LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (Dec. 18, 2025) – As the USGA celebrates the 50th anniversary of its Members Program today, the organization is marking a year of significant progress toward its mission to champion and advance the game for generations to come.

Starting in 1975, when Volunteer National Chair Arnold Palmer presented U.S. President Gerald R. Ford with the first Associate's bag tag (for what is now called the USGA Members Program) in the Oval Office on Dec. 18, the program has united those who share a passion for golf and a commitment to its long-term health. Through members' support, the program helps fund critical USGA initiatives that ensure the game's future — from developing the next generation of American golfers to driving innovation and sustainability across the game.

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Investing in the Future of American Golf

In 2025, the USGA's U.S. National Development Program (USNDP) expanded its reach to support more aspiring golfers nationwide through training, competition and access opportunities. By identifying and developing the country's most promising juniors, the program is building a stronger pipeline for American golf — one that reflects the game's growing diversity and global competitiveness.

This year alone, the USNDP provided more than $850k in grant funding to 109 athletes and their families from 32 different states, ensuring those with the talent to reach the highest levels of the game aren't held back by financial constraints. Grant funding is used for costs associated with coaching, equipment, tournament travel and more.

"[The program] lifted the financial burden off my parents," said grant recipient Jude Lee, 17, of Walnut, Calif. "Being able to travel without that extra burden of thinking about how much it was going to cost. Because of that I was able to travel around the country playing events, which helped me boost my ranking and get on the radar for recruiting for top D1 schools. Ultimately, that allowed me to earn a scholarship to Stanford, which was a total dream come true."

The grant program is one of four pillars currently available to USNDP athletes, with U.S. National Teams, Tournament Exemptions and State Teams rounding out the program's current offerings, which in 2025 impacted more than 500 junior athletes.

Advancing Sustainability Across the Game

The USGA continued to lead the way in helping golf courses become more resource-efficient and environmentally responsible. Launching its Water Conservation Playbook in March, the USGA Green Section renewed its longstanding commitment to helping facilities nationwide lower costs and conserve water with practical, science-based strategies.

The USGA also awarded 15 new Davis Grants, reinforcing its broader, long-standing investment in research that supports a healthier environment, stronger communities and better playing conditions. As the largest private turfgrass and environmental research grant program in golf, the Mike Davis Program for Advancing Golf Course Management annually supports more than 60 international projects with $2 million of funding, contributing to the more than $55 million the USGA has invested over the past 40 years. This investment has helped courses operate more sustainably, delivering nearly $2 billion in annual benefits, and strengthening the game's long-term health.

Building Golf's Future Workforce

The USGA continued to invest in programs that create career pathways and open doors to the next generation of leaders in golf, including directly funding more than 370 internships. In 2025, the organization hosted its fourth annual Pathways Discover Program, a 10-day immersive experience that introduces 24 college and graduate students from a wide range of backgrounds to the many facets of the golf industry through education, hands-on training and networking. This year also marked the launch of Pathways Launch, a new collaboration between the USGA and nine leading golf organizations, including the PGA TOUR and Pinehurst Resort, designed to widen the pipeline of future leaders and make the industry more accessible and inclusive ahead of its 2026 debut.

In addition, the USGA reinforced its ongoing support of the nationwide P.J. Boatwright Internship Program, helping to provide meaningful entry-level experiences at Allied Golf Associations across the country and ensuring a strong, diverse talent pipeline for the game's future. In 2025, the USGA provided $2.1M in funding to AGAs to support the hiring of 219 interns.

The USGA also expanded the Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program (GAP) in its third year, adding Horry Georgetown Technical College in Myrtle Beach, S.C., alongside the original location at Sandhills Community College in Pinehurst. The free, one-year curriculum combines classroom

instruction with on-course experience, offering students a well-rounded pathway into golf course management and helping address the industry's critical need for a qualified workforce.

"This is my first job in golf course maintenance. I moved down here from Minnesota alone, which was a big leap," said GAP student Brooke Heikkila. "Now I feel confident in what I'm doing—and that's thanks to the mentors and instructors who have supported me the whole way. When I started, I thought I'd just try it out for a year because it was free. I wasn't sure if this industry was for me. But now, I love it. I want to stay in it for the rest of my career."

Of the 33 graduates from the first two years of GAP, 85 percent are still in the industry, and 48 percent have earned job promotions.

If you would like to support any of these initiatives, visit usga.org/donate.

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