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GULF STATES PGA SECTION

From Tragedy Comes a New Beginning

PGA Professionals are playing a key role in revitalizing an entire New Orleans community

The devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 changed the city of New Orleans forever. Thanks to a dedicated group of local residents—including many members of the Gulf States PGA Section—the future is bright for a historic area of the city with a rich golf background.

The Bayou District Foundation was founded in 2006 to redevelop the site that once housed the St. Bernard public housing community and the City Park Golf Course. In the last century, City Park was a 72-hole public facility that hosted as many as 250,000 rounds per year and was home to a thriving junior golf program. Prior to Katrina, City Park had fallen on hard times and was operating with just 27 holes of golf, and the St. Bernard community was one of the city's most violent areas.

Following Katrina, the Bayou District Foundation looked at the revitalization around Atlanta's East Lake Golf Club as a model for how a golf facility could help turn around a community's fortunes.

"The idea was to create a new community that would break the cycle of poverty," says PGA Professional and Gulf States Executive Director Robert O. Brown. "The goal was to create an area that felt safe, offered housing and education opportunities for multiple income groups and age groups, and was attached to a golf course just five minutes away."

Over the past 10 years, the Bayou District Foundation has succeeded in creating a new community, now called Columbia Parc. There is a best-in-class early education center called Educare New Orleans, and residents have access to new health care centers and schools.

PGA Professionals have been involved throughout the process, and especially as City Park's golf facility has moved toward a new phase in its rich history. Dozens of Gulf States PGA Section members participated in the

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"Hundred Holes for History" fundraising golf marathons over the past five years, raising more than \$250,000 in the process.

"That's a big chunk of change for a relatively small Section such as ours," says J.T. Crawford, PGA head professional at nearby New Orleans Country Club and coordinator of the event. "It's been a long road getting to this point, but when it's done, it will be incredible—and there will be several PGA Professionals working at City Park. It's great to see so much good coming out of so much bad."

City Park North is currently open, with a family-friendly 18 holes that is ideal for recreational and beginner golfers. Scheduled to open later this year is a second 18-hole course, yet unnamed, that was designed by Rees Jones to provide a premium golf experience—and be able to host Section or even national events.

When the new course's clubhouse opens, the Columbia Parc/City Park area will have another new resident: the Gulf States PGA Section, which will have its offices and hall of fame on site.

"It's been really heartwarming to work on something that's so big and to see our work paying off," Brown says. "We're thankful that the Bayou District Foundation asked us to play a role and that so many PGA Professionals have given their time. J.T. Crawford and Jim Dorman, our District 3 Director, and all the Section officers over the past 10 years have been instrumental, and you can see how many people are benefiting from the work that has been done." ■

Gulf States PGA Section at a glance

www.gspga.com

Headquarters:
Metairie, Louisiana

Founded: 1968

Total members: 274

Apprentices: 32

Total golf facilities: 334

Geographic region: Covering the states of Louisiana and Mississippi

President: Jeff Adkerson, PGA, Mississippi State Univ. PGA Golf Management, Starkville, Mississippi

Executive Director:
Robert O. Brown, PGA

Home to PGA Presidents:
James Ray Carpenter (1987-88);
Ken Lindsay (1997-98)

Prized program: Drive, Chip & Putt Championship