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## Region, Wegmans likely to benefit from LPGA event

*Jim Stinson*  
Staff writer

Landing the 2010 LPGA Championship as presenting sponsor "is brand extension at its finest," according to one University of Rochester business professor.

But don't expect Wegmans Food Markets Inc. to admit it. Instead, the Gates-based company, long known for playing host to the LPGA, is saying sponsorship of one of only four annual LPGA Tour majors was done to promote the Rochester-area community.

"It's the right thing to do for the Rochester community," said Larry Kitts, Wegmans director of corporate events and co-chairman of the Wegmans LPGA.

On that, he will get no argument from Rochester leaders, who now expect an even larger bounty than the usual one the region gets from the Wegmans LPGA. Kitts said the Rochester-Pittsford area usually generates more than \$10 million in economic activity from the Wegmans LPGA, based upon past studies.

The LPGA Championship is expected to be better attended, as it is one of the tour's four majors. The LPGA Championship will run from June 21 to 27.

The event will likely attract all of the LPGA's top stars, which, according to Sandy Parker, CEO of the Rochester Business Alliance, wasn't always the case in the past. The all-star lineup will likely draw fans from Canada and many parts of the United States, Parker said.

Parker and other economic development officials said hotels and restaurants can expect to be busy for those days in the summer.

But how busy is anyone's guess. The LPGA Championship drew an estimated 90,000 people each year it was held in Havre de Grace, Md., from 2005 to 2009.

Jim Richardson, director of the Harford County Office of Economic Development, said Havre de Grace, a small town south of Baltimore, and its golf course did not bid for the 2010 LPGA Championship after its five-year contract ended.

Richardson said the Havre de Grace golf course decided it was time to move on. But even with other sports business in Harford County, including the Cal Ripken World Series, Richardson said the championship will be missed.

Richardson said such events usually put extra money in the pockets of workers such as wait staff, cooks and hotel operators.

Since 1994, McDonald's Corp. has been one of the main sponsors for the LPGA Championship. Wegmans will fill that role for 2010 and get unusual event exposure for a company that isn't nationwide.

All the better for an expanding company, said George Cook, executive professor of psychology and marketing at the William E. Simon Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Rochester.

"It is brand extension at its finest," said Cook.

Wegmans has 75 stores in five states and has expanded into the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. It has looked at locations in Boston.

The exposure will depend on what kind of television contracts the LPGA gets in 2010. Cook said it is smart marketing because it attaches the Wegmans name to a popular sporting event, much the same way food companies do when attaching names to college football championship games.

Rochester will get exposure, too.

The event is ideal for area businesses to use for visiting guests and prospective clients, and also business officials thinking of locating a company or branch in Rochester, said Patti Donoghue, vice president of communications for the Greater Rochester Visitors Association Inc.

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*Includes reporting by staff writer David Andreatta.*

## Additional Facts

By the numbers

The economic impact of golfing events held in the Rochester area in 2008:

### **Wegmans LPGA at Locust Hill**

8,000 out-of-county visitors; 1,000 hotel rooms used.

Between \$7.2 million and \$10 million in economic impact.

### **69th Senior PGA Championship at Oak Hill**

15,000 out-of-county visitors; 2,298 hotel rooms.

\$13.4 million in economic impact.

### **Xerox Classic Nationwide Tour**

800 out-of-county visitors; 741 hotel rooms.

\$716,040 in economic impact.

SOURCES: Monroe County Sports Commission, Wegmans, Center for Governmental Research