

Dayton

## Students learning through golf

### Thanks to The First Tee and Brian Hafer foundations.

By Virginia Buirroughs

Contributing Writer

On Oct. 4, Dayton Public Schools received a check for \$9,750 from the Brian Hafer Foundation to add three more schools — Cleveland, Edwin Joel Brown, and Westwood PreK-8 — to The First Tee's school golf program, which introduces students to golf.

With this most recent gift, these three schools will join four other Dayton schools — Eastmont, Lousie Troy, Ruskin, and Wright Brothers PreK-8 — which have already integrated golf into their physical education programs. The First Tee of Greater Miami Valley, which also funds programs in Butler and Warren counties, has committed to fund its program in all 22 Dayton PreK-8 schools by 2017.

"I was skeptical about the program at first, worried about safety and afraid the kids would hit each other with the clubs," said Doug Wiggins, physical education teacher at Eastmont PreK-8, the first Dayton school to introduce the program.

"But it's been great, and is something brand-new for the teachers and the kids. A lot of our kids have never even played Putt-Putt, and they love it. We gave them a test this year to see how much they remembered from last year, and they did great."

Eastmont was the first Dayton school to receive equipment, training, and curriculum for The First Tee, a national program with local chapters. Brian Parkhurst, a PGA golf pro and member of the Southern Ohio PGA, is executive director of The First Tee of Greater Miami Valley and chair of the golf in the schools task force for Southern Ohio.

"Dayton is our chapter's largest program partner. We've been working with the athletic director of DPS, trying to make golf a competitive sport for its schools," he said. "All kindergarten through fifth graders will get access to the game of golf, which serves as a platform for education and core values of integrity, respect and perseverance, which are integrated into the golf lessons."

Parkhurst has also partnered with the city's Recreation and Youth Services to develop a summer program for older students. "After fifth grade, students have the opportunity to continue The First Tee program through the city's golf courses — Kittyhawk, Madden, and Community. The junior golf program provides 300 summer scholarships.

"We're providing access to those who might not otherwise have the opportunity to play golf."

The Brian Hafer Foundation, an Ohio nonprofit, is The First Tee of Greater Miami Valley's largest program partner, and has already given \$75,000 for the Dayton golf programs.