

THE BLADE

One of America's Great Newspapers

Sylvania caddiemaster stays on course

5/16/2016

BY KYLE ROWLAND

BLADE STAFF WRITER



Tom Grzywinski sits in the Sylvania Country Club office he's occupied for 26 years.

Tom Grzywinski has no interest in retirement. And why would he? The 74-year-old has the self-proclaimed greatest job in the world. Mr. Grzywinski has been the caddiemaster at Sylvania Country Club for 26 years.

"To have influence upon kids is great," he said. "The truth is I'm good at this. I've been with kids for 35 years."

Before his time at Sylvania, Mr. Grzywinski was a Toledo Public Schools teacher for 35 years and the caddiemaster at Inverness for seven. He was also a college basketball official for 30 years.

When he was given the chance to work at Sylvania Country Club, one of the finest golf facilities in the region, he didn't hesitate. The club, which employed caddies, wanted to boost its reputation.

"The real heroes here are the members, the people that employ these kids," Mr. Grzywinski. "They're the real champions. I just orchestrate. Am I good at that? Yes. I'm not bragging. But the members go out with these kids for four hours and learn all about them. You take them because you want them."

The number of caddies tops triple digits, with the youngest being 14.

"I love Tom as a boss," said Northview graduate Peter Cook, 20, now a senior at Ohio Wesleyan. "I've been here for seven years. When you first get to know him, he acts tough to gain respect. ... But once he has your respect, he's a fun-loving guy who enjoys his job. ... There's some hard work, but it's great being out here."

As Mr. Grzywinski points out, this is a full-time summer job that's to be taken seriously.

"We aren't giving away free money," he said. "You have to work for it. And they have to answer to me. There's an old saying, 'Keep up and keep quiet.' I'll teach you everything else.

"A lot of kids don't like me. I expect them to be respectful, I expect them to look good, I expect them to be on time, I expect them to be sociable. And if you use your phone on the course, I'm going to fire you. The parents love me."

Cell phones are a major no-no, a sticking point for some youths. But it doesn't temper their admiration for the boss — no matter what he says.

Sean McMullen called Mr. Grzywinski the best boss he's ever had.

"Tom is the caddiemaster, but he's more like a co-worker to me," said Mr. McMullen, 19, a sophomore Evans Scholar at Ohio State University. "It's great that I was able to develop a relationship with him. In my first year, when I didn't believe in myself, he did. I enjoy coming here every day."

The Evans Scholars Foundation, founded in 1930 with money from famed amateur golfer Charles "Chick" Evans, is a nonprofit that provides college scholarships to caddies. Sylvania Country Club, in its centennial year, has many Evans Scholars caddies.

So how does Mr. Grzywinski sum up leaving home every morning and working weekends deep into his 70s?

"I have a terrific, understanding wife," he said.

