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# Fairways of Life

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Golf's  
Lifestyle  
& Living  
Magazine

Machrihanish Dunes  
Mull of Kintyre, Scotland

Southworth Development



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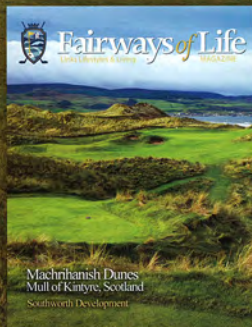
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*On The Cover | Southworth Development's Machrihanish Dunes, Scotland The First Golf Course Built on The West Coast of Scotland in 100 Years, "The Worlds most Natural Golf Course" and "Golf's Ultimate Back to the Future Course" (See page 62)*





# A Ray of Sunshine IN THE GOLF COURSE REAL ESTATE Development World

By David DeSmith



David Southworth & Joe Deitch | Southworth Development

**T**he recent recession wasn't a great time for golf course communities. With housing prices falling, some developers and developments did, too—by the wayside—when the receipts they counted on getting from real estate sales to pay for golf course and infrastructure work didn't materialize. But every black cloud has its silver lining and for Southworth Development, the recession actually proved to be a bit of a rainmaker.

Southworth is currently managing and developing golf and/or real estate properties in Massachusetts, Virginia, New Hampshire, The Bahamas and Scotland. Others may have had to retrench, but all systems have been go at this Newton, Mass.-based company right through the recession's darkest days.

## How have they done it?

"We were fortunate enough to come into the downturn with no debt—and some dry powder," said David Southworth, President and CEO. "So that put us in a position where we could look around and take advantage of some of the prices that were out there. The truth is, the prices a few years ago were unheard of. We were able to position ourselves to succeed—and to offer buyers tremendous value for their dollar."

Finding opportunities is something that David Southworth has made a career of. After learning the hotel management business at Cornell, and stints with Hyatt in San Francisco and the Pompano Beach Club in Bermuda, the Arizona native moved to Massachusetts, where along with Reebok mogul Paul Fireman he was one of the founders of Willowbend Development. At Willowbend, Southworth spearheaded the company's involvement in several noteworthy projects, starting with the Willowbend golf and real estate community itself in Mashpee, Mass. Set amidst 14 acres of active Cape Cod cranberry bogs and site for many years of the popular Willowbend Chil-



dren's Charities Pro-Am, Willowbend provided a blueprint for future successful projects. Speaking of those bogs, which are still being farmed, Southworth noted that they're "one of the few golf hazards that make actually money."

On the heels of Willowbend came several other projects that were equally well received: the J.W. Marriott Starr Pass Resort, tucked into a rugged mountain setting near the Saguaro National Park outside Tucson; and two other fabulous resort projects in Puerto Rico, The Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort and Country Club (now a Wyndham property) and its neighboring sibling up the coast at Coco Beach (now called Trump International). The feather in the Willowbend Development cap golfwise, though, was undoubtedly Liberty National GC, which was perhaps the most audacious such project ever imagined. Situated on the shore of New York Bay, within

par-5 distance of Lady Liberty herself, what was once the property of Big Oil was transformed into one of the most awe-inspiring places to play golf on the planet. In 2009, the private club played host to the PGA Tour's Barclays Championship. The pros plied their trade within sight of the Manhattan skyline, Wall Street, Ellis Island and the Verrazano Bridge, as the club's oh-so-fortunate members do on a daily basis. You can only imagine the negotiations that went into making the place happen.

"We learned so much in dealing with Liberty National because that was such a toxic site," Southworth said. "And then to go from there on to Machrihanish Dunes in Scotland, where we built the course by hand—where you picked up a piece of turf and had to wheel it over to another place and replant it—talk about extremes."

In 2005, Southworth left Willowbend to start his own company. "Paul was retiring, so the timing was right," said Southworth. "It was a little scary, but I felt that I knew what I was doing. We hadn't screwed

anything up, and I have a tremendous amount faith in our company's people, so all we needed was a little luck."

Flying the Southworth flag now, the company has kept to its winning ways. In 2006, Joe Deitch—a longtime personal friend of David Southworth's—joined the company as partner and Chairman. Deitch's expertise and financial acumen (he's also the founder and Chairman of Commonwealth Financial), added greatly to the company's capabilities. Today, the properties it's building and selling are numbered among the best in the world.

### But the world has changed.

"It's more of a show-me world now," said Southworth. "Consumers are beat up. What a developer says "Phase II" will be means nothing anymore, no matter who you are. In this show-me world you have to capitalize these projects in a different way—you have to lead with your chin a little bit. But even that's not enough. You can build facilities and everything else but you still have to show and prove the stability factor. Stability is one of the most important things we focus on in our messages to consumers. With that, and a fantastic product, you have a chance."

Southworth currently has its hand in four first-class projects in America. In Aldie, Va. outside Washington, D.C., there's Creighton Farms, a 962-acre luxury residential golf community with a Jack Nicklaus Signature Course that's received rave reviews. In fact, it was one of only two courses in the world to have earned "Best New Course" accolades in 2008 from *Golf Digest*, *Golf Magazine* and *Travel & Leisure Golf*. Southworth had been acting as manager of the property, a job it took over from the Ritz-Carlton people, but when the opportunity to buy this stunning piece of Virginia horse country came along, they jumped at the chance.

"Over the years, we've gotten involved in several properties as a manager and fallen in love with the property," said Southworth. "It's much easier to be the buyer if you know the property and you know the asset, so if you've been there managing for some time you feel very comfortable doing that. Creighton Farms is a one example. We've added a clubhouse and other amenities and more are in the works—it won't be long

before the full vision of that community is realized there."

The real estate at Creighton Farms offers some exquisite choices. Set on beautiful, rolling horse country with views of the nearby mountains, the luxurious Legacy Homes and jewel-box Villas are

among the areas most desirable places to live. The Villas are located in the community's Nicklaus Village neighborhood, and Jack Nicklaus himself will soon own one of them. The Golden Bear also hosted a charity invitational event at Creighton Farms in 2012. Not a bad guy to have as a neighbor.

Up north, Southworth added a grand new clubhouse to its golf course community at Renaissance in Haverhill—a club it acquired in 2008. The course here was the first signature course from Brian Silva and combines great classic features like the punchbowl green at the short, par-4 10th hole with modern, imaginative twists at every turn. Thanks to Southworth, the club was reborn, debt-free, and its great course and practice area now have a clubhouse to match, replete with club rooms on the top floor where members and guests may stay. Southworth's golf division is headquartered at Renaissance, which has also built a name for itself as the North Shore's premier wedding venue.

In New Hampshire, the Southworth community of custom homes and home sites at Meredith Bay on Lake Winnepesaukee doesn't presently have a golf course, but it doesn't really need one. Here, the marina, beach club and stunning scenery are the primary amenities. As Southworth said, "it's all about the lake, the lake, the lake." There is room for a golf course, as well as a five-story hotel, but no final decisions have been made on those. The site is the former Brickyard Mountain ski area, so the views from many home sites include not just the lake but on a clear day, distant Mount Washington, as well.

At Meredith Bay, buyers choose between lakeview lots, many with



*The Clubhouse at The Renaissance Club in Haverhill, MA*



*Liberty National Golf Course Jersey City, NJ*



*Creighton Farms Villa*



*The Renaissance Club  
in Haverhill, MA*





Meredith Bay Home, NH



Machrihanish Dunes, Scotland

spectacular views, and lakefront townhomes, whose decks overlook the lake below and the White Mountains in the distance. Lake Winnepesaukee has long been one of New England's favorite summer destinations, and the Southworth community at Meredith Bay gives buyers a four-season home base from which to enjoy all that the region has to offer.

Southworth's most recent acquisition was the property that started it all—Willowbend—so in a way, it was a re-acquisition. The company acquired Willowbend from David Southworth's former partner Paul Fireman in May, 2012. At Willowbend, club members and homeowners enjoy 27 holes of championship golf, 8 tennis courts including a stadium court, state-of-the-art fitness center, sprawling pool complex, and a huge clubhouse where gourmet cuisine is served under the watchful eye of renowned chef Paul Cunningham. The Club, which is well known for both its cranberry bogs and its famous members (there are reportedly more than a dozen billionaire members at Willowbend) has long been the center of Cape Cod's summer glitterati scene. It also served as home of the Willowbend Children's Charity Pro Am for many years—an event which brought some of golf's biggest stars, including Greg Norman, Gary Player, Tom Watson, Nick Faldo, John Daly and others to the Club. There were hugely popular tennis exhibitions at Willowbend, too, featuring household names like Bjorn Borg and Jimmy Connors.

"Willowbend has always been regarded as one of the most outstanding club communities in the country," said Southworth. "As someone who was there at the very beginning, having the chance to build on that legacy going forward is an opportunity that I value dearly."

Despite the real estate downturn, sales at Willowbend have remained

historic hotels and new golf cottages (which are also for sale on a fractional ownership basis) sit on prime linksland that's right next door to the famed Machrihanish GC. But the David McLay Kidd-designed course at Machrihanish Dunes certainly isn't playing second fiddle. Only three years after opening, it's already been ranked among the top 25 in Scotland.

"The course was literally built by hand," said Southworth. There's not an even lie anywhere—even on the tees. What we say about Machrihanish Dunes is that it's "The way golf began"—but it's not a slogan, it's a fact." Because of the extreme environmental sensitivity of the property, the gorgeous seaside course was created with no bulldozing. Kidd identified fairways then built tees and greens correspondingly, while the bunkers were mostly created by the local sheep. If you've ever wanted to play golf as it was meant to be played in true links style, you owe it to yourself to visit.

Finally, there's PGA Village—The Bahamas. This project, being created in conjunction with the PGA of America, broke ground in April, 2009 on beautiful Cat Island in the north-eastern part of the Bahamas archipelago. Two golf courses are in the plans, one of which (a Rees Jones design) is already under construction, along with a hotel, spa, and real estate offerings. The course will run right up to edge of the clear, turquoise sea and offer a surprising amount of elevation change. It will be a true championship course, designed in the classic style, and anything but the flat, featureless kind of course so prevalent in the Caribbean.

Cat Island, one of the Bahamas' "Family Islands" is about as quiet and unspoiled a place as you're likely to find. Within five minutes of landing at the single-runway airport, you can be standing barefoot in the powdery pink sand at a beach bar with a cold beer in your hand. Islanders and the Bahamian government have embraced the new project, in part because of the sterling reputations of the Southworth company and the PGA of America. Plans call for the first golf course to be ready for play in the near future, with the hotel and other amenities to follow. ■

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Machrihanish Dunes Clubhouse

brisk and got even brisker after Southworth assumed control of the community. The single-family homes, villas and townhomes are in high demand with people looking to enjoy an all-inclusive summer lifestyle.

Overseas, Southworth's first project was Machrihanish Dunes. Located in Scotland on the rural Mull of Kintyre near Campbelltown, Machrihanish Dunes is primordial golf with a luxury spin. The course, recently restored