USGA Media Center

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J., and PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (Oct. 4, 2023) – The USGA is awarding its latest round of IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility) grants to 27 First Tee chapters across America, building upon a longstanding commitment to create a more accessible game and impact communities through golf.

From supporting chapters in major urban markets, mountainous regions and predominantly Hispanic communities to targeting low-income families across the country, the USGA and First Tee aim to level the playing field by providing club-in-hand experiences to every junior who wants to play golf and benefit from the character-building lessons the sport provides.

In 2023, chapters selected will receive up to $15,000 to provide transportation, hire diverse coaches, train volunteers and build programs in diverse communities, among other activities. USGA grant funding, which totals $200,000, will enhance grassroots efforts that help break down barriers of entry.

“It’s important that we don’t let up on our efforts to drive greater diversity and inclusion at the junior level,” said USGA CEO Mike Whan. “By meeting youths within their schools and communities, and collaborating closely with our industry partners, we are opening up more pathways at a critical entry point into the game.”

IDEA grants will support many chapter initiatives, including:

- **First Tee – Central Carolina**, located near Winston-Salem, N.C., will extend its programming from eight months to year-round by hosting Golf and Grades, an after-school tutoring and golf initiative, at indoor and outdoor facilities. The chapter also supports six paid summer internship positions for HBCU golfers that offer valuable instructional opportunities, access to practice facilities and hands-on experience at the PGA Tour’s Wyndham Championship.
- The first chapter in its region, **First Tee – Greater Tallahassee** (Fla.) engages students in Title 1 schools and predominantly low-income communities by supplying equipment and training physical education teachers to lead in-class activities, while also offering after-school programs and summer camps. The chapter hosts a golf camp and two DE&I Community Field Days in collaboration with Florida A&M University, an HBCU, with transportation and meals provided for participants.
- Through a series of instructional sessions, **First Tee – Central Coast** offers children from People’s Self Help Housing in Guadalupe, Calif., their first exposure to the game. Over 20 participants from low-income households are invited to two-hour, off-course classes prior to taking lessons on-course at Santa Maria Country Club and Blacklake Golf Course, where they have access to the practice facilities and are able to play a hole of golf.
- In partnership with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, **First Tee – Phoenix** engages local Latinx youth through a series of outreach initiatives in addition to hiring a translator and hosting listening sessions and focus groups. The chapter also provides clinics tailored toward Latinx families and events around Día Del Niño.
- More than 70 percent of youths in the **First Tee – Metropolitan New York’s** service area come from traditionally underserved communities. The chapter plans to use its funding to help provide full scholarships for youths from the NYC Housing Authority, Mosholu Montefiore and other community centers.
- **First Tee – Virginia Blue Ridge** is working to make golf more welcoming and inclusive by providing opportunities for kids to try the game without an intimidation factor. Following the successful launch of putting league competitions at a local putt-putt fun center, the chapter plans to use grant funds to improve the league and establish additional community partnerships that help to reach underserved populations.
- **First Tee – Monterey County** (Calif.) has identified a growing number of children considered homeless in its area and hopes to inspire and engage these youths with new programs. The chapter plans to allow 25 participants to travel to King City Golf Course, which it assumed management of in 2022, where they will participate in four, two-hour clinics with a PGA instructor. Following the program, the students will take a field trip to Pebble Beach Golf Academy and participate in a clinic hosted by academy director Laird Small.

The USGA IDEA Grant program was established in 2021, building off the strength of more than 20 years of partnership between First Tee and the USGA. Since its inception, 72 grants have been distributed to 46 chapters across 30 states,

helping connect more diverse young people to the game and to First Tee's character-empowering programs.

The full list of 2023 USGA IDEA Grant recipients is as follows:

First Tee — Central Arkansas
First Tee — Central Carolina (N.C.)
First Tee — Central Coast (Calif.)
First Tee — Central Mississippi
First Tee — Denver (Colo.)
First Tee — Greater Charleston (S.C.)
First Tee — Greater Pasadena (Calif.)
First Tee — Greater Philadelphia (Pa.)
First Tee — Greater Richmond (Va.)
First Tee — Greater Wichita (Kan.)
First Tee — Indiana
First Tee — Inland Empire (Calif.)
First Tee — Lake Erie (Ohio)
First Tee — Los Angeles (Calif.)
First Tee — Louisville (Ky.)
First Tee — Massachusetts
First Tee — Metropolitan New York
First Tee — Monterey County (Calif.)
First Tee — Orange County (Calif.)
First Tee — Phoenix (Ariz.)
First Tee — Sandhills (N.C.)
First Tee — South Central Wisconsin
First Tee — South Dakota
First Tee — Southern Colorado
First Tee — Tallahassee (Fla.)
First Tee — Virginia Blue Ridge
First Tee — West Michigan

IDEA Grant applications were open to all First Tee chapters in the United States, with preference given to those affiliated with one of the USGA's 58 Allied Golf Associations (AGAs). Located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, AGAs provide USGA resources and services at the community level – helping to increase engagement and participation and improving the golfer experience.

In 2022, 3.4 million juniors played on a golf course – the highest level since 2006 – with studies indicating that this golfer segment continues to be more diverse than the overall golf population. Programs like First Tee and initiatives such as IDEA grants play an important role in that growth, underscoring the need to direct funding toward grassroots efforts.

A recent study conducted by First Tee and Harris Poll highlights the importance of exposing youths from underrepresented backgrounds to golf and similar extracurricular activities in their character development. Eighty percent of parents surveyed stated that participation in extracurricular activities is more about development than recreational activity, with 76 percent also identifying golf as helpful in building character and teaching life skills.

"First Tee is proud to not only introduce kids to the great game of golf, but also to provide fun and safe spaces for young people to build self-confidence, overcome challenges and grow as leaders," said First Tee CEO Greg McLaughlin. "The USGA has been an important partner of First Tee since our inception, and we are grateful for their ongoing support to help us reach kids from underrepresented and underserved communities."

Additional research from the Harris Poll indicates that black and lower-income families participate in extracurricular activities at lower rates, creating a greater need for initiatives like IDEA grants that help break down barriers to entry. First Tee aims to make programming accessible to families through scholarships and other special programs.

About the USGA

The USGA is a nonprofit organization that celebrates, serves and advances the game of golf. Founded in 1894, we

conduct many of golf's premier professional and amateur championships, including the U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open. With The R&A, we govern the sport via a global set of playing, equipment, handicapping and amateur status rules. The USGA campus in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, is home to the Association's Research and Test Center, where science and innovation are fueling a healthy and sustainable game for the future. The campus is also home to the USGA Golf Museum, where we honor the game by curating the world's most comprehensive archive of golf artifacts. To learn more, visit usga.org.

About PGA TOUR First Tee Foundation ("First Tee")

First Tee (www.firsttee.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit youth development organization that is supported by the PGA TOUR. Its mission is to impact the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character and instill life-enhancing values through the game of golf. Since 1997, First Tee has expanded to reach millions of kids annually through its network of 150 chapters, 11,000 schools and 1,900 youth centers. Headquartered in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA, programs are delivered in all 50 United States and select international locations. President George W. Bush serves as Honorary Chair.

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