

County to pilot caddie program this summer

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Second attempt

A program that aims to teach local youths to be caddies will be introduced at a Kenosha County golf course this summer.

The Caddie and Leadership Academy of Southeast Wisconsin, which is modeled after an elite PGA program, will begin in June at Petrifying Springs Park Golf Course, according to Dan Drier, general manager of golf operations for the county.

"The program is unique because it's the first public golf course in the nation to host something like this," he said. "It's very exciting for me, too."

Drier said the program is training 20 youths ages 13-15 to caddie for local golfers four to five times a week, with three to four "loops," or circuits around the course, each time they work.

The academy is partnering with the Boys & Girls Club of Kenosha on the program.

"This program, I think, is really a great opportunity not only for our golfers to experience golf with a caddie, because usually, you have to be a tournament player" to have a certified caddie, he said. "It's also great for the kids, because usually you have to be in a private country club with that player to have an opportunity to caddie."

Marcus Gallo, a golf coach with the Kenosha Unified School District, will be supervising the training, Drier said.

Last year, the program temporarily landed in a bunker as it initially was to have been established at the city's municipal golf course at Washington Park. In fact, the day the program was to start, youths had showed up ready to train but were turned away.

City officials cited legal issues with paying the youth caddies when it halted the program last summer. According to statute, the city was expected to employ the caddies. However, their wages were to be donated by sponsors and distributed by Manpower Services to administer the payroll.

State labor standards officials, however, had said a memorandum arrangement could have been made between Manpower and the city to guarantee that the caddies be paid.

"We have worked out any issues through our corporation counsel and with Manpower in order to guarantee they're getting their fees and the kids are paid, and now we're able to continue it," Drier said.

Drier said the program is designed to groom caddies so they can advance to private courses such as The Club at Strawberry Creek and the Kenosha Country Club.

"This is an initiative to help the youth of America and help grow the game of golf. It's definitely something we feel these kids will get a positive experience from," he said. "It's not that this is the end all, but a starter step for them to continue on from there."

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