A positive impact on the game of golf

ASGCA Foundation President Clyde Johnston explains how the non-profit organization is supporting facilities and enabling a better golfer experience.

Since its establishment in 1973, the ASGCA Foundation has worked to support the game of golf. We spoke to its current president, ASGCA Past President Clyde Johnston, ASGCA, about the Foundation’s efforts to make golf more accessible, enjoyable and sustainable.

Could you explain the purpose of the ASGCA Foundation?
As a non-profit organization, the ASGCA Foundation helps fund important research on golf course design as it relates to the game of golf, the enjoyment of golf, new technologies and golf’s relationship to the environment. The information and insight collected by the Foundation is shared with those committed to designating green space for recreational purposes, helping them develop a better understanding of how golf course architecture can increase player enjoyment and benefit the environment.

The Foundation also supports the game of golf, funding and administering programs to help the game flourish and grow. We run initiatives aimed at getting more people involved in the sport and provide college scholarships to deserving high school students.

How did the Foundation’s support for the Longleaf Tee Initiative come about?
The Longleaf Tee Initiative was the brainchild of the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation, and was created to help grow the game through the use of additional tees. The first implementation took place at Longleaf Golf & Family Club in North Carolina based on design work from Bill Bergin, ASGCA.

When I first heard this notion, I admit to having a few doubts as to how possible this would be. But any skepticism was quickly quashed once I spoke with U.S. Kids Golf President Dan Van Horn. They really helped open my eyes to what the system can offer to golfers of all ages and abilities. Once I realized how beneficial the system could be to the game, it made perfect sense for the ASGCA Foundation to provide support. We need to embrace opportunities like this to make a positive difference to the health of the game.

How does the Longleaf project meet the mission and vision of the Foundation?
The Longleaf Tee System is for golfers of any age, gender and golfing ability, and therefore offers an opportunity to make the game more fun, encourage new golfers to take up the game and retain golfers in the sport. The system will also be good for new and existing golf courses as it expands their ability to appeal to a wider range of golf skills.

The ASGCA Foundation is committed to showing courses how they and their golfers may benefit by adopting the concepts developed through the Longleaf Tee System.
Ultimately, we are looking to provide more clubs with the opportunity to make golf more accessible to people of all ages, gender and ability.

**What other projects and initiatives are currently in progress?**

We are currently working with the United States Golf Association (USGA) on the Site Evaluation program which launched in 2015. The program involves grants to golf courses for a golf course architect and an agronomist from the USGA Green Section to visit their facility. We’re bringing our combined expertise to qualified facilities, outlining opportunities for improvement in areas such as course design, agronomics, environmental stewardship and operations. The aim is to help courses bring their own ideas to life and find new ways of enhancing the overall golfer experience, provide a more welcoming setting for newcomers, while achieving measurable goals such as lowering costs and making better use of existing resources. We’re really proud of what we’ve achieved through the program so far. It’s so rewarding having such a positive impact on the facilities we support.

We also partner with organizations like local chapters of The First Tee to provide college scholarships to high school students. Successful candidates receive grants to help them with their studies and are invited to attend the ASGCA Annual Meeting to meet our members and spend time in our education sessions. It’s a great opportunity for them to meet with the leaders of today and learn more about our industry. We are also in the planning stages of an internship program too, aimed at supporting up-and-coming design students.

**What does the future hold for the ASGCA Foundation?**

We’re very focused on the future of golf and are constantly looking for ways we can positively impact the game of golf and the profession of golf course architecture. We have recently increased our fund raising goals to enable us to perform more research and provide more and better educational publications to the golf industry. Our supporting partners are a big part of our success in getting people to see the true values golf and golf courses bring to our quality of life.