



Issue #1 Volume #1

# Iowans helping Iowa's injured vets.

**The Partnership:** Golf for Injured Veterans Everywhere (G.I.V.E.) is a working partnership between the Iowa City VA Medical Center which screens and recommends Veterans for the program, the Iowa Section of the PGA, which provides professional instruction, and Riverside Casino & Golf Resort, which provides the facilities of Blue Top Ridge golf course and practice area.

**The Program:** Golf is a life-long game. Golf can be modified to take advantage of player's strengths while offering the benefits of exercise, outdoor recreation, companionship and competitiveness. This program provides a social setting for Veterans, with Veterans, and let's them focus on something other than themselves and teaches them a skill that is life-long that can be played with their family and friends.

**Make a Difference:** G.I.V.E. is a 501 (c) 3 organization and relies on donations to provide golf equipment and services to the Veterans who participate in the program free of charge.

Please consider a donation today. You can donate online at [www.giveforveterans.com](http://www.giveforveterans.com) or you can mail a donation to:

**G.I.V.E. Foundation**  
PO Box 659  
3184 Hwy 22  
Riverside, IA 52327

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# PGA Professionals **G.I.V.E.** Back

The GIVE Foundation is a unique new program that helps injured veterans make golf an important part of their ongoing recovery.

*By Bob Denny*

**A group of 17 military veterans**, with service ranging from World War II through Iraq, were the first student/participants in the inaugural Golf For Injured Veterans Everywhere (GIVE) Foundation program, held in Riverside, Iowa. The distinguished group celebrated the end of their golf “basic training” in mid-November.

The program was conceived by Louis King, a veteran and former executive director of The PGA of America, to make golf an important part of an injured veteran’s recovery. King was asked by Dan Kehl, CEO of the Riverside Casino & Golf Resort, to bring to-

gether the Iowa PGA Section and the Veterans Administration (VA) to form a partnership at the section’s new on-course home – Blue Top Ridge at Riverside. King was named president of the GIVE Foundation.

The ensuing partnership between the Iowa PGA Section, the Veterans Administration Medical Center of Iowa City and host Riverside Casino & Golf Resort made this unique classroom possible. The partnership is flourishing for many reasons, but not without its undercurrent of selflessness among all parties. Twenty-five Iowa PGA Professionals who have volunteered to give free instruction to injured veterans, giving them a new lease on life. And, the professionals also are learning from their stu-

dents, many of whom brought their spouses to the training program.

“We’re not here because we’re getting paid,” says former Iowa PGA President Ken Schall of Des Moines. “We’re here because of the veterans, and what they have done for us. We’re lucky in our Section to have so many who may come and help. We’re a close-knit group. This is an

ongoing program, where the ultimate goal is for all veterans to enjoy the game. I’ve seen so many good things take place already, and we’ve yet to take these veterans to the range and eventually play the course.”

***“The professionals I’ve met are not just going through motions. They look you in the eye; they care about you. I’ve started building a little more trust; I feel born again.”***  
***- Joe Corso - West Liberty, Iowa***

The GIVE Foundation program, administered by the Iowa PGA, has four phases of training for veterans to enhance their mental, social, physical, and emotional

well-being and improve their quality of life: Introduction to Golf (Rules, equipment, dress, scoring, etiquette, etc.), indoor instruction, outdoor practice at Blue Top Ridge and finally, golf rounds at Blue Top Ridge.

The Veterans Administration has received 62 registrants eager to join the GIVE project. The first group of 17 “graduates” received

training in all aspects of the game of golf – from the game’s timeless Rules and etiquette to all phases of shotmaking. Once the training was completed, the students were fitted for their own set of free clubs. PGA Professionals analyzed each veteran’s swing/abilities and customized the clubs to accommodate the player’s injuries.

Joe Corso of West Liberty,

Iowa, is one of the GIVE “pioneer” students. The 63-year-old former E-5 Sergeant has coped with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) since his last day of three tours of duty in 1969. He also learned late last summer that he has the early stages of leukemia.

Corso says that he had not left his home in a couple years, but now has reason to feel good again about fresh air and meeting new faces, including fellow veterans. He was joined in the classroom by his wife, Linda.

“This program has brought me closer to my wife,” says Corso. “The professionals I’ve met are not just going through motions. They look you in the eye; they care about you. I’ve started building a little more trust; I feel born again.”

The warm feeling that Corso and others in the classroom feel would not be possible, however, without the other pieces of the program fitting so well.

With the bulk of its 850-employee base from eastern Iowa, the Riverside Casino & Golf Resort is a study in the commitment of Dan Kehl and his brother, Bobby, a member of the resort’s Board of Directors. Together, they founded the GIVE Foundation as a timeless service to all veterans. The resort soon will have a training center completed that will support year-round practice.

Iowa VA Medical Center Director Barry Sharp praised the program, calling it a “truly unique partnership.”

“What excited me is that we have a partner giving a program to our veterans that previously didn’t exist – and at zero cost to the VA or the taxpayer,” says Sharp. “The support has been overwhelming. Our goal is to get it right in order that we may help other VA centers and many more veterans around the country. And, we have come



a long way so far. There was a standing ovation for the vets at one of the meetings and I heard one vet tell me, 'I can't believe someone doing this for me!' They are overwhelmed."

Sharp oversees 1,200 employees at VA clinics in 32 counties in Iowa and 14 in western Illinois, serving some 43,000 veterans. In addition to the Iowa City Veterans Medical Center, the state also has VA hospitals in Des Moines and Knoxville.

"We could not be more pleased to have the Iowa Veterans for Golf Program start in Iowa City," says Sharp. "It shows a commitment from Iowa businesses and organizations to our veterans. It will bring great enjoyment to our veterans, their families, VA staff, PGA staff and Blue Top Ridge at Riverside staff." When Blue Top Ridge at Riverside opened on Aug. 1, a grand opening fund-raiser raised \$65,000 that day for the GIVE Foundation. "It's a start, a good start," says Dan Kehl. "Golf might be one small way we can repay the debt all of us owe these great Americans. But it doesn't end there. We have many more miles to go."

"He's got big plans," says Sharp of Kehl's program. "What is

so wonderful is that we have all the players that can make this happen."

To "get it right," as Sharp, the Iowa PGA and Kehl agree, there must be training for Iowa PGA Professionals to adapt to teaching both physically disabled as well as those suffering primarily from PTSD.

The Iowa PGA invited PGA/LPGA Professional Judy Alvarez to teach a class. Alvarez is The PGA of America's National Trainer for the Wounded Warrior Program, and has led similar clinics nationwide.

"The Iowa VA and PGA officials were very open, very professional about their goals," says Alvarez. "I was very impressed, and you know I also learned a lot from the speakers joining me that day – including a psychiatrist and one representing Family Wellness.

"It's one thing to teach a veteran to hit a golf ball, but it's another to understand what life is like for him or her before they arrive on the practice range. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder usually adds strains on a family, and many times the spouse has had to get another job to support the family after the veteran returns; there is a loss of intimacy

and the spouse basically becomes a fulltime caregiver for the kids.

"Golf is a program that is so much more helpful than we may realize. People escape to a golf program. When working with PTSD vets we learn that we sometimes have to repeat the information we give to veterans, to get them to focus. We may not give a full-fledged golf lesson, but we have to anticipate that and be patient. There is so much good being accomplished, and I applaud Iowa for what it has done and the great support it has received from both the facility and the VA."

PGA Professional Dave Schneider, the director of golf and general manager at Wakonda Club in Des Moines, had never taught a disabled student to play the game before participating in the GIVE Foundation program.

"This program is so far ahead of the curve," says Schneider. "It is tremendous. It gives the student a completely new outlook on their psychological therapy. Golf transcends that. I believe that you are communicating with students as never before. I was nervous before I arrived. I did not want to fall short as a teacher."

Two days before Thanksgiving, the "graduates" were fitted to new equipment by the Iowa PGA Professionals and each presented a complete set of clubs donated by Iowans at Iowa City, Coralville, and Cedar Rapids Hy-Vee Food Stores. Hy-Vee also presented each graduate with a Thanksgiving turkey.

"This is as rewarding as heck," says PGA Professional Jerry Johnson, a past Iowa PGA Section president. "There are great people involved on both sides of this – the veterans and my fellow professionals." ■



# *Golf program for veterans a Hole-in-One*

**Seventeen disabled veterans complete G.I.V.E. basic training hitting in the links**



The golf program has four phases of training for veterans to enhance their mental, social, physical and emotional wellbeing and improve their quality of life. Instruction is provided by golf professionals from across the state who are mem-

individual player by PGA professionals. Hy-Vee also presented the graduates with a free Thanksgiving turkey. Iowa VA medical Center Director Barry Sharp praised the program calling it a “truly unique partnership” that will benefit our veterans. “We could not be more pleased to have the Iowa Veterans for Golf Programs start in Iowa City,” Sharp said. “It shows a commitment from Iowa businesses and organizations to our veterans. It will bring great enjoyment to our veterans, their families, VA staff, PGA staff and Blue Top Ridge at Riverside staff.” “We are proud to have been a part of this program and are anxious to have the graduates play the course next spring and summer. Golf might be one small way we can repay the debt all of us owe these great Americans,” Riverside Casino & Golf Resort CEO Dan Kehl said. To learn more about the Iowa Veterans for Golf Program or to donate to the G.I.V.E. Foundation, please contact Sharon Haselhoff at 319-648-1234, ext. 1950. ■

Monday was a special day for participants in the Golf for Injured Veterans Everywhere, or G.I.V.E. program. Seventeen disabled veterans completed their basic training in golf. The VA Medical Center in Iowa City, the Iowa PGA Section and Riverside Casino & Golf Resort established G.I.V.E. to allow veterans with disabilities being seen at the Iowa City VA Medical Center the opportunity to learn and play the game of golf.

bers of the Iowa Section PGA at the Riverside Casino & Golf Resort, where they have access to the Blue Top Ridge at Riverside golf course. This first class included veterans from WWII, the Vietnam War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the final session, the graduates were presented with complete sets of golf clubs donated by Iowans at Iowa City, Coralville and Cedar Rapids Hy-Vee stores and refurbished and fit to the

## **Homers** *What's going right*

**GOLF GIFT FOR VETS:** A new partnership will give Iowa veterans with disabilities the opportunity to learn and play golf. The Golf for Injured Veterans Everywhere Foundation was recently established by The Veterans Administration Medical Center in Iowa City, the Iowa Professional Golfers Association Section and Riverside Casino & Golf Resort to raise money for the program. The goal is to enhance veterans’ mental, social, physical and emotional well-being and boost their quality of life. They deserve it.

Cedar Rapids Gazette 8-20-07

# LETTERS TO G.I.V.E.

Kirt,

The GIVE Program has been a great experience for my wife and me. After my accident, I thought about all the things I never had tried and probably would never get to try. Golf was one of those sports that I have never tried and with my disability, I figured I would never get to play. When I started the program, I kept thinking to myself, how I am going to be able to golf. The Iowa PGA was helpful in showing me how to get around what I thought were obstacles. After attending a few lessons, I know I would be able to play golf. After weeks of training, you could see the difference it had made in all the veterans that were participating. I believe the Iowa PGA also seen the difference in us and I believe they even have changed a little themselves. This is a great program and I think it should keep going. My wife and I cannot say Thank You enough to the Iowa PGA, Riverside Casino & Golf Resort, and the Iowa City VA Medical Center. I hope someday that a program like this will be available to every disabled veteran in America.

Thank you,

Kenny & Pauline Lloyd

To GIVE Program:

This golf program you have started is GREAT! To me its seeing Vets with disabilities treated like real people.

The Pros come from all over (on their own time) to take time to show us how to play, swing, rules, everything that goes with the golf game. They give me self confidence.

It's a good learning atmosphere. The Vets can be together and really relate to past experiences while we are trying to go on with our lives.

Kirt Sickels and Lou King and the Casino CEO----Thank you so much from my wife and kids and me.

Sincerely,

Joe & Linda

PS. Kirt, I really don't know how to repay you for my comfort zone. Joe (Hack)



From: Peterson, Lea Anne  
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2008 3:43 PM  
To: Sadler, Anne G; Sickels, Kirt A.; Sharp, Barry D.  
Subject: Touching Base

I wanted to take a minute to touch base with the three of you regarding a female veteran that I had followed for almost 5 years as the Women Veterans Program Manager. When I last spoke to her in May of 2006 she was doing "okay" but she remained socially isolated, unable to work due to severe PTSD and was having a great deal of difficulty forming and maintaining positive relationships.

Today she contacted me wanting to say "thank you" to the VA for helping her. She states that she received a "life saving/life changing" referral from Dr. Sadler to the G.I.V.E program. She indicated that she reluctantly started working with Kirt through this program last summer. She states that since that time her life has changed so much for the better. Through this program she has met and spoken to many veterans and maintains contact with them through golf. She was always (prior to her MST) a competitive athlete and has found the drive to train and compete again. She is now helping others because of this program and states she has started coaching softball again and she is considering coaching golf (once she learns more). She has formed three strong relationships with people she has met through this program and she talks to them at least once a week and they can't wait to get on the golf course. She said that through this experience, she has become less isolated and is now working with another VA program to purchase a home. MOST importantly and part of the turning point for her was sitting next to Mr. Sharp at a G.I.V.E. event/dinner and getting on a first name basis with him.

I wanted to let the three of you know what an impact your time and work has had for this woman. It's amazing how things that we may take as "routine" like a referral, a phone call or just talking to someone can have such a life altering influence on someone. She states she will be forever grateful!

Strong Work!!

Lea Anne Peterson, LMSW

From: Sharp, Barry D.  
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2008 4:34 PM  
To: Peterson, Lea Anne; Sadler, Anne G; Sickels, Kirt A.  
Subject: RE: Touching Base

Lea Anne,

Thank you for sharing this email with us. I am glad others get to see the power of these rehab programs. The game of golf has very little to do with the recovery, but it certainly serves as a vehicle (Ideas of Merch I for your benefit Anne). This model is repeatable year after year, veteran after veteran. Why? Because it comes down to veterans helping veterans, it is the social interaction that is mentioned below that gives these programs the power.

It is stories like this one that reminds me of why I took this often crazy job of Medical Center Director I because I can make a difference. Your story is another reminder that we ALL can make a difference, even though we may not think it is a big deal at the time. Your example goes to show you that each and every day counts, and it counts in every veteran's life I and in this case a Ilife saving/life changingI referral. I don't know how it gets any better than that.

Thanks for sharing this story, it will be going into the GIVE vault for memories.

Barry Sharp

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Our Veterans deserve a boost in their quality of life and this is a chance for you to give back and make a difference in someone's life. We ask for your financial support today. This program has made national news with its success covered in the January, 2008 PGA Magazine.

Please help us continue to teach our injured Veterans the game of golf, and continue to enhance their mental, social, physical and emotional well-being.

**Contributions can be sent to:**

**G.I.V.E. Foundation**

**PO Box 659**

**3184 HWY 22**

**Riverside, IA 52327**

For more information please feel free to contact us at: 319-648-0026 or send us an email at:

[info@giveforveterans.com](mailto:info@giveforveterans.com).

You may also visit our website at:

[www.giveforveterans.com](http://www.giveforveterans.com).

## SAVE THE DATE

Don't forget to mark this date on your calendars!

**July 28, 2008**

**2nd Annual  
Give Foundation  
Golf Tournament at  
Blue Top Ridge**



**G I V E**  
F O U N D A T I O N

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