

Kids On Course for Success



Photo: NCGA

Responsibility is what you do when no one is looking." Those words, spoken by President of the Northern California Golf Association Foundation Paul Morton, eloquently sum up the mission of the Youth on Course initiative. Youth on Course (YOC) was created to make golf accessible to underprivileged children.

Let's face it: golf is expensive. YOC gives kids from ages 7 to 17 the unheard-of chance to tee off on 115 regional courses throughout Northern California for \$5 or less. But this is not just about recreation.

"Golf is unique," says NCGA Executive Director Adam Heieck. "It teaches things that other sports simply don't. You can play against yourself. You're never perfect." And perhaps most importantly, it's self-policing. "As a golfer, you apply the rules and call penalties on yourself."

Life can dish out some hard knocks, and the game of golf mirrors that. It shows how one deals with adversity—whether it's a ball plopping into a sand trap or a bad day at the office. "Golf is a difficult game

to learn," says Laird Small, director of Pebble Beach Golf Academy. He's coached dozens of YOC kids. "What we're trying to show these kids is they can learn golf and get good at it. It's about possibility—if they can do this, they can do other things in life."

Over five years, the NCGA Foundation has invested more than \$2.5

million in youth, subsidizing in excess of 100,000 rounds of golf. To qualify, kids are required to have taken life skills and core values training programs such as Scouting, First Tee or Salvation Army. "We've become a logical extension of those programs," says Heieck. YOC has also developed online training, teaching nutrition, fitness and the rules of golf.

Bottom line? Building self-esteem and providing an avenue for success. "Golf can never be fully conquered," Heieck reflects. Kind of like life itself.

Get more information—or get involved—at www.Ncgafoundation.org.

—Michael Chatfield