



**GREATER
SOUTHWEST
CHAPTER**
CLUB MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

GREATERSOUTHWESTCMAA.ORG

**SARAH
RICHARDSON**

**GSW
SOCIAL**

**FEEDING
ARIZONA
CLUBS IN
MORE WAYS
THAN ONE!**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREATER SOUTHWEST CMAA

In a time that has so many of us preparing for the upcoming season, it may not feel as though it's appropriate to reflect on some of the successes of our association in 2026. Regardless, taking inventory of the efforts of our Executive Director, Gaby Speh, and the contributions of my fellow board members, seems appropriate as this is the final newsletter in my tenure as Chapter President.

The past few months have proven to be incredibly rewarding for the Southwest Chapter CMAA as we saw increased participation in all aspects of our annual calendar. With Women in Club Management and The Southwest Summit becoming staples on our annual calendar, we also continue to find success with The Hodges Golf Event and our Las Vegas Getaway.

Most recently, our Chapter received some awards and recognition for our Women in Club Management program and the advent of our Chapter newsletter as a communication tool for our members. We'll remain committed to building and improving both as they become woven into the fabric of our Chapter.

With our Annual Chapter meeting marking the end of my tenure on the Chapter Board, I look forward to turning the gavel over to Gregg Leonard as our new President. Gregg is a committed industry leader who is well-equipped to take our Chapter to new heights, and with an incredibly talented board of Nick Gerstner, Shelley Caiazzo and the introduction of Alex Beardon as an incoming board member, we are well-positioned to assist Gaby in her efforts to lead the Southwest Chapter to new heights.

I hope to see many of you at our Annual Meeting on Monday, November 16 and wish you all the very best as you prepare for the upcoming season or wrap up the one in your rearview mirror.



JASON CHENEY
General Manager
Southern Highlands CC
President
Greater Southwest CMAA

THANK YOU, JASON!!!

FROM THE ENTIRE CHAPTER

As we close another incredible year for the GSW Chapter, I would like to take a moment to recognize someone who has made such a meaningful impact on our Chapter: our President, Jason Cheney.

Together, we have celebrated growth, welcomed new members, created new opportunities, strengthened our partnerships, supported our students, celebrated our Women in Club Management, launched new ideas, restarted our Vegas meeting, shared countless conversations, and, most importantly, continued building what makes our Chapter so special: our people.

Jason makes you believe in what is possible. He gives generously, not only with his time and energy, but with his knowledge, his support, and his belief in the people around him. He has a way of making people feel seen, valued, and capable of more.

I have personally felt that support throughout these years, and I will always be grateful for it.

And because I know you, I know that your impact on this Chapter is nowhere near finished. The title may change, but the example you have set and the mark you have made will continue to be part of this Chapter for many years to come.

Thank you, Jason, for believing in us. Thank you for believing in me. And thank you for showing all of us what it looks like to lead by example.

I feel incredibly lucky that we got to do this together. And we truly could not have done it without our amazing Board.

To each of you, thank you for your support, your friendship, and for always showing up with such caring and generous hearts. I feel so blessed to have shared this journey with all of you.

Thank you will never be enough.

With so much gratitude and love,

GABY SPEH
MANAGING DIRECTOR



2026 ANNUAL MEETING

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16TH
6:00 – 9:00PM

 Grass
Clippings

DINNER – NETWORKING – TOY DRIVE

NIGHT GOLF AVAILABLE AFTER EVENT STARTING
AT 9:30PM (FOR AN ADDITIONAL CHARGE)

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE
INFORMATION OR TO RSVP](#)

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GABY'S BOOK CLUB

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT....

YOUR CLUB & TEAM SUCCESSES

UP AND COMING SUPERSTARS

BEST PRACTICES (CULTURE, MEMBER EXPERIENCES, AND OTHER IDEAS

INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS

PROJECTS OR RESEARCH YOUR CLUB IS DOING

ANYTHING THAT WOULD HELP OUR MEMBERS LEARN AND GROW!!!

EMAIL [GABY@GREATERSOUTHWESTCMAA.ORG](mailto:gaby@greatersouthwestcmaa.org)
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Gold PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



SARAH
RICHARDSON



Tell us a little about Sarah. What should our members know about you that they might not learn from working with you?

I love traveling! I am a very curious explorer and try to go to at least one place a year that I have never been to, embracing the ways, cultures, and of course cuisines of the world. Occasionally, there are countries I come across that beg a second visit. Iceland was on this list, and I expect a return visit to Japan too. Next up the motherland of Shamrock: Ireland!

You spent part of your career as a chef. How has that experience shaped the way you approach relationships and problem-solving today?

Chefs wear so many different hats. Beyond cooking, you are often a therapist, a peacemaker, and a problem-solver. I learned how to be able to take in the issues (whatever they are), show empathy and help find a resolution where both sides win.

What do you enjoy most about working with private clubs and the people in the club industry?

In our industry, people who choose service have a need to please others in their DNA! Where hospitality is concerned, private clubs are the peak of excellence, and I love that I get to work with others who share this spirit to serve.

Q&A Continued

You've had an interesting career journey. How did you get to where you are today, and what led you to Shamrock Foods?

I started in kitchens at the age of 15 and was always drawn to cooking. My parents insisted that I attend a four-year school before giving my life over to the hospitality world, so I earned my bachelor's from the University of California at Davis with a double major in Classical and Mediterranean Civilizations and Communications. After graduating, I attended culinary school in San Francisco before working for Laurent Gras and Melissa Perello at the Fifth Floor, and Michael Mina at his flagship restaurant in Union Square. These high-pressure Michelin restaurants gave me a very disciplined foundation, which I took with me in future roles. I moved to Scottsdale in 2007, where I worked at Mary Elaines until its closure. High-end resorts including the Phoenician and the JW Marriott led me to the private clubs starting with Desert Mountain Club where I was the Chef de Cuisine at Constantino's at the Chiricahua Clubhouse and later at The Country Club at DC Ranch.

As a customer of Shamrock Foods, I was really impressed by their culture and especially during the challenges of Covid, they worked tirelessly to help ensure I could still serve our members and give them sanctuary in a very chaotic world. I have been a proud member of the team since 2021 and now, with the CMAA, I get to work with all our clubs in the Greater Southwest Chapter which has been a welcome enhancement to my professional network and has allowed me to give back in charitable endeavors like our annual Hodges Tournament.



Q&A

Final Thoughts



What is something you wish club leaders better understood about the distributor side of the business?

At Shamrock, we pride ourselves in being customer-driven. The products you buy and sell are the transactional piece of the working relationship but knowing that there is a legion of really caring people who want to see both sides succeed is the most important piece to me. This is why I wanted to work for Shamrock Foods. As a customer, I could buy my groceries from a lot of places but having a sales representative who legitimately cared about my operation was the X factor. And now that I'm at Shamrock Foods, I see this comes from every direction of our organization.

On the flip side, what have you learned from working with club managers and their teams that has made you better at what you do?

Practicing empathy and working on being solution focused when handling challenges or disputes can benefit anyone in a customer-driven field.

If you were back in the kitchen and had to cook one dish to impress a room full of club chefs, what would you make, and why?

Probably not what you might expect, but over the years, I was often given a chef challenge: "Can you make this or that?" Usually something with an emotional connection or even something technically difficult. One time I had a member ask for a particularly intimidating dish, Scottish Haggis. This is one that will appear on many a fear factor or dare to eat list, but I happily accepted the challenge. While I wasn't able to get my hands on a sheep's stomach for the more historically accurate casing, I did produce everything else to traditional spec, albeit with a synthetic casing. On the night of the dinner, where one night a week, members were treated to foods I made from around the world, I was not only surprised to see how many were willing to try Haggis with its Neeps and Tatties accompaniment (turnips and mashed potatoes in our vernacular), but more importantly, how much it hit the mark according to the Scottish member who requested it. He was even very happy to procure the one extra that I had prepared to take home with him. And by the way, it was really delicious!

FINANCIAL INSIGHTS

LEARNING CENTER

What can Arizona's water crisis teach us about the decisions club leaders make today? In this issue, Nicholas Gerstner explores how a choice that solves an immediate problem can also create an obligation for future leaders. He draws a connection to the financial policies clubs set around dues, reserves, capital projects and membership, where the consequences may take years to become clear. It is a thoughtful reminder that good governance means caring for today's members while understanding what our decisions may require of those who come next. Read "What Arizona's Water Crisis Can Teach Us About Club Governance."

**CLICK HERE TO SEE
FULL ARTICLE**



**NICK GERSTNER,
CCM, CFE**

CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER
Desert Highlands
Association

Treasurer
Greater Southwest
CMAA

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

JACOB JOHNSON

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CLUB OPERATIONS

Jacob got his start in hospitality at 11, flipping eggs and making breakfast sandwiches for a traveling horse show caterer. His sister had taken up horse jumping, and the job helped pay the bills. He didn't know it then, but those early mornings were the start of a career.

Now, as Assistant Director of Club Operations at Desert Mountain, Jacob's days cover a lot of ground—literally. The property spans 8,800 acres, and he makes a point of getting out to its outlets during lunch and dinner service. He checks in with the team, clears a few plates and catches up with members. He tries to meet a few new ones along the way.

"I feel so blessed to work with such a supportive organization," he says. You can hear that appreciation when he talks about his team. One lesson he has learned as a leader is to give people room to run. He believes in asking hard questions and offering honest feedback, but he would rather help someone grow than simply hold them to account. As he puts it, "Teaching trumps accountability."



Jacob's curiosity has shaped his career, especially his love of wine. While working at Bistro Montage in Des Moines, he had a moment that changed how he thought about it. A guest at a private dinner offered him a small taste of 1996 Domaine Leflaive Bâtard-Montrachet. Jacob took the glass back to the kitchen and tried it. That was the beginning of a much deeper interest in the people and craft behind a bottle. His curiosity reaches well beyond the dining room. If he could spend a week in another department, he would choose agronomy. With a background in permaculture and biodynamics, he wants to understand more about the science and care behind a great golf course. He encourages other leaders to follow their own questions: "What is stopping you? Just send the email and ask."

JACOB JOHNSON Continued

Away from work, Jacob is an enthusiastic taste tester for his wife, whom he calls a phenomenal sourdough baker. Her baking includes cookies, cinnamon rolls and traditional German breads, and he is happy to sample it all...and, like many of us, he has a golf goal: breaking 90 this year.

Ask Jacob what he would tell someone beginning a career in clubs, and he comes back to kaizen: make a small improvement every day. It's a philosophy he lives in the small moments, showing up for pre-shift, clearing a plate, learning someone's name, giving a teammate the confidence to lead. None of those moments may seem remarkable on their own. Together, they are how you build a team, a career and a club people are proud to be part of.



2026 WICM



2026

LAS VEGAS & THE ANNUAL SUMMIT



SUMMIT TOURS



2026 CMAA LLC



2026 HODGES



DESERT HIGHLANDS



Gaby's BOOK CLUB

Hyperfocus: How to Be More Productive in a World of Distraction

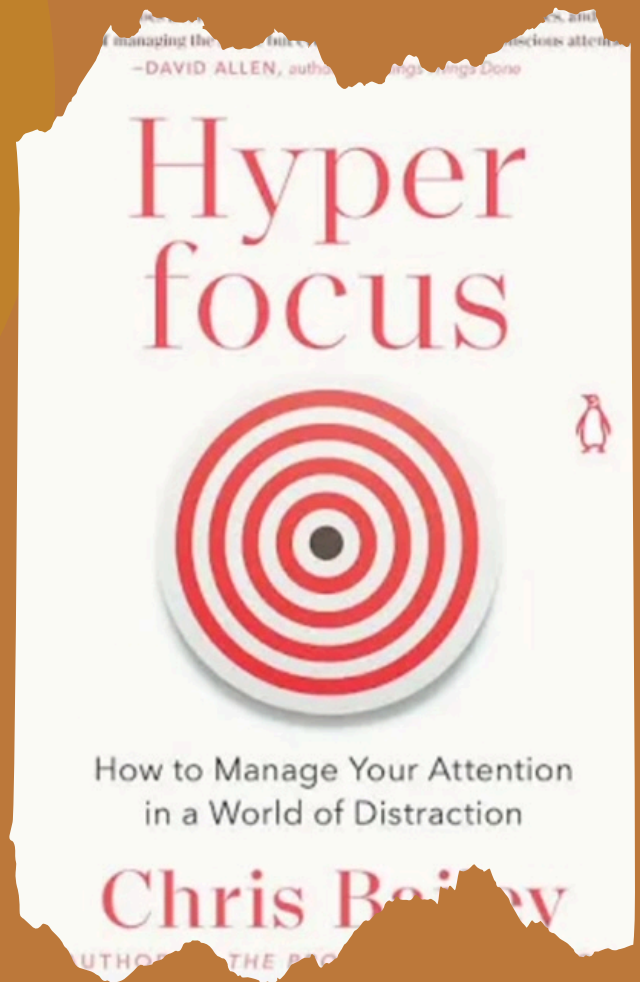
By Chris Bailey

Chris Bailey's *Hyperfocus* makes a compelling case that managing your attention matters more than managing your time. Drawing on neuroscience and mindfulness, he describes two useful modes: hyperfocus, when you give one task your full attention, and scatterfocus, when you deliberately let your mind wander and make new connections. Productivity requires room for both.

Bailey also challenges the idea that multitasking helps us get more done. Checking email during a Zoom call may feel efficient, but each switch divides your attention. His suggestions are practical, including a deceptively difficult one: keep only one browser tab open while you work. Five lessons that stayed with me:

1. Protect your attention. A focused 90 minutes can accomplish more than a full day of interruptions. Having time available means little if your mind is elsewhere.

2. Choose your priorities. Write down the four things that matter most today. Identify the one with the greatest impact and work on it before opening email or messages.



3. Make room for wandering. A walk, a shower or a few quiet minutes can help you solve a problem you could not think your way through at your desk. Give your mind that space intentionally.

4. Set up your environment to help you. Turn off notifications, put your phone away and close unnecessary tabs. Removing temptation is easier than resisting it repeatedly.

5. Notice your internal distractions. Even a quiet room cannot stop a wandering mind. When you catch yourself drifting, gently return to the task. That small act gets easier with practice.

The takeaway is simple: what we choose to focus on shapes both the work we do and the lives we lead.

CHAPTER PARTNERS

GREATER SOUTHWEST CMAA

OUR PARTNERS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE STRENGTH AND SUCCESS OF OUR CHAPTER. THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT ALLOWS US TO DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, RELEVANT EDUCATION, CREATE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES FOR OUR MEMBERS, AND KEEP OUR DUES COMPETITIVE. BY SUPPORTING OUR PARTNERS, YOU ARE DIRECTLY INVESTING IN THE PROGRAMS, RESOURCES, AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT BENEFIT OUR ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THEIR COMMITMENT AND ENCOURAGE YOU TO ENGAGE WITH AND SUPPORT THE COMPANIES THAT SO GENEROUSLY SUPPORT US.

GOLD PARTNERS



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by Hotwire Communications

Sysco
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food and service

TRUE NORTH
BUILDERS


ClubProcure

BRONZE PARTNERS



QUESTCO



everhart
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lilo



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PABIAN LAW

WHOOSH

THANK YOU!!!



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