

## Colorado's Sanctuary a treasure chest for charities

By JAY FINEGAN

SEDALIA, Colo. — Sanctuary, among the most prominent of the new wave of private, single-member courses, last year raised \$3.5 million for various charities by allowing them to hold tournaments on the dramatic layout carved into the foot-

hills of the Rockies.

Medical organizations such as Craig Hospital, the American Heart Association and the Anchor Center for Blind Children predominated among the charities. But many other causes were given use of the course for fundraising events. They included

Food Bank of the Rockies, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes.

### 'EYE-POPPING' LAYOUT

Sanctuary, opened in 1997, is owned by Dave Liniger, co-founder of real estate giant RE/MAX International. Designed by

Colorado-based golf architect Jim Engh and built by Niebur Golf of Colorado Springs, the rugged, 7,200-yard layout has swept numerous honors. It's been named Best New Private Course of 1997 (*Golf Digest*) and One of the 25 Best Courses in the United States (*Landscape Management*).

"It's 222 acres of eye-popping, bizarre terrain, with rocks and trees and slopes and outcroppings — all sorts of stuff," said Engh. "It's surrounded by 40,000 acres of dedicated open space. So it really is a sanctuary, a little pocket of privately owned land, with no housing on it whatsoever and nothing around it than can ever be developed."

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## Accessible golf

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### CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

The number of disabled Americans who are interested in playing golf could potentially inject some life into flagging golfer participation rates. According to 1998 statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, the number of American using mobility devices has grown to about 9.5 million. A study conducted by Gary Robb demonstrated that 35 percent, or 3.3 million, of these disabled individuals expressed an interest in golf (see chart on page 3).

*'The people who are already using mobility devices are the people we are most concerned about.'*

— Larry Allen

"That is a lot of new players," said Allen. "The people who are already using mobility devices are the people we are most concerned about. There is a tremendous opportunity to expand the game of golf if we can make it available to these folks."

### EDUCATION AT THE FOREFRONT

Allen believes that education is the key to improving accessibility.

"This forum is specifically geared towards developing educational strategies for enhancing and promoting the inclusion of golfers with disabilities," he said. "We have never focused on education before, so what we are trying to do here is look at what type of educational programs and services need to be provided."

"We have targeted these groups and organizations and we will be discussing what type of education programs and services need to be provided to them and by them to enhance accessibility," Allen said.

Issues concerning golf course design guidelines and rules regarding the use and provision of adaptive golf cars will also be discussed.

"These other issues always come up," said Allen. "We will have an update on federal issues from Peggy Greenwell from the U.S. Access Board and hopefully a representative from the Justice Department will be present as well." ■

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## Sanctuary a treasure chest for charities

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### THE ELK OLYMPICS

As animal sanctuaries go, this place would be tough to top. It's got the whole menagerie of Rocky Mountain wildlife — mountain lions, bobcats, bears, foxes, deer, wild turkeys, coyotes, golden eagles and more.

"We have a couple of herds of elk, about 80 to 100 each, that roam around the course at various times of day," said Engh. "And I've personally killed probably 10 rattlesnakes there, mostly during construction but a few since then."

Little to no effort is made to shunt wildlife away from greens or fairways, with the exception of elk during the mating season.

"In the fall, the elk tend to have elk Olympics to see who can skid the farthest across the greens," said Engh. "We have tried every possible scenario to ward them off. We've run radios out there to blare music. We've sprinkled mountain lion urine on the greens. We've had those flashing lights like you see on police cars. No matter what you do, they figure out it's harmless. Oddly enough, if you put a rope fence around a green, they'll leave that green alone."

Ongoing maintenance keeps the appearance of damage minimal. Superintendent David Hare runs a winter crew of 10 that builds to 30 during the summer.

"It's not a part-time deal," said Engh, who sometimes plays "paintball" with owner Liniger at the course. "They probably have the premier maintenance facility in the state. It's all professionally run. They have a full-time pro and an assistant pro, and they staff up for the summer."

### OVERRUN BY CHARITY REQUESTS

Charity work wasn't the original goal of the course.

"When it all started, it was going to be just for Dave Liniger and his friends," Engh said. "Then he decided, 'Okay, we'll have a couple of charity events.' He got requests for 200 a year, and he narrowed that down to 15 or 20."

A typical tournament nets \$100,000 to \$135,000

To accommodate additional charities, RE/MAX, the presenting sponsor, holds foursome "auctions." Every year, about 40 charities not holding tournaments receive a foursome to auction for fund-raising. Bidding starts at \$1,200, averages \$3,000, and has hit as much as \$16,000. An invitation to play Sanctuary is seldom refused, and the foursomes are popular among business people.

### PONDS STOCKED WITH TROUT

It's easy to understand the demand to play the course. Liniger spared no expense in building it, and Engh was happy to oblige.

The layout features recirculating waterfalls on three holes. It is the only course in Colorado with powder-soft white silica sand; 1,100 tons worth were shipped in from Idaho. The 6.93 miles of winding, eight-foot-wide concrete cart paths have a terra cotta tint to blend with native rock.

Nearly 100 trees, some 70 feet tall and weighing as much as 90,000 pounds, were transplanted. Ponds near the maintenance area and on the 14th hole are stocked with steelhead, brown and rainbow trout, and a ramp is being built to make one

pond handicap accessible. The course also has some 20,000 square feet of man-made rock walls, primarily supporting trees and tee boxes.

Unfortunately for designer Engh, his masterpiece is rarely seen. "When it doesn't have easy access for golfers or people in the media, it doesn't help my business any," he said. "During charity tournaments, they have the tees up so far that the better players, who are the reputation builders, probably are playing on tees they aren't enjoying all that much." ■



The 13th hole at the Jim Engh-designed Sanctuary in Sedalia, Colo. The course, owned by Dave Liniger, raised \$3.5 million for charities in 2000.

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