

McCleery Golf Course's Inner City Youth Program in its 15th year.

Muncie Booth has been the Head Golf Professional at Langara Golf Course since 1991 and McCleery Golf Course since 1998. He started the Inner City Youth golf program in 1999 to bring golf to children of the downtown Eastside. The program, which runs in August, will celebrate its 15th season in 2013. To get started in 1999 Muncie recruited the assistance of three Community Centers in the downtown Eastside area - Strathcona, Thunderbird, and Ray-Cam.



The first year had its challenges, namely raising the \$7,000 needed for buses and drivers, PGA of Canada Professionals, hot meals, snacks and refreshments, printed materials, prizes, gifts and trophies. And this was all for only one week of camp. The main source of funding at that time came from private individuals, the Men's and Ladies' Club members of both the McCleery and Langara Golf Courses, and a couple of small corporate donations. The popularity of the program grew very quickly, and over the next 14 years, Muncie was able to double the enrollment and hold the program over two separate weeks to allow more kids to participate. With this growth, came increased expenses and the annual budget grew to about \$12,000.

The program provides both short-term and long-term benefits for the children that participate. The participants are selected by the participating Community Centers from various other programs they run. The golf experience is a reward and then teaches a new skill while at the same time encouraging other qualities that the game of golf celebrates - etiquette and respect, rules and self policing, sportsmanship and getting along with others. The one week exposure gets those who have special skills off on the right track. Last year's program even became long-term for one female participant when one of the instructors from the McCleery Golf Academy offered her a space in an ongoing junior group program at no cost. The student's nice swing and good attitude were recognized and the instructor has worked with the girl's parents to get some equipment at a reasonable cost. The benefits of the Inner City Youth program will continue with longer term guidance and a goal to join a school golf team.



Every year the Inner City Youth program is faced with a new set of challenges. “We have been able to meet these thus far and move forward, with the goal of providing disadvantaged children with the opportunity to learn to play this wonderful game of golf, and at the same time give them a chance to have a very positive life experience. This is more than a typical golf camp for kids. Our aim is to make a difference in a kid’s life, even if it is for only one week each year. That will always be our main focus.” said Muncie. “It is pretty obvious that this is a labour of love for me, and I derive a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment from being involved.”

In 2013, the program will take place the first two weeks of August and will include 40 children each week giving a total of 80 kids exposure to the game of golf and a positive life experience.



The program is always in a fundraising stage in order to meet the annual \$12,000 budget and is now able to provide an **official tax receipt** to any individual who wishes to contribute. There are no administrative costs to the program, as Muncie donates his time. That means that 100% of monies raised go directly to covering the operational costs of the program. We would like to acknowledge Mr. Fred Clarke, who has been our main sponsor since day one. Also, for 2013 we have added some other prominent local contributors, such as Ian Mansfield, former President of Telus and former Commissioner of the Canadian Tour, Mr. Jim Young, President of Woodtone industries, Mr. Ted Bowers, owner of Bowers Medical Supplies, Mr. Ray Stewart, former PGA Tour player and owner of Stewart Medical Equipment, Mr. Dan Cooper, of Oakcreek Equipment, and Mr. Brad Sakich of KPMG.

This year we would like to take the program to the next level, which is to have enough funding in place so that we can have some individuals from the camps continue into our full-time lesson programs.

Anyone interested in helping Muncie and the Inner City Youth Golf program can please contact Muncie Booth directly at 604-308-1317, or by email at munciebooth@shaw.ca.