

PGA of America to Host Play Golf America Day at National Down Syndrome Congress in Atlanta

PGA Professionals from the Georgia PGA Section will provides lessons for attendees from some 1,600 participating families.

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. – The PGA of America will host a Play Golf America Day event, July 22, as part of the National Down Syndrome Congress, July 21-23, in Atlanta, Ga. The Play Golf America Day event will feature Georgia PGA Section Professionals providing lessons for attendees from some 1,600 participating families.

PGA Professionals participating in the National Down Syndrome Congress represent the Association's ongoing mission to support new disabled organizations in golf.

"The PGA of America is excited about this opportunity to reach out to new populations of the disabled and present a Play Golf America Day to encourage enjoyment of the game of golf," said PGA of America President Roger Warren. "PGA Professionals have traditionally been at the forefront of coaching, training and nurturing a love for the game, and this is another example of an extension of our members' expertise."

During the Congress, Philadelphia PGA Section President Dick Smith Jr. will unveil a pilot program, "Golf For Life," which was developed out of his three-year association with The Variety Club's Buddy Program.

The pilot program, presented before the National Congress' Self-Advocacy Program, evolved from the teamwork between Smith, the PGA head professional at Woodcrest Country Club in Cherry Hill, N.J., and Brad Hennefer, 17, of Cherry Hill, who has Down Syndrome.

Smith, who had never worked with individuals with Down Syndrome, met Hennefer in the summer of 2003 through The Variety Club's Buddy Program. It was not long before Smith's teamwork with Hennefer developed to enable Brad to be able to play 18 holes on his own. Hennefer is now participating on his high school golf team.

Hennefer had begun playing golf at age 3 with his brother, Bob, now a 22-year-old PGA apprentice professional at Woodcrest Country Club. Brad, who is left-handed, learned the golf swing by mirroring his brother, who is right-handed.

At age 12, Brad competed and won a gold medal as the youngest competitor in his first Special Olympics Golf Tournament in New Jersey. His brother served as his partner and coach, and will assist Brad in his presentation at the National Congress.

"The wonderful thing is that Brad will be on the stage making the presentation, and assisted by his brother," said Smith. "Brad appeared a year ago in Anaheim (Calif.), and was asked to return this year.

"Together with his family, we worked on a presentation and we now have a pilot program. It's great to say that Golf For Life has now exploded into a full-fledged Play Golf America Day. We know this is just the first step, but it is great to be making it with Brad. There was a void in assisting people with Down Syndrome in enjoying golf, and our mission is to fill that void."

Celebrating its 90th anniversary, The PGA of America was founded in 1916, and is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the game of golf while continuing to enhance the standards of the profession. The Association is comprised of more than 28,000 men and women PGA Professionals who are dedicated to growing participation in the game of golf.