

## Program puts kids on courses

Like The First Tee, Sticks For Kids is a golf program gaining momentum. Started by the Golf Course Builders Association of America during the late 1970s as the Sticks for Kids Foundation, the association is tweaking the program to make it stronger.

The GCBA's Web site states: The future of the game of golf in the United States depends on those young boys and girls interested in learning and respecting the game. The responsibility to secure the future of golf lies with

The GCBA had 30 Sticks for Kids programs in place throughout the years, and all the programs were set up where a member had to take charge, says Bill Kubly, c.e.o. of Landscape Unlimited and president of the board of directors of the GCBA Foundation, the charitable arm of the GCBA.

"That was the original direction, and 15 were still active a few years ago, but we discovered some programs weren't as successful as we'd liked

based at the GCBA headquarters in Lincoln, Neb.

The GCBA has partnered with US Kids Golf, a company that manufactures golf clubs for kids, and every facility will receive 10 sets of clubs, Kubly says.

"We'll be buying a minimum of 1,000 sets of clubs a year," he says. "The clubs will be used in the classroom, on the driving range and on the golf course. This is a 12-month program. Our investment, which is about

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those of us benefiting from golf today. The GCBA established the Sticks for Kids Foundation to provide the tools and opportunities necessary to allow as many junior golfers as possible to enjoy the game.

For golf courses that would like to participate in the SFK program, there are four requirements. Each facility:

- Must have an active junior program – the SFK program may establish, enhance or replace a current program;
- Must have the ability to store the clubs for use by junior golfers;
- Is expected to promote the program through the use of posters and displays; and
- Is expected to work with local media and businesses to promote the program.

because we all had full-time jobs," Kubly says. "We needed a partner, so Paul Foley (executive director of the GCBA) hooked up with the National Recreation and Parks Association, which has embraced golf. The NRPA had done this type of work with tennis, and there are 700 tennis programs now. They have 6,000 members that represent 10,000 golf courses. NRPA is connected to municipal golf courses. They are a major player."

The NRPA and the SFK program was a good fit because the NRPA didn't have a golf program. The GCBA Foundation is committed to starting 100 programs a year for the next three years. The GCBA is supplying golf clubs to these programs and is helping market and administer the program, mainly through an assistant

a quarter of a million dollars, will touch at least 100 kids per program."

Kubly says there have been 245 course members sign up already, but only 100 are going to get in.

To measure the success of the program, Kubly says the GCBA needs to know how many kids are using the clubs, how many times the clubs are used and to closely monitor the program to see how well it's doing.

The SFK program, like the other programs designed to grow the game, is about inclusion.

"Our sport has always been a blue blood sport, so we wanted to reach kids who otherwise wouldn't play golf," Kubly says. "It's also important to work with baby boomers, women, etc. Every initiative to get more golfer out there is important." GCN



There are 245 golf facilities interested in participating in the Sticks for Kids program. Photo: GCBA