

Children's Golf Foundation building facility for disabled kids

By ANDREW OVERBECK

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The Children's Golf Foundation is set to open the country's first golf learning facility built specifically for handicapped children. The \$300,000 project marks the culmination of 12 years of hard work to construct a permanent facility for

the program's activities.

"We needed a non-conventional facility to teach a conventional game," said Keith Stuhler, CEO of the foundation. "If you are physically challenged, golf is hard enough to learn. We are going to teach them in a relaxed, non-competitive environment, which is es-

sential for our kids."

The foundation provides weekly golf lessons for more than 200 disabled children each week. "Golf is positive for them because it shows them that they can do something that they didn't think they could do," Stuhler said.

He estimates that there are 20,000 special education stu-

dents in Palm Beach County alone that will be served by the new facility.

A SPECIAL DESIGN

The 15-acre facility was designed by Stuhler, a PGA professional, with handicapped needs in mind.

"We know what the kids are capable of," he said. "We left out



Children's Golf Foundation teaches the game of golf to handicapped kids.

the tees because of mobility issues. There are no impediments and most of the course is under a two degree slope."

The facility, which is being built on a former landfill, will include a 25,000-square-foot teeing area, an 8,000-square-foot putting green and a 3,000-square-foot clubhouse. The driving range provides four holes of varying length.

"I designed a 15-yard hole that runs downhill so that if they even touch the ball they will have some positive reinforcement of hitting the green," Stuhler said.

In addition to the short hole, there is a 115-yard par-3, a 235-yard dogleg par-4, and a straight away 295-yard par-4. "We needed to have a two-shot hole to teach them that golf was not just about par-3s," he said.

DONATIONS MADE IT POSSIBLE

The project was made possible through the fundraising work of Stuhler and other donations and grants. Palm Beach County is leasing the foundation the land for one dollar a year and the USGA, the First Tee, the George S. May Foundation and Dorothy Campbell provided the primary funding for the project. The facility will be named Tam O'Shanter Golf and Learning Center as a tribute to George S. May who staged the 1950 World Open at the original Tam O'Shanter Golf Club in Nilus, Ill.

In addition, the foundation has received a lot of support from the golf course industry. Jerry Pierman of Frontier Golf Construction built the course for a drastically reduced fee and Simmons & White donated civil engineering services. Haverland Nurseries, Hector Turf Co. and Mike Roach Irrigation have also contributed to the project. Bryan Plummer, superintendent at Ironhorse Country Club, is overseeing the grow-in of the facility and will assist in the day to day maintenance once Tam O'Shanter opens.

Construction is now wrapping up and Tam O'Shanter is due to start teaching handicapped children to play golf by the beginning of the summer.



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