

A New Orleans man, who lost everything to Hurricane Katrina, was so distraught about his life that he dove into the Mississippi River and tried to drown himself. Sadly, sorrowful stories like this abound in the city, where the suicide rate has soared the past two years because of the utter chaos caused by Katrina.

Hence, what I'm about to ask may sound insensitive considering that many people in New Orleans have lost everything they own and will be rebuilding their lives for years to come. But I ask this in complete consideration for their well-being: Can playing golf help these troubled people in their quests to regain normalcy in their lives?

I believe it can and so do others, including Billy Lewis, president of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association. Lewis is so sold on golf making a difference in New Orleans that he has embarked on a campaign to reopen one of the city's municipal courses that was destroyed by Katrina.

In June, Lewis, the superintendent of the Carolina National Golf Club in Shallotte, N.C., saw the the city's battered Joseph Bartholomew Golf Club up close when he was given a tour of its grounds by the course's superintendent, Peter Carew. The devastation Lewis witnessed at the course — the crumbling clubhouse, the dying trees — caused his eyes to widen and his jaw to drop.

But Lewis didn't let what he saw rebuff his enthusiasm. Instead of dwelling on the destruction, Lewis considered the opportunity at hand. Knowing that playing golf is a great outlet for people to forget their troubles, Lewis volunteered to lead an effort to rebuild Bartholomew. He believes that reopening the course will incite hope among the New Orleans people. And hope is something the city's people desperately need and will continue to need for years to come.

It's not a stretch to say that golf can help people escape from their angst-filled lives. It's also not absurd to believe that golf might help save somebody's life in New Orleans.

Think about it for a minute. Golf is recreation. A few hours spent on the golf course,

Help Rebuild a Golf Course – And Lives

BY LARRY AYLWARD



NORTH CAROLINA
SUPERINTENDENT
CAMPAIGNS
TO REOPEN
NEW ORLEANS
COURSE DESTROYED
BY KATRINA

which is essentially a time-out from the hectic pace that we keep, can provide peace of mind for almost anyone. In New Orleans, where many people need respite from their shattered lives, a few hours on the golf course could help them reassess their situations.

Lewis invites you to join him in his effort to help Carew reopen Bartholomew. It will take about \$11 million to restore the course, but much less to get it up and running.

"I can't do anything right now to change the everyday lives of the people," Lewis says. "That's up to our government. But I do think, as an ambassador to the golf industry, we can make a difference in golf in New Orleans through our organizations and connections."

Lewis figures nobody outside the golf industry will help Carew repair Bartholomew because they don't understand the blood, sweat, tears and money it will take to bring the golf course back. "You have to understand his problems in order to be willing to change his problems," Lewis says.

Lewis has worked to spread the word about rebuilding Bartholomew since leaving New Orleans. He has become the course's official lobbyist. On behalf of *Golfdom*, I'm joining Lewis in this cause. Like Lewis, I believe golf can make a difference in people's lives in New Orleans.

We hope you will join us in this cause. If you would like to get involved or have any ideas on how to raise money for Bartholomew, please contact Lewis at billyboys40@hotmail.com, Carew at pcarew@cityofno.com or me at l aylward@questex.com.

Consider this column an official call to action to help rebuild a golf course *and* lives in New Orleans.

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