

Fore Hope program for disabled gets lift

By Vern Putney

After three years of struggle, Fore Hope founder and director Melinda "Mindy" Derr believes her non-profit golf program for the physically disabled is off the ground in Columbus, Ohio.

She'd welcome a major sponsor from the golf industry, but is buoyed by a distinct upswing in interest in her project.

The latest Fore Hope focus was a four-minute spot on "Life Choices," a show originating in Columbus and syndicated to seven major cities in the United States.

Derr recently spent a week in Miami at the 8th International Symposium on Adaptive Physical Activity. Her work was selected for presentation from more than 400 abstracts.

Experts throughout the world shared knowledge that will improve opportunities of those with special needs to lead an active life.

Keeping on track with others through golf was a symposium highlight. That recognized need will be developed at a conference in Japan in 1993. Delegates from Finland were particularly interested in golf's future role for the handicapped.

Derr has assembled a like-minded board of directors, and has enlisted the support of, among others, veteran PGA Tour player Ed Snead Jr. and paraplegic golfer Dennis Walters.

Walters, as promising young pro tour player, suffered a disabling injury in a golf car mishap in the mid-1970s. From his specially equipped golf car, the Florida-based Walters travels nationwide staging a trick shot show.

Said Walters: "I am impressed with her (Derr's) single-minded pursuit to help the disabled regain the joy and pleasure of playing golf.

"As one who has gone through the experience of a disabling physical injury, I can attest that golf is a wonderful form of therapy, both for the mind and the body. It is not only recreational, but is a vehicle to improve one's

confidence and social skills."

Though an avid golfer since childhood days (dad Guy's farm bordered a golf course), Mindy didn't venture into the golf teaching field until her father was stricken with Lou Gehrig's Disease in 1984.

She saw the need for recreational activities that would stimulate the minds of persons with limited physical abilities, and at the same time not require too much physical strength or agility. Golf fit the bill. It required concentration.

"You're not thinking of your problems while you're playing," Derr noted.

Developing a golf program for the handicapped — particularly for "forgotten people, those in nursing homes and those like Dad, at home" — was a challenge.

An even bigger problem was finding a teacher. In 1988, she attended a school in Chicago that taught pupils how to teach golf.

Her kickoff clinic in northern Ohio attracted 12 golfers. A two-season total was 43 persons, 107 lessons and \$20,000 raised.

She moved her program to Columbus in November 1990. The state capital has many rehabilitation centers. Edwin Shaw Hospital in Akron has built a three-hole course and practice range that are handicapped-accessible. Several pros have donated time to work with the handicapped.

Derr works with local therapists, and stresses safety, fun and golf at each lesson. Handicapped golfers don't need special clubs, but there are Velcro gloves that fit around the hand and a place to attach the club to the hand for those unable to grip a club. She suggests lightweight shafts for some, and longer shafts for those in wheelchairs.



Mindy Derr

Derr advocates, not catering to the disabled, but increased integration and accessibility.

"There are steps course owners and developers could take to provide equal playing opportunity without compromising the character of the course or forcing costly adjustments," she said.

Right now, she's a volunteer recruiter, fundraiser, marketer and salesperson, public speaker and golf teacher. The Loudonville native, who gave up her job as exploring executive for the Boy Scouts of America to help the handicapped, qualifies as a Good Scout.

She can be contacted at P.O. Box 12117, Columbus, Ohio 43212. 614-487-1722.

USGA grants provide help

FARHILLS, N.J. — The United States Golf Association has initiated a grants program designed to expand opportunities for physically disabled golfers to enjoy the game.

This program will provide financial assistance to non-profit organizations dedicated to assisting the physically challenged.

Funds will be provided from the sale of USGA Christmas cards and contributions made to the USGA Foundation to assist disabled-golfer programs.

For more information, contact the USGA Foundation, Golf House, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, N.J. 07931.

Nat'l panel formed for handicapped

A group of golf industry professionals in Colorado has formed the Committee for Better Access for Disabled Golfers and expects this spring to publish guidelines for making public courses accessible to the disabled.

The panel was the brainchild of Don Tolson, project coordinator for Fox Hollow at Lakewood Golf Course, and Tom Houston, a disabled golfer and inventor.

Joining them on the committee are golf course architect Richard Phelps, professional Marcia Bailey, who teaches the Golf-4-Fun instructional program for disabled golfers, Raccoon Creek Golf Course pro Dave Detweiler, Golf-4-Fun director and PGA pro Jim Bailey, Colorado Golf Association Executive Director Warren Simmons and CGA Assistant Executive Director Ed Mate.

Tolson said the group hopes that by April or May it will have printed three-part guidelines.

The first part, he said will be a brief introduction to disabled golfers, demographics of disabled Americans, and a comparison to the ski industry.

The second part will discuss the effect on public facilities of the Americans With Disabilities Act, which was enacted by Congress and signed by President Bush in July 1990.

Part three of the guidelines will regard obstacles to disabled people and make general statements about grades of land, widths of bridges and the like, Tolson said.

"They will only be suggestions, not rules," Tolson said, adding that developers and course officials will make their own decisions about how to deal with access regulations.

Houston, who owns Falcon Rehab and Mobility Plus in Commerce City, Colo., will speak Feb. 14 on the disabilities act's impact on public courses during the International Golf Course Conference and Show in New Orleans.

"What got me thinking about this was my goal to build a perfect golf course at Fox Hollow," said Tolson. "Part of that goal was making the course accessible to everyone."

Houston, who has been playing for three years from a specially designed motorized cart, said: "This project is going to be an uphill battle. There are still those psychological and perceptual barriers, things like carts (wheelchairs) damaging greens, slow play and liability. These issues may only be perceptual or they may really exist. To find out, we must provide access and encourage disabled people to participate in this great game."

Tolson said the committee hopes to demystify some of these perceptions by allowing able-bodied golfers a chance to play and spend time with disabled players.

"With the United States Golf Association handicapping system that we use here in Colorado, not only will disabled persons be able to play, many of them will be able to be competitive with and even outscore their able-bodied counterparts," said Simmons.

Through all its efforts, the committee hopes to put into action the Americans With Disabilities Act, which provides that "No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation."

AquaGro 20•Spreadable. More Concentrated, 15% Less Expensive To Use.



Spread The Word.

Turf managers everywhere are spreading the the word that the number one selling soil wetting agent costs less than ever before to apply. All the more reason to use the new AquaGro 20•S to solve your water related problems.

New AquaGro 20•S gives you the same outstanding performance as the old formulation, it's just more concentrated. And we're passing the cost savings on to you. What used to cost about \$4.40 per 1000 sq. ft., now costs less than \$3.75 — that's a 15% savings.

Just like the other AquaGro formulations, AquaGro 20•S speeds the movement of water into dry spots, compacted soils and slopes, drains wet areas and moves water soluble chemicals through thatch.

No other soil wetting agent manufacturer offers you the money-back performance guarantee that's printed on the front of every bag.

Lower price, guaranteed performance — that's an unbeatable value.

So when the heat is on, use AquaGro 20•S; it helps you make the most of available water.

To find out how the new, economical AquaGro 20•S can make you a better water manager, call us for a FREE copy of the User's Guide.

1-800-257-7797.

Another
Reason To
Use AquaGro.

AQUATROLS
The Water Management People

Cherry Hill Ind. Sites, Bldg. 26
Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08003