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First Coast's Many Charity Golf Tournaments Important to Businesses and Nonprofits Alike

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Northeast Florida – home to the PGA Tour, THE PLAYERS Championship and The World Golf Hall of Fame – is known by many as the center of the golfing world. Related, but perhaps less well known, is the First Coast's position as a virtual mecca for charity golf tournaments.

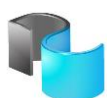
Indeed, while THE PLAYERS Championship raises millions each year for area nonprofits, even more is raised locally through more than 50 annual charity golf events. It's a growing business that organizers and participants say is as good for those who participate as for the charities that benefit.

"It's a big, big deal for our company every year," said Mike Locher, CEO of Enterprise Integration, a Jacksonville-based integrated technology company that's consistently sponsored the Daniel Kids Charity Golf Tournament since its inception 15 years ago. "Our participation shows our customers and employees the value we place on contributing to our community, while the event itself provides us with an enjoyable way to spend time with our valued clients."

Charity golf tournaments like Daniel's have become a rite of the spring season for golfers, the volunteers who organize the events and the sponsors that help underwrite them.

About 143,000 charity golf tournaments each year in America raise more than \$3.9 billion for charity, according to the most recent [survey by the National Golf Foundation](#). Increasingly, however, golf tournaments are also a way for charities to meet new donors and market their message.

"I can't tell you how many people I've introduced over the years to Daniel Kids and our mission of helping at-risk kids through our golf tournament," said Jim Clark, CEO and president of Daniel Kids. "So many of our supporters, who might never consider attending another type of charity fundraising event, are willing to spend money and time on a golf course to help a great cause."



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“Some of our first donations were through the Daniel Kids’ golf tournament,” Locher said. “But our relationship grew from there – we ended up making financial donations outside the tournament, providing in-kind donations of technology and getting our employees involved in holiday gift drives for the kids,” said Locher.

Golf tournaments are increasingly important for the charities that depend on them for fundraising and public outreach, World Golf Foundation Executive Director Steve Mona told the New York Times last year. “Among the charities we surveyed, 60 percent said the tournaments they run were extremely or very important to their success,” Mona said.

Almost half of the 25 million golfers in America play in at least one charity golf tournament each year, according to the World Golf Foundation. And golfers as a whole are affluent and older, which makes them an attractive group for nonprofits soliciting donors and volunteer leaders.

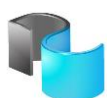
While the Great Recession took a terrible toll on many sources of funding for local nonprofits, golf has proven particularly resilient on the First Coast.

The latest annual report from The National Golf Federation, which tracks trends in the sport, showed the number of 18-hole courses dropped from 2013 to 2014. The federation found that there were 14,437 courses left open in 2014; that’s down by 128 from 14,565 in 2013. The number of golf facilities — meaning courses, driving ranges and training centers — also dropped from 15,516 in 2013 to 15,372 in 2014.

Golf on the First Coast has not seen those impacts. There are currently 68 courses running from Nassau County to Flagler County. The highest count of courses on the First Coast was in the ’90s, when the figure reached 72, according to David Reese, president of Florida’s First Coast of Golf Inc., a nonprofit group that helps market the area’s links and golf facilities to golf tourists.

That resilience has been very important to local nonprofits like Daniel that depend on revenue from annual golf tournaments.

Established in 1884, Daniel Kids is Florida’s oldest child-service agency. It assists an average of 2,000 children and families each day through a diverse range of innovative and nationally recognized programs. Daniel Kids offers abused and emotionally troubled children refuge and counseling, connects kids with foster and adoptive homes,



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helps homeless teenagers find housing and jobs and more. It also assists other nonprofit agencies throughout the United States and Canada through training materials and conferences. For more information, visit DanielKids.org.

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