UW-Stout professor Kris Schoonover sat outside the clubhouse at Erin Hills, where she works during the summer. Schoonover, director of the golf enterprise management program at UW-Stout, will be assistant competition director for the 2011 U.S. Amateur golf tournament. Above: The fourth hole is a par four at Erin Hills, a links-style public course 35 miles northwest of Milwaukee. The course, which opened in 2006, will host the 2011 U.S. Amateur and 2017 U.S. Open tournaments.

Professor valuable resource for UW-Stout golf enterprise management students

By UW-Stout News Bureau

MENOMONIE — Professor Kris Schoonover spends her summers at a golf course, which seems appropriate given that she directs the golf enterprise management program at UW-Stout.
Schoonover doesn't go to just any course, however, and doesn't spend much time on the course itself. She is on the administrative staff at Erin Hills, the southeastern Wisconsin facility that will host the 2011 U.S. Amateur and the 2017 U.S. Open.

Her involvement as an operations assistant since 2007 at one of the nation's top public golf facilities gives her cutting-edge experience she can pass on to students.

"I'm able to bring back to the classroom the latest knowledge and expertise. The exposure I have by being part of a facility like this is invaluable," said Schoonover, an Eau Claire native who has taught at UW-Stout since 2006 and was women's golf coach from 2006-08.

Erin Hills, an Irish links-style design 35 miles northwest of Milwaukee, was named one of the country's best new courses after it opened in 2006.

With the 2011 United States Golf Association men's amateur championship less than a year away, Schoonover has taken on added duties. She will be the assistant competition director, overseeing committees for volunteers, operations and transportation. The Aug. 22-28 event will have 312 players and an estimated several thousand spectators daily.

In August, Schoonover and three other Erin Hills staff members took a crash course of sorts on preparation when they attended the U.S. Amateur in Washington, near Seattle.

One of the classes Schoonover teaches at UW-Stout is Event Management. She'll be able to provide GEM majors with firsthand knowledge of event management issues and procedures from a major tournament sponsored by the national governing body of golf.

For example, she has been offering advice in recent weeks by phone to GEM student Zach Friedman, from Edina, Minn. Friedman is interning at the Atlantic Golf Club, which is hosting this week's USGA Mid Amateur tournament. Friedman is chairing a committee for the event.

Rich Tock, Erin Hills vice president and director of operations, said Schoonover's experience and attention to detail will make her "perfect" for her U.S. Amateur duties.

"Volunteers will be a huge organizational part of hosting the Amateur, and providing housing and transportation will be a challenging endeavor," Tock said. "Before Kris is done with the Amateur, she'll be able to do anything here. "She'll have ties with everyone," said Tock, a longtime PGA professional.
Schoonover also was transportation and volunteer coordinator for the national Women's Amateur Public Links tournament held at Erin Hills in 2008.

Erin Hills was closed much of this season for renovations, but when it reopened in August business was brisk on the heels of the course being named in June by the USGA as the 2017 U.S. Open site.

"I was here the day it was announced. The phones started ringing," Schoonover said. "People are saying that they have to play this course. It's part of their bucket list."

The course traverses rolling glacial landforms carved during the last Ice Age. No houses or commercial buildings are visible from the 18 holes, which are part of a 652-acre property. Walking is encouraged; professional caddies are available.

"This is truly a unique facility," Schoonover said.

Along with demanding shots on treeless holes framed by tall fescue grass, the course can play at more than 8,000 yards, making it one of the longest in the country. It also has many natural vantage points for spectators, leading some to speculate that the U.S. Open could draw the biggest crowds ever in 2017.

Along with an Irish-style clubhouse, which features a pub, pro shop and lodging, new cottages are being built for golfers, many of whom fly in or travel long distances to play. This year, golfers from 36 states have visited.

Erin Hills was built by Bob Lang but was sold in 2009 to Andy Ziegler of Milwaukee. Schoonover was rehired by the new management team.

"We're lucky to have some staff members who have been around here and can give us some direction," Tock said.

**Learning About Golf**

The golf enterprise management program at UW-Stout has about 200 students who take classes on various aspects of golf course management, course design and marketing. The program is part of the School of Hospitality Leadership, which is in the College of Management.