

Beacon Hall celebrates 25th anniversary with scholarship launch



By Brock Weir

For many golfers, a good caddy is an essential ingredient to a great round on the links.

Indeed, a skilled caddy doesn't just lug the clubs while golfers take in their lush surroundings interrupted by a shot or two, but their expertise can make or break a game.

Now, as members of Beacon Hall Golf Club mark their 25th anniversary, they have formed a new foundation to give their caddies the same vote of confidence as they embark on the next stage of their lives.

On Saturday evening, the Aurora golf course marked their silver anniversary in grand style as nearly 200 members and their families took in the occasion. For them, it wasn't just a way to celebrate the club's development over the last 25 years, but officially inaugurate the Beacon Hall Caddie Scholarship Foundation, intended to help youngsters in the Aurora and King communities pursue higher education.

The program is the brainchild of Phil Hardy, Director of Golf and Membership at the course.

For him, their caddie program has become an integral part of the Beacon Hall fabric, and it was only natural to put a program in place to provide bursaries for those in need who also "contribute to the exceptional golf experience" at Beacon Hall.

"I suppose the community could say this is a bunch of very wealthy people and their playground, but it is much more than that," says Mr. Hardy. "We started [a similar program] seven years ago but this year we made it a true scholarship program. Our caddies are between the ages of 13 and 19 and we will be supporting anywhere from three to nine kids who are either in or going into post-secondary education."

The recipients of the program will be selected on the criteria of "need, experience, character and personality," but need will be the overriding factor, he says.

"We have a young lady who came here with a 13 handicap and not a lot of financial resources," says Mr. Hardy. "She is now going into her third year at Missouri State University on a full scholarship. I think if you asked her she would say there was very little chance of that happening without becoming a part of Beacon Hall and experiencing the generosity of membership."

For them, it is a way of giving back after enjoying the golf course, for which land was broken in 1986. Ready to open in 1988, it was on a parcel acquired from the Toronto North York Hunt Club. Its natural beauty, says Mr. Hardy, has been a vital component in the

success of the course.

?You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.? He says. ?You can tell a golf course that has been manufactured; this one is just a bunch of little grades on God-given land.?

The second principle in their formula was access to the tee. Membership to Beacon Hall is limited by design, so you don't have too many people jostling for tee-times. 120 rounds are standard on their busiest days.

?Those two founding principles are still what draws people,? he says. ?What has made us successful is the ability to hold onto people and I think that speaks to the third principle, which is the membership and this fabulous culture of a common mindset. They love golf, they respect the golf course, and they respect each other.?

In addition to the scholarship program, the club has also set a 25th anniversary target of bringing in more members from the surrounding residential community. While some members of the club have been critical of the club for clearing and replacing trees ostensibly to reconfigure sunlight access on the green, they want everyone in an adjacent home to be ?affiliated? with the club either from a golf or social perspective.

?The design is to have a club where everyone is on the same page,? he says. ?The lasting legacy is an incredible golf course that is internationally ranked, that has supported a place where people have really developed long-lasting friendships and relationships.?