

My buddy recently welcomed his third son to the world. “That completes the foursome,” Steve proudly announced shortly after the birth of bouncing Brady. He envisioned his three boys and himself teeing it up someday soon on a breezy, sunny Sunday afternoon.

Steve also has a daughter, 7, who’s his oldest child. But five is a crowd in a foursome. Besides, Steve figures his daughter, Shannon, would rather stay at home with Mom and play with her “Winnie the Pooh and Tigger, Too” dolls.

But what makes Steve so sure that his daughter wouldn’t rather hit the links and pretend she’s “Tigger” Woods? The National Golf Course Owners Association wants to know.

That’s why NGCOA has instituted April 24-28 as “Take Your Daughter to the Course Week” to coincide with “Take Your Daughter to Work Day” on April 27. NGCOA wants to get more girls interested in golf.

“While there are many unique and effective junior golf programs in the market, the majority of participants in these programs are boys,” says Mike Hughes, NGCOA’s executive director. “Although 22 percent of all golfers are female, only 13 percent of junior golfers are girls.”

As NGCOA’s director of the Get Linked/Play Golf promotional program, Anne Lyndrup is striving for golf to be viewed as an inclusive sport. “It’s not just for the good-old boys and their male children,” she says.

That includes Steve and his boys.

“We’re going after people like him,” Lyndrup adds. “We’re going after people who think golf is for middle-aged white men of a certain economic range — because the game is going to die if we think like that.”

But what makes Lyndrup so sure that girls, whether 7 or 17, will enjoy golf? She admits it will be a challenge. The objective is to get girls to believe that golf can accommodate them.

“As long as they’re not told they can’t do it, then they’ll do it,” Lyndrup says. “We’re pushing the message that golf needs to be fun.”

NGCOA sent marketing kits to its member courses at the end of February. The kits contained press releases for the courses to send to local media advising them of Take Your Daugh-

Time to Take Your Daughter Golfing

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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ter to the Course Week. “We’ll do what we can on the national level, but our members need to promote what they’re offering on a local level,” Lyndrup says.

That could be a free round of golf for girls ages 7 to 17 if they’re accompanied by a parent. Or it could include free instruction clinics or a complimentary hour on the driving range.

“Some courses are talking about putting together a nine-hole parent/daughter scramble to make the experience quick, easy and fun,” Lyndrup adds.

Take Your Daughter to the Course Week is about more than teaching girls how to play and enjoy golf. Lyndrup urges superintendents to conduct short seminars to teach the girls how to respect and maintain golf courses.

“That should be a part of any beginners’ clinic,” Lyndrup says. “We’re stressing that young people — girls and boys — understand that caring for the golf course is an intrinsic part of the game. They need to know you’re suppose to repair divots.”

The short-range goal of NGCOA’s initiative is to get more young girls interested in golf. The long-range goal is to produce more women golfers.

“Any sport you take up as a child, you’re going to play as an adult,” Lyndrup says. “There’s no better way to develop players than to start them playing young. If they feel the golf course is a fun place to be, then they’ll want to come back.”

I will alert Steve to Take Your Daughter to the Course Week. And maybe, 10 years from now, she’ll be teaching her little brothers and her dad a few things about driving for accuracy and pitching on to a green from 50 yards out.

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