

## Golf Branches Out with Sticks For Kids

BY PETER BLAIS

**T**en-year-old Bradley Williams lives near Shawnee GC in downtown Louisville, Ky. He plays the three-hole junior course at Shawnee frequently. Before walking to the first tee, he checks out one of the 15 free sets of junior clubs provided through the Golf Course Builders Association of America's (GCBA) Sticks For Kids program.

"We have to watch him, though," Shawnee's pro Kevin Greenwell says with a chuckle. "He'll take four or five clubs from every set and put them in his bag. I'll say, 'Bradley, it gets kind of heavy carrying that many clubs.' And he'll say, 'Oh, OK.' Once in a while, he'll even have a left-handed club in there. But he has gotten other kids involved from the neighborhood, and they seem to have a great time."

Williams is one of thousands of kids who have benefited from the Sticks For Kids program, which has provided 28 U.S. courses with junior golf equipment and raised roughly \$100,000 to help underprivileged youths take up the game, according to Lee Hetrick, GCBA executive vice president.

"We use the clubs for clinics and provide them to some of the inner-city kids playing the course here," says Greenwell, who believes many of Shawnee's junior golfers would never have gotten involved or stayed with the game if not for the availability of the program's equipment. "Some of the sets fill the void for kids aged 6 to 10 and the rest for kids 11 to 15. We had about 3,500 rounds played on that [junior] course last year, and the clubs were used quite often."

This is exactly what GCBA envi-



The Sticks For Kids program introduced underprivileged kids to golf.

sioned when it started Sticks For Kids four years ago. The mission of the program is to provide as many children as possible with:

- A set of clubs to use while learning to play the game.
  - A set of clubs to use as many times as they want while saving to purchase their own sets.
  - A chance to experience a sport that teaches etiquette, discipline, integrity and honor.
  - Competitive courses to play.
- James Kirchdorfer, president of ISCO Industries LLC of Louisville and a former GCBA president, is chairman of the program.

"We were looking for something we could do as builders to promote the game of golf," Kirchdorfer says. "Our idea was to make golf clubs available for kids to play."

Kirchdorfer is a part owner of five courses in Kentucky and Indiana. He made the program available at his properties and recruited the city of Louisville's three golf facilities — Shawnee, Sun Valley and Bobby Nichols golf courses. He also donated

much of the irrigation and construction equipment used to build the three-hole junior facility at Shawnee, which is located in a disadvantaged portion of the city. "My other courses aren't necessarily in disadvantaged areas," Kirchdorfer adds.

Landscapes Unlimited President William Kubly, who helped found Sticks For Kids, has aggressively marketed the program in his home area of Lincoln, Neb. Other sites are scattered across the country.

"We're looking at where we want to take the program," Kirchdorfer says. "Wherever we have a program, we want a GCBA member to monitor it and get some credit."

In order to get involved:

- Participating courses must have active junior programs. The Sticks For Kids program may establish, enhance or replace current programs.
- Courses that receive new clubs or monetary support from the program must have active collection and refitting programs of used clubs for junior golfers.

*Continued on page 72*

## Money Shot

*Continued from page 70*

- Courses are expected to promote the program through use of posters and displays provided by the GCBAA.

- Courses are expected to work with local media and businesses to promote the program.

Funding for the program comes primarily through proceeds raised at the

GCBAA's Auction of Champions, which is conducted during its annual dinner held in conjunction with the GCSAA Conference and Show and during a raffle at GCBAA's annual summer meeting. GCBAA also seeks companies or individuals to donate new or used sets of clubs or to make direct donations to the program.



**Program participants receive expert instruction.**

"If you like the game and are involved in the commercial side, it's a way to help grow the game," Kirchdorfer says.

Hetrick and Landscapes Unlimited's Vice President of Operations Brad Schmidt recently conducted a three-day Sticks For Kids workshop for youngsters aged 9 to 15 at Jim Ager Junior Golf Course in Lincoln. Hetrick videotaped the workshop to serve as a model for courses interested in hosting similar events.

The three-day event featured education in golf fundamentals from area golf pros. Guest speakers included Knox Jones, the Nebraska State Match Play Amateur Champion, who got his start at the junior course. Each child received clubs to use during the workshop and a club to take home after the event.

"Tiger Woods has these kids wired," Hetrick says. "They love the golf atmosphere and were attentive to their instructors. We encourage them to keep playing by giving them three free rounds of golf at the Jim Ager course."

Courses interested in being Sticks for Kids host sites should contact a local GCBAA member. Anyone interested in donating golf equipment or auction items can reach Hetrick at 402-476-4444.

*Peter Blais, a free-lance writer who operates a golf media relations firm in North Yarmouth, Maine, can be reached at pblais@maine.rr.com.*

# #1 Selling Pesticide Storage Building

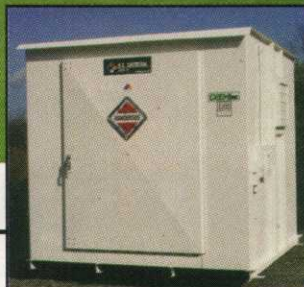


**Superintendents:  
Don't let unexpected  
EPA fines ruin your game.  
Protect yourself, your  
staff, and your golfers!**

- ◆ Custom Built Sizes: 8' x 6' up to 14' x 54'
- ◆ Non Fire Rated/2 Hour Fire Rated/4 Hour Fire Rated
- ◆ FM Approved
- ◆ Mechanical Ventilation
- ◆ Steel Floor Grating
- ◆ Lighting Package
- ◆ *Plus Other Options*



**Call today and ask for your  
Superintendent Discount!  
*Limited Time Offer.***



**1 800 233 1480**  
**www.uschemicalstorage.com**