

Community events to expose non-golfers to the game ...

By Frank Chieppa, PGA

Each year, the PGA of America administers four major championships at some of the most prestigious facilities around the country. As part of our Association's commitment to promote each of these championships – and as part of the PGA Long-Term Strategic Plan to serve PGA members and grow the game – the PGA Player Development team offers clinics and consumer experiences in each local community to expose and introduce the game of golf.

So far this year, we have run events in three of the four Championship markets: Indiana and Kentucky for the Senior PGA Championship, New York for the KPMG Women's PGA Championship, and Philadelphia for the PGA Professional National Championship. Our fourth activation will be held in Wisconsin next month in conjunction with the PGA Championship.

The first step in any successful player development program is to make sure we have strong exposure to the game of golf. These public events are built with that in mind. But I've also realized that an opportunity is available to drive business to PGA Professionals at these consumer events.

On the Saturday prior to the Senior PGA Championship in French Lick, Indiana, the Indiana PGA Section and French Lick Resort hosted 150 youth from around Southern Indiana for a clinic that highlighted different golf skills. Additionally, a station that centered on golf as a career option was a part of the event. And in both Louisville and Indianapolis, on two different evenings during minor league baseball games, more than 25 PGA Professionals volunteered their time to assist with events by giving 10-minute swing and putting lessons.

As with any good consumer event, exposure to the game is not by itself enough to get someone to start playing. That brings us to step two: Market your programs and ultimately introduce patrons to specific opportunities that will take them to the next level as golfers.

At French Lick, each junior who came through the activation was provided information about local PGA Junior League Golf teams, summer lesson programs, and Drive, Chip and Putt registration.

So what significance are these events to you as a PGA Professional?

In your market, there are festivals, county fairs, neighborhood gatherings and community outreach programs taking place. Take advantage of these events by participating and supporting your PGA Section.

These gatherings can pay off handsomely on an individual basis with future students for youth golf programs, Get Golf Ready participants and individuals who are looking for a PGA Professional to teach them the game.

It takes some preparation to capture these potential customers. Every time you assist at a clinic or event, make sure you come well-armed with business cards, class schedules and instructions on how people can get ahold of you or your staff to register for programs or lessons.

I am proud of what is being done through our consumer events to find our next generation of golfers. As we have seen with initiatives such as PGA Junior League Golf and Drive, Chip and Putt, there are multiple new and innovative ways to get people enthused about the game. You just have to make sure that once you've exposed people to PGA Professional instruction, you also provide a map of next steps.

For more information or ideas on types of consumer events that can be done in and around your community, don't hesitate to contact any one of the PGA Player Development Regional Managers around the country. Contact information can be found on PGA.org. We are happy to serve you.

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