. A career highlight of Hosting the 2015 USGA Women's Open ranks as his favorite memory there.

In June of 2020, as he and his wife Madison expected their first child, he made the decision to step away from the demands of the job to focus more of his energy on family. After 6 months away from golf, George knew that on the course is where he belonged.

In March of 2021, he began his new role as Golf Course Superintendent at Overlook Golf Course. A role that has given him the balance he had been looking for, while providing an opportunity to make a mark. Now into season 2, he and the grounds team look forward to continuing the success at Overlook Golf Course.



Presidents Message

Welcome to the 2022 season. It is certainly off to a slow start. The winter left its mark on many of us with ice damage. Hopefully with some warmer weather recovery will be complete soon. The 2021 season was very successful for Central Penn. Thank you to all those willing to host the meetings. We have four great venues on the schedule this year. The golf championship will be returning for the September meeting and the Rafferty DSA at the October meeting. Congratulations to Tom Ocepek who is the 2022 Dave Rafferty Distinguished Service Award recipient. Tom is a former president of Central Penn and one of its strongest supporters.

There is some legislative work behind the scenes that is occurring. The Alloway fertilizer bill in the state senate (SB251) has been amended again and is a priority for the current budget cycle. We are working with Rep. Dawn Keefer of York County to understand how it will affect the turf community and specifically golf courses. Eventually they will get their way with us becoming certified fertilizer applicators similar to our pesticide license overseen by PDA. Soil tests will be required for large applications with nutrient mapping plans similar to Maryland. The devil is in the details of these latest revisions to the bill with potential limitations on amounts of products used per year. We will keep you updated but at least we have a seat at the table.

See you in a couple weeks!

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CPGCSA President

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Membership News

We would like to welcome the following individuals into our association.

Joseph Orlando.....Class C
Assistant Superintendent, LedgeRock Golf Club

Nathan Schell.....Class C
Assistant Superintendent, Lancaster Country Club

Zachary Smith.....Class C
Assistant Superintendent, Lancaster Country Club

Jonas Weaver.....Class C
Assistant Superintendent, LedgeRock Golf Club

If you know of anyone who is interested in membership into the association, please have them contact Wanda at 717-279-0368 or cpgcsa@hotmail.com.

There are a few outstanding 2022 Membership Dues, please contact Wanda if you have any questions about your dues.

Please see a list of our Association Sponsors on Page 13.

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Myriad forces driving fertility volatility

A multitude of factors have sent fertilizer prices skyrocketing, and turf managers big and small have been left to pay the price.

May 3, 2022 | Andrew Hartsock

The price of natural gas in Europe jumps, Russia declares war on Ukraine, and a golf course superintendent in middle America wonders if he'll have to cut back on how many labor hours he can allocate to trim around bunkers.

Talk about a butterfly effect.

In the seeming never-ending run of bad financial luck befalling superintendents — like inflation, fuel costs, supply-chain issues, crippling labor shortages, and who can forget the [Great Grass Seed Shortage of 2021](#) (and beyond)? — few misfortunes are as potentially budget-bending as the skyrocketing cost of fertilizer.

“I’ve been a superintendent since 2008, and I’ve never seen prices as high as they are,” says Grant Backus, GCSAA Class A superintendent at Shipyard Golf Club in Hilton Head Island, S.C., and a 17-year association member. “With inflation and everything else ... it’s tough.”

And while the butterfly effect — the metaphorical notion that an insect’s beating wings on one side of the earth can lead to a tornado on the other — is at play here, one longtime fertilizer follower leans more toward another winged motif to explain the roiling realm of fertilizer. Josh Linville, director of fertilizer for financial services network StoneX and a 20-year veteran of the traditionally less volatile fertilizer market, has taken to tweeting with the hashtag #blackswan, indicating the forces at play driving up the cost of all things N-P-K are a once-in-a-lifetime culmination of factors, or a so-called black swan event.

“It’s a match,” Linville says, “made in hell.”



*Pallets of fertilizer await order and delivery at LebanonTurf.
Photo by Chris Gray*

Continued ↓

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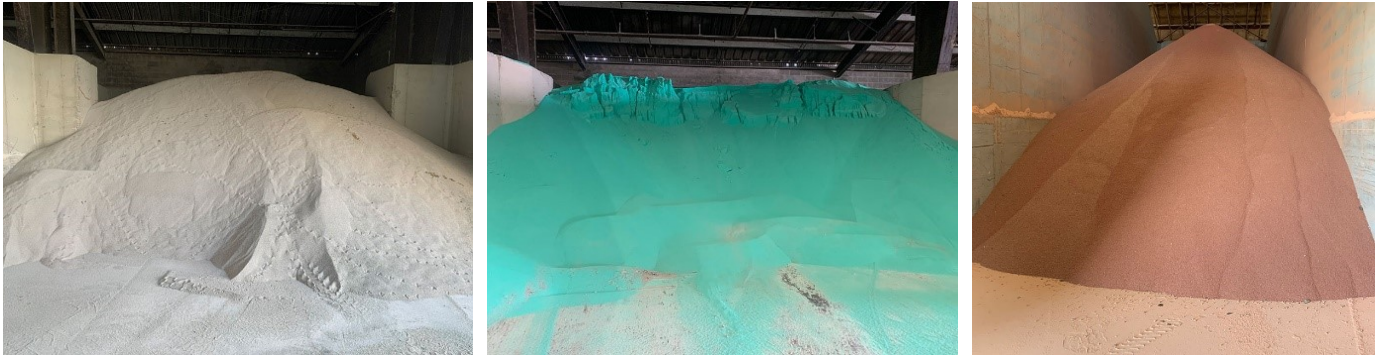
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'It was a slow build'

The first inkling there were fell fertilizer influences afoot might have come a year ago.

"There are so many things that happened that led to it," says Chris Gray, golf channel manager for LebanonTurf, a 22-year GCSAA member and a former superintendent of 18 years. "It was a slow build that just continues to get worse.

"There were natural disasters, wildfires in California, then the lovely stuff happening in Europe had a much more direct impact. All these things were compounding on one another. We were seeing increases happen 12 months ago. Urea started to rise. That's one indicator. Clearly, we've seen all these increases show up in nitrogen, potash, phosphate. The increases started happening a year ago. That's the starting point. Then it started snowballing."



Stockpiles of urea, methylene urea and muriate of potash, or MOP, at LebanonTurf. Photos by Chris Gray

The underlying explanation, of course, is the Econ 101 staple of supply and demand. But convoluted monkeying with both sides of that equation did more than simply nudge the needle. Before long, that needle — and heads — were spinning cartoonishly.

"We look every week (at fertilizer costs)," Gray says. "In a normal year, we produce one price sheet in the fall. I've been here 10 years, and fertilizer is the only price sheet we would issue only once a year. The market just never fluctuates. This year, we've priced five times. That's how much things are changing out there on a constant basis."

Even without market-specific influences, fertilizer likely would have cost more in 2022 than, say, 2020, when the Big Three of turfgrass macronutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium; or, more accurately, the components that go into the products that provide those nutrients) were at or near historic lows. Inflation, fuel and freight costs and other weak links in the supply chain were destined to goose prices. But a perfect storm was building.

Gray says urea is the primary driver of cost associated with a bag of fertilizer, and that market is a mess. A surge in demand for urea at the start of 2021 started the climb, but that was only the beginning. European natural gas prices, driven by pandemic-recovery demand, rose more than 340% in 2021. That matters, because natural gas makes up 75% to 90% of all operating costs for the production of synthetic urea. When natural gas prices jumped, "countless" fertilizer factories closed, Gray says, because they were unable to absorb the increased manufacturing costs, which immediately triggered a urea shortage, which led to near-record pricing.

Hurricane Ida hammered the U.S. Gulf Coast in August 2021, constricting the flow of goods to and from the U.S. (New Orleans is a crucial port for the import of fertilizer components) and shutting down all the ammonia plants in the area, thus restricting the availability of urea nitrogen even further.

Then Russia — which, Linville says, produces 14% of the global urea supply (and 25% to 31% of the global urea ammonium nitrate supply) by itself — invaded Ukraine. Resultant sanctions against Russia and partner-in-crime Belarus essentially took or will take their contributions of those components out of the equation. Germany suspended approval of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline, striking a blow to Russia but imperiling Europe's supply, and Russia, which supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas and 25% of its oil, pushed back, recently refusing to supply Poland and Bulgaria with natural gas.

All these current events drove up prices just as natural gas costs were starting to stabilize in the area, further endangering urea production.

But that's not all.

China essentially banned the export of urea and phosphate to ensure its needs are met, and ongoing pandemic shutdowns in that country have caused snarls across the supply chain, including with some of fertilizers' raw materials, like urea-formaldehyde (UF)

concentrate, the vast majority of which goes into the production of adhesives and wood products, like particle board, plywood and medium-density fiberboard (MDF).

“The wood industry bought up all it could, which drove up the components we use to make methylene urea,” Gray says. “Most people have no clue about the raw materials. Coated urea ... those coatings come from China. N, P and K are just one part. UF concentrate costs are up 200%. How do you explain that to somebody? There are a lot of unseen costs — so many aspects people aren’t aware of.”

What about ‘Mother Ag’?

And that’s not even considering the role of agriculture. “Mother Ag,” as Gray refers to her, buys up 90% of the United States’ allotment of urea, leaving turf and ornamentals and all other channels scrambling for table scraps. Traditionally, when nitrogen prices spike, U.S. farmers respond by swapping out acres dedicated to nitrogen-thirsty corn for soybeans, which can convert atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia to meet much of their N needs. But high corn prices — coupled with high costs for phosphorous and potassium that soybeans require, thus offsetting potential savings from nitrogen — mean it makes more financial sense for farmers to continue to put in corn.

“We’re a minor player in the fertilizer commodities market,” Gray says. “Ag directs everything. As the thirst for corn continues to grow, the millions of acres of corn planted has impacted how much is available to us. Because the phosphorous and potash markets are accelerating at the same rate as urea, there’s no viable reason to switch crops. Corn continues to drive what’s needed for food production, and while we love grass, people need to be fed. There’s little left for us.”

Just as the urea market is roiled by several interwoven factors, myriad movers have conspired against the other three legs of the holy N-P-K triumvirate. Remember the sanctions on Russia and Belarus? Russia contributes 10% of the global phosphate total and 20% of the world’s potash supply. Belarus produces 18% of global potash.

European natural gas prices and the shutdown of the massive Mosaic potash mine in summer 2021 in Canada also stymied the U.S. availability of fertilizer.

Whew.

“So, there are a lot of problems going on with this,” Gray says. “There are so many issues going into it, there’s no simple solution.”

Rolling with the punches

What’s the bottom line for a fertilizer-dependent golf course superintendent?

Again, there’s no simple solution. But there’s no question superintendents universally are and will continue to feel the pinch.

According to GCSAA’s 2021 Maintenance Budget Survey, fertilizer was the second biggest golf course maintenance expense nationally at just over 5% for 2020. Labor far and away was No. 1, at 56.74%. It’s worth noting, though, that because the cost of water is so varied, it is not included in the list of largest maintenance expenses; overall nationally, that line item is nearly 13% of the total budget among golf courses that purchase water.

Fertilizer expenses are also somewhat regional. In the Southeast, fertilizer costs made up nearly 7% of maintenance budgets in 2020. Courses in the Pacific region, in contrast, spent just 3.5% of their maintenance budgets on fertilizer in 2020.

“Before, we were talking about fertilizer being 6½% of the average budget, and now it’s probably closer to 10%,” Gray says. “You have to be able to respond to that. They don’t want to raise the budget, so you have to play the shell game. A lot of courses will have to make hard decisions. Do you want to cut the fertilizer budget? You don’t want to make decisions that will have a detrimental effect on turf. It’s not like you can go without fertilizer.

“One, you can trade down to a less sophisticated fertilizer. There are numerous types out there. But superintendents become comfortable with what a product gives them. If that’s now out of your price range, trading down is an option, but what effect will that have on the quality of turf? That’s a dangerous game to play.”

“There are other things you can do,” Gray says. “You can cut down areas you maintain — out-of-play areas, naturalized areas. An overall reduction in maintained areas cuts down on inputs and labor. There are some tricks like that. Superintendents are well versed in areas they can cut. What about pesticides, weed control, fungicides? You can’t stop putting down dollar spot treatment on greens. In some cases, there might be no effect at all. Membership has certain expectations for conditions, so, ‘Here’s the money.’ I think it will impact those mid-tier courses and lower, the mom-and-pops, who are depending on those revenues to maintain their course. If they can’t afford to maintain the course to expectations, when you hit that tipping point that people stop coming to your golf course because of conditions, it’s a domino effect. Every course is different in how they will decide to deal with it.”

Tales from the trenches

Justin Collett, director of agronomy at Sea Palms Golf & Tennis Resort in Saint Simons Island, Ga., says he has seen across-the-board increases in fertilizer costs.



Sea Palms Golf & Tennis Resort in Saint Simons Island, Ga., where superintendent Justin Collett is spoon-feeding in an effort to curtail fertilizer usage. Photo by Justin Collett

“Some of the stuff I buy used to be \$17 a bag. It’s up to \$23 a bag now,” he says. “Granular has more than doubled in price.”

Rather than broadcasting granulars, he has switched to spoon-feeding.

“It’s looking like we might be in this for the long haul,” says Collett, a nine-year GCSAA member. “That makes it a little scarier. And availability is an issue. I tried to order two pallets today. They only had one. Stuff we used to get right away now takes two weeks or more.”

Over at Shipyard GC on Hilton Head Island, Backus, too, has turned to spoon-feeding as an alternative to slow-release N that has more than doubled in cost.

“You’re not getting that big slug up front,” he says, “but you can spray a little bit frequently and manage it that way.”

He also put out an application of 5-3-0 sludge — prilled human waste. “The price of that stuff,” he says, “has barely moved.”

At Deer Creek Golf & RV Resort in Davenport, Fla., GCSAA Class A superintendent Ryan Herren, a 24-year association member, has seen about a 40% increase in fertilizer costs. He’s experimenting by increasing the amount of his slow-release nitrogen in hopes he can cut out one application.

“You gotta change things,” he says. “We’re putting it down a little heavier and hoping we can skip an application. It’s still too early to see if it’s going to hurt us.”

Half a continent away, in Bartlesville, Okla., Jody Shahan hasn’t felt the pinch — yet. After consulting with sales reps last summer, he anticipated a big jump in costs for all his chemicals and had the foresight to stock up.

“By the time I hit fall of last year, I had everything I needed for the 2022 growing season sitting in my shop,” says Shahan, superintendent at Adams Municipal Golf Course and a 16-year association member. “I’m hitting the tail end of my budget year now, and I’m a lot broker now than I’d normally be, but that’s because I bought a season and a half of the same chemicals in the same budget year. I thought it was a gamble worth taking. I’ve had reps come see me now who say, ‘You probably made one of the smartest moves you could make.’ I went to the city manager and said, ‘I’m broke right now.’ He was, like, ‘You did a good thing. If you have budget concerns down the road, we’ll address them then.’”

Granular fertilizer alone consumed close to 10% of his \$50,000 annual chemical budget. The thought of that doubling — or worse — is concerning.



Superintendent Jody Shahan puts out an early morning application of methylene urea at Adams Municipal Golf Course in Bartlesville, Okla. Photo by Jody Shahan



A busy day on the practice green at Adams Municipal GC in Bartlesville, Okla. Photo by Jody Shahan

“Honestly, I was more concerned about availability than I was pricing,” Shahan says. “There’s not much you can do on pricing. When the stuff was available last fall, I jumped on it. You couldn’t even walk in the chemical room when the stuff came in.”

He’s wrapping up work on next year’s budget and increased his chemical budget by 25%. “I’m hoping that’ll do it,” he says.

If not?

“Then we’ll have to start looking at things,” he says. “We might have to look at maybe fertilizing just the short grass, not everything. Obviously, greens have to stay where they are. My bermuda is what would suffer. I’ve definitely heard people talking about it. Some people are talking about cutting manhours instead to make up for it. There are courses talking about edging bunkers twice a year to save manhours. That money has to come from somewhere. You can cut back in ways like that because you can’t let the grass suffer.

“Another option for us is to change up the preemergent on our bermudagrass. I spray Spectacle in the fall, and I try to go deep in the roughs with that. Maybe we scooch in a little, maybe use something cheaper when we start hitting tall grass. That’s how I’ve had to deal with stuff in the past.

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Once you hit the tree line, it’s going to be getting the cheapest preemergent on it, and it’s not going to get fertilizer.”

Chris Rice, GCSAA Class A superintendent at Salina (Kan.) Country Club and a 14-year association member, also benefited from early-ordering his fertilizer.

“I heard some things would be hard to get because of shipping and COVID and all that, so I early-ordered a lot more. I usually don’t early-order fertilizer, but I did last year,” says Rice, who still noticed a 15% increase in his fertilizer prices as far back as October 2021.

In the run-up to the Senior LPGA Championship that Salina CC will host in July, Rice anticipates he might have to make an early-season fertilizer order to combat some winter desiccation on his greens. He’s bracing for sticker shock.

“You just might have to cut other places,” he says. “With fertilizer and stuff like that with grass, you don’t have many options. Fertilizer and fuel ... you have to have it. You can’t just stop using it because you don’t want to pay more.”

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Penn State Turf Community Mourns Loss of Professor Wakar Uddin

Faculty, staff, and students in the Penn State turfgrass program are deeply saddened by the loss of our friend and colleague, Dr. Wakar Uddin, who passed away last week following an extended illness. Dr. Uddin was a Rohingya American, born in Maungdaw, Arakan State Burma/Myanmar. After immigrating to the United States, he obtained his B.S. and M.S. degrees

 in IPM from the University of Nevada. He received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of Georgia in 1996 for his dissertation: 'Epidemiology and Management of Phomopsis Shoot Blight of Peach.' He worked with former turfgrass pathologist Dr. Richard Smiley at Oregon State University, and at the University of Georgia Plant Disease Clinic, as well as other plant pathology jobs before joining Penn State in 1998 as our turfgrass pathologist.

His expertise was in epidemiology and management of turfgrass diseases, population biology of turfgrass pathogens, host defense responses in turfgrass pathosystems, and chemical control of turfgrass diseases. His main research focus involved management of gray leaf spot disease of perennial ryegrass turf. Dr. Uddin taught courses in turfgrass pathology to hundreds of undergraduate and 2-year certificate program students over his 20+ years at Penn State.

In addition to his work in plant pathology, Dr. Uddin served as Director General of Arakan Rohingya Union, a federation of 61 Rohingya organizations worldwide that is recognized by the international community as the official voice of the Rohingya people. He was also the Founding Chairman of The Burmese Rohingya Association of North America, and the President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Muslim Aid America. Numerous tributes to his work and accomplishments are posted on social media.

[Penn State Turf Mourns Loss of Professor Wakar Uddin \(mailchi.mp\)](mailto:mailchi.mp)



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2022 Meeting Schedule

May 25

Overlook Golf Course

June 23

Royal Manchester Golf Links

September 20

Dauphin Highlands Golf Course

October 4

LedgeRock Golf Club

A Rise in *Poa annua*

May 06, 2022

Elliott L. Dowling, senior consulting agronomist, Northeast Region

It is easy to recognize *Poa annua* growing in bermudagrass this time of year. [Green clumps](#) of grass growing amidst brown or semi-green fine turf are easy to identify. It is just as easy to identify how well your herbicide program worked based on the number of clumps on your course.

What is not as easy to identify, and doesn't get the same consideration as an herbicide program, is weather and golfer traffic. Since last October the weather in the southern part of the region has been ideal for *Poa annua* germination and growth. Mild weather for most of the winter allowed the winter annual grass to thrive. Another potential cause for an increase in *Poa annua* is an increase in rounds played. With more rounds comes more traffic, and more potential stress.

The rise in *Poa annua* is not just in fairways and rough, but also on bentgrass putting greens. I've heard more courses mention this than in previous years. As putting greens thin late in summer, this creates voids and an opportunity to gain a foothold. It is easy to be concerned if your course has more *Poa annua* on greens this spring than you've had before, but it doesn't necessarily mean you need to make any drastic herbicide applications to combat it.

My sense is given how mild the weather was, most of the *Poa annua* is the annual biotype and should die off with warmer weather. This doesn't mean that your greens will have massive voids and turf loss, but rather as the weather warms bentgrass will start growing more aggressively and *Poa annua* will slowly fade away.



An increase in *Poa annua* on putting greens can be attributed to nearly ideal weather for growth of the weed, and additional turf stress from increased play.

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In some instances, *Poa annua* might survive, in which case it can be managed with plant growth regulator applications. In rare cases, preemergence herbicides might be necessary this fall or early winter. Before you throw your entire herbicide program away, think about how weather and play impact *Poa annua* development.

Northeast Region Agronomists:

Adam Moeller, director, Green Section Education
amoeller@usga.org

Darin Bevard, senior director,
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On April 15, 2022, Brad Heintzelman, Lehigh Country Club Mechanic, suffered from a Cerebellar stroke that was caused by a blood clot. He has had multiple surgeries since and will need lots of rehab and therapy moving forward. The upcoming days, weeks, and months will prove to be challenging for this family. This GoFundMe page will help defray medical costs and other family expenses so his wife Kim can stay by his side and focus on what's most important: his recovery.



Even a small donation could help support this family, and if you can't make a donation, please share this fundraiser with the golf community.

<https://gofund.me/f5d7d7ce>.

Please reach out to John Chassard, Lehigh Country Club for any questions and updates.



Golf Course Superintendents Association

Dear CPGCSA Member:

The CPGCSA Board of Directors has developed a scholarship for students pursuing a career in Golf Course Management and/or for children of a member of CPGCSA seeking any type of higher education. The deadline for applications is July 31st.

Listed below are the CPGCSA Scholarship Guidelines:

Eligible Candidates:

Applicants must fall into one of the following categories:

- Students majoring in Golf Course Management at an accredited institution who are employed at least part time by a CPGCSA member.
- Students majoring in Golf Course Management at an accredited institution and are currently a member of CPGCSA in good standing.
- Students attending an accredited institution and are the child of a CPGCSA member in good standing.

Guidelines for Applicants:

- Applicants must have completed at least one year at an accredited institution.
- Applicants must submit a typed essay of no more than 500 words outlining his or her career goals and why they feel they are deserving of the CPGCSA Scholarship.
- Applicants must submit two letters of recommendation. (One from an instructor and one from a CPGCSA member)
- Applicants are eligible to receive this award one time.
- The scholarship will be paid directly to the college or university.

Timeline:

- July 31 - Deadline for submission of applications.
- August - Board will review applicant's information, approve and notify recipient.
- Annual Scholarship Tournament – ceremonial presentation of the award.

Attached please find a scholarship application. Additional applications can be obtained by contacting CPGCSA office at (717) 279-0368 or cpgcsa@hotmail.com. If you know of a deserving student, Central Penn GCSA can help.

Sincerely,

Scholarship Chairmen

2022 Scholarship Application

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