Each year, the AJGA presents awards to the tournaments with the best individual media coverage, fundraising, charitable giving, volunteer base and hospitality. The AJGA also recognizes its golf professional of the year, most improved event, best new tournament, best Invitational and overall tournament of the year.

Without the help of tournament committees comprised of course staff, sponsors and local volunteers, AJGA tournaments wouldn't contain that special touch that keep juniors coming back. Each committee works with the AJGA tournament director to create an atmosphere that is not only conducive to good competition, but also provides an enjoyable experience to all involved.

The AJGA would like to thank all 2010 committees, volunteers and staff who helped make our events a success in our 32nd year as an Association. We would also like to take time to recognize those who went above and beyond to make a mark on the 2010 AJGA schedule. Congratulations to our award winners!
The Evitt Foundation RTC Junior All-Star embodies the essence of southern hospitality. Located in the north Georgia city of Ringgold, the community produces a fleet of 200 volunteers who embraces the AJGA event not out of obligation, but because they want to thank their AJGA guests for visiting the community.

For this commitment, the Tournament Committee has earned the 2010 Volunteer Award, which recognizes the Evitt Foundation RTC Junior All-Star event for building the model volunteer base.

In the case of the Ringgold community, this award recognizes the efforts that date back to 2003, the tournament's first year.

"It's really how many of these individuals kick-start their summer," Tournament Chairman Marcy Cirlot-Kernea said. "They want to show these golfers that they appreciate them coming to this community and they want the juniors to feel welcome, so our community has really embraced this event."

Cirlot-Kernea said that about 200 volunteers come back year after year, and the primary reason is that they value the time they spend interacting with the next generation of golfers.

"Some of our volunteers use their vacation time to be able to come to the course and work with the kids all day, so I think that speaks to the caliber of the AJGA players and also to the tournament," she said. "Many of our volunteers even end up following them throughout their golf careers."

Past champions such as University of Florida standout Arnond (Bank) Vongvanij and NCAA All-American Candace Schepperle (Auburn) have given Ringgold residents good reason to follow the players' careers.

Above all else, the unparalleled dedication is a sincere "thanks" from the community to AJGA families, and the volunteers know the feeling is mutual.

"The kids are so gracious of our volunteers being there and I think our volunteers feel that they're appreciated, that they're valued and they know that being there makes a difference," Cirlot-Kernea said.
When the Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic comes to Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico, it is truly a community event, and that is evident in the media coverage received from local news outlets.

It is for this reason the Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic Tournament Committee is receiving the award for best media coverage at an AJGA event.

Each day as players round the course at El Camaleón Golf Club, home of the PGA TOUR's Mayakoba Golf Classic, they are greeted by newspaper photographers and television cameras, and the leaders can be sure that they will be asked for an interview when they leave the scoring area.

The media success of the Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic is in large part attributed to a member of the Tournament Committee, Veronica Muller, Sales and Marketing Manager of the TOUR event. Muller serves as the Media Chairman for the AJGA's tournament and works diligently to ensure the best possible media exposure for the tournament, players and golf course.

Her role as Media Chairman differs from that of most tournaments due to the challenges presented by running an event in a foreign country. She translates and distributes all press releases to the local outlets, and in 2010 organized a press conference that was attended by 19 members of the local media.

"All of us involved with the Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic are delighted to receive the AJGA's Media Award for 2010," Muller said. "We are proud that the AJGA Mexican membership has more than doubled since the inception of the Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic and that there is more active participation in the game than ever before."

The Mayakoba Junior Golf Classic is an important extension of the efforts made by the Mayakoba Golf Classic, Mexico's only PGA TOUR event, to grow the game of golf within the Riviera Maya, Cancun and Mexican community as a whole.
Winning one tournament award is quite an accomplishment, but to take home two awards in one year, you have a pretty special event. That special event is the Erie Junior Golf Classic earning the Newcomer of the Year and the Charitable Giving awards. When Co-Tournament Chairman Greg Cronkhite wanted to bring an AJGA event to Erie, Pa., he first thought it would be a great opportunity to showcase some of the local players, but he did not envision what the tournament would accomplish once the process started rolling.

Cronkhite and fellow Tournament Chairman Fred Bird wanted to find a suitable charity to support with the fundraising from the event. They looked no further than the local municipal course, JC Martin. With little city money going toward this junior golf establishment, the Tournament Committee felt it was necessary to support the course where so many junior golfers learn the game and meet lifelong friends. The ongoing fundraising for the JC Martin Renovation Fund totals $85,942.

"JC (Martin) is a perfect place for kids just starting out (with golf)," Cronkhite said. "Those who contributed and were involved all grew up in Erie and many played JC. We wanted to be able to provide support to make it a great place heading into the future."

If the Committee would have stopped there, it would have been considered a very successful event, but they went above and beyond with providing the players an experience they would not forget. Added touches such as free massages, post-round snacks and a hospitality room created a great environment for both players and parents.

"The Erie community supports golf in such a huge way," Cronkhite said. "The committee got a jump-start on the event, planning more than a year in advance, and when everything came together it was great to see and we are excited to be recognized."

Newcomer & Charitable Giving

Erie Junior Golf Classic

Tournament Director: Courtney Jones
Tournament Chair: Greg Cronkhite & Fred Bird
Sponsor: Phillips E. Patton Foundation
Course: The Kahkwa Club (Erie, Pa.)
Boys Division Champion: Matthew Gerard (68-69-69–206)
Girls Division Champion: Talia Campbell (70-75-73–218)

<< A member of the local media interviews The Kahkwa Club’s Head Golf Professional, Michael O’Connor
The Randy Wise Junior Open has a rich history, from an impressive list of previous champions to a host course with a famous past and a tournament chairman who has been there for it all.

The tournament has been a staple on the AJGA schedule since 1985, and Dr. Howard Foote has been there from the start. Foote got involved with the first event as a Junior-Am participant, later took on the Finance Chairman role and then assumed the Tournament Chairman title.

“I think it’s a great organization,” Foote said. “Being a golfer and loving the game so much, I’ve enjoyed watching these juniors play all these years in it. My son played in it. It’s a labor of love.”

The event will be honored with the AJGA’s Most Improved Tournament Award to recognize the tournament committee for its continued effort to develop and enhance the AJGA tournament experience.

The event has been held at courses throughout Michigan, and the 2010 Randy Wise Junior Open made its first stop at Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club, which hosted the PGA TOUR’s Buick Open for 51 years.

The Tournament Committee and golf course staff worked diligently to give juniors a PGA TOUR-like experience. Participants received locker room access and admittance to a players-only lounge. Buick Open memorabilia was on display, and juniors were able to take photos with the trophy. They were also able to compare their skills to the pros, as the course was set up nearly identical to the Buick Open.

Foote credits much of the recent success to sponsor Randy Wise, who has helped raise the bar for the event. Wise previously participated in the Junior-Am, and when the tournament needed a sponsor in 2007, the Randy Wise Automotive Team stepped in. Wise noted that he liked what the event stood for and did not want to see it leave the community.

“I’m honored,” Wise said of the award. “We are trying to put out the best tournament we can. We are glad to be recognized, but that’s not why we do it.”
For Jack Gaudion, choosing to host an AJGA event was an easy decision.

“I don’t think I have a choice,” the co-owner of The Legend Clubs said. “I need to run the event.”

Gaudion’s AJGA ties date back to the start of the Association. He began his golf career at Onion Creek Golf Club in Austin, Texas, in 1978, where the first Future Legends tournament was held. He believed in the AJGA’s mission, and when Gaudion became the co-owner at The Legend Clubs in Wisconsin, he reached out to AJGA Executive Director Stephen Hamblin to start the tournament again.

Since 2005, the AJGA has hosted the McArthur Towel & Sports Future Legends event at one of the three Legend Clubs each year, creating playing opportunities for junior golfers in the Midwest and across the country.

Because of his commitment to AJGA junior golfers, Gaudion is being honored with the 2010 Golf Professional of the Year Award.

Gaudion dedicates his time each summer to create a memorable tournament experience for everyone involved. When rain soaked the course the night before the 2010 tournament, he went to work to have the course playable for the kids. Meeting at 4:30 a.m., Gaudion and the course staff pumped and raked the bunkers to get the course ready for play. At one point, Gaudion recalled looking up and seeing 17 staff members working vigorously on the par-3 17th hole as the juniors neared the tee. While it was a long morning, he said it was a bonding experience for the staff and everyone rallied together to get the job done.

Following the event, the players and parents expressed their gratitude to The Legend staff - a reminder to Gaudion about why they run the event.

“Someone comes up and tells us what it means to them and their kid, and that’s all you need,” he said.

Through his leadership, dedication to Wisconsin players and passion for junior golf, Gaudion exemplifies the mission and purpose of the AJGA.
Being a successful junior golfer requires a great deal of commitment. That commitment includes travel that takes one away from the comforts of home. The 2010 staff at the Rolex Girls Junior Championship did their best to counter the inconvenience that can come with travel.

With a designated hospitality committee, the members at Long Cove Club in Hilton Head, S.C., made sure that players were taken care of throughout the week. From homemade cookies in the locker room and extra tournament gifts, to taking participants and their families on a dolphin watch using their private boats, members gave the girls a memorable experience outside the 54 holes of golf.

Players and guests were also provided with meals throughout the week - a luxury that not only assists in convenience, but helps with bottom-line expenses. At the start of the tournament, players were invited to a welcome reception that featured a plated dinner. Breakfast and lunch buffets were available for players, guests, coaches and staff throughout the tournament week and the traditional tournament cookout was featured at the conclusion of the second round.

Outside of competition, juniors enjoyed an instant-photo booth with new and old friends using funny props and personalities. When they wanted to get serious, a complimentary gym pass was provided by the local Palmetto Athletic Club. The PAC’s staff was also on hand before and after each competitive round offering free 10-minute massages.

“Our objective as a committee was to make the girls feel at home,” Tournament Chairman Staunton Oppenheimer said. “By all accounts, it was a tremendous success and we are committed to hosting the 2014 Rolex Girls Junior Championship because of this accomplishment.”

With more than 120 volunteers, a dedicated committee and an accommodating golf course, the 2010 Rolex Girls Junior Championship rightfully earned this year’s Hospitality Award for going above and beyond to create a special tournament experience for the juniors and the families in attendance, both during and after competition.
Champions are crowned after the final round, but an equally important time at an AJGA tournament comes several days before the last putt drops.

A Junior-Am Fundraising Tournament is the best way for the AJGA and its players to connect with the local community and sponsors. The HP Boys Championship at Carlton Woods stood above the rest in 2010, as its fundraising tournament raised $110,000 and secured the Junior-Am Award for the second year in a row.

“We are thrilled for this award and the fact that we have won the award for the second year says a lot about our membership at Carlton Woods, The Woodlands community, and the support from our title sponsor HP and its network of supporters,” said Co-Tournament Chairman Christine Dernick.

Brett Snortland, the event’s other Co-Tournament Chairman, and Wes Colwell build relationships with members of The Woodlands community throughout the year.

Because of their success (a total of 42 teams participated in the tournament’s Junior-Am), the HP Boys Championship at Carlton Woods has donated a portion of the proceeds to grassroots junior golf organizations such as the Houston Golf Association junior golf program, Camp Blessing, The Woodlands High School golf team and the AJGA ACE Grant.

“We try to make the Junior-Am a memorable experience for everyone involved,” Dernick said. “We are very fortunate to have had AJGA tournaments here in The Woodlands for many years and that certainly helps, as many of the sponsors are long-time supporters and if they can’t play, they recognize the cause and are willing to generously donate and support our event.”

In all, the AJGA’s longest-running boys-only Invitational has raised more than $200,000 the last two years. The tournament has a rich tradition of notable past champions, but the Junior-Am Award shows that the championship has developed a legacy of impact that precedes the tournament awards ceremony.

>> The Woodlands community has supported the AJGA and its mission for many years. Last year’s Junior-Am raised $110,000.
Each year when the AJGA recognizes the Invitational of the Year, the awards committee takes a lot into account. Tournament experience, committee structure, sponsor involvement - the awards selectors take it all into account and the one thing they agreed upon was: The ANNIKA Invitational has it all.

From the day participants arrive at Reunion Resort, they are treated to a first-class experience unlike any tournament on the AJGA schedule, not to mention the hands-on approach host Annika Sorenstam takes throughout the tournament week.

From the ANNIKA Clinic sponsored by Rolex to The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club Dinner, the ANNIKA Invitational is one of a kind. With evening activities scheduled after the practice round, as well as the first two tournament rounds, there is no shortage of fun for juniors. Following the second round, participants are treated to a night with Florida Hospital's “100 Healthy Athletes” program, which has proven to be a crowd favorite. The night includes training on health and nutrition, as well as a session on how to be a media-friendly athlete.

Tournament participants aren't the only ones active at these events. Annika is on hand for each of them, interacting with the players and their families and getting to know the girls.

"I am glad the players and AJGA have recognized the time we put in to try and create an inspiring week for them. We are honored to be named Invitational of the Year," Annika said. "We have received two awards in two years, so now we just have to keep working hard.”

After its inaugural run, the ANNIKA Invitational was honored with the AJGA's Newcomer of the Year Award. Now, after only the second year on the AJGA schedule, it has received top honors.

With the 2011 ANNIKA Invitational scheduled for Feb. 18-21, the top junior girls in the country are looking forward to seeing what this award-winning event has in store.

>> Annika congratulates Kristen Park on a successful tournament

>> Annika's involvement with the AJGA goes well beyond hosting an award-winning tournament. She also serves as the Association's National Chairman and has committed to the endowment of an ACE Grant, which will guarantee financial assistance for juniors in future generations.
The Winn Grips Heather Farr Classic hosted by Longbow Golf Club has been an AJGA Easter weekend tradition since 1999. Between its storied past - with an impressive list of champions like Hunter Mahan, Amanda Blumenherst and Paula Creamer - and its overall purpose, the tournament alone is something special. But that isn’t good enough for the committee members who help run the event. They want families to walk away having had a pleasant holiday weekend experience.

The tournament is hosted in honor of Heather Farr, a young LPGA Tour member and former AJGA champion whose life was cut short due to cancer. More than ever, the 2010 tournament aimed to tell Farr’s inspiring story to everyone on site. A special tournament program was produced and a touching video was shown highlighting Farr’s life.

“This great tournament honors an inspirational young woman who never gave up,” said AJGA Tournament Director Chris White. “The staff at Longbow does a great job in helping us to not only honor Heather Farr, but to put on an event that is second to none.”

From Jay Larscheid, Head Golf Professional at Longbow Golf Club and Tournament Chairman, grilling a steak dinner for the AJGA staff after a long day at the course, to Media Chairman Kris Strauss working diligently on promoting the tournament and the talented players on display, the hours put into the overall effort are evident throughout the week.

In the time leading up to players’ arrivals, the committee identified various things that they could do to improve upon the overall satisfaction of the 144 players and guests that would be walking their course for three days.

A well-maintained golf course and an accommodating Longbow staff welcomed participants. With much consideration going into convenience, the staff at Longbow placed extra restrooms and concession stands throughout the course and positioned parking lot attendants at the clubhouse entrance for a fluid arrival. They know that the small things make a large difference.

With a visible Tournament Title sponsor in Winn Grips, players not only benefited from a well-supported event, but they also were treated to complimentary re-gripping services throughout the week.

eSoles was also available for juniors to obtain customized eFit soles using their latest foot imaging technology. During the tournament cookout, juniors and their families were treated to Mexican food and a chance to test their archery skills.

When notified as being the recipient of the AJGA’s Tournament of the Year Award, the tournament committee stated that everything they do is for the juniors and they do it because they enjoy it.

“Winning Tournament of the Year is a tremendous honor,” Larscheid said. “It is a reflection of the dedication to junior golf and effort that is put in by everyone involved.

The entire committee truly loves the AJGA and we do it because we like to.”