

Goofy golf event sends players out in rain

How to help

To sponsor a golfer, go to www.salemlf.org or call (503) 315-8924.

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Who says golf is a sport for mild, dry weather? The Salem Leadership Foundation doesn't.

On Monday, about 30 volunteers will golf 18 holes to raise money for the foundation's work. The faith-based organization mobilizes churches and neighborhoods to improve their community.

Think they won't do it? How much would you pay to see your friend golf in the rain, wind and sleet?

Basically, that's the idea behind the RainFest Golf Challenge.

"It's just goofy enough to match our personality that we'd have a golf event in February," executive director Sam Skillern said.

Of course, fundraising is serious — not goofy — business for nonprofits.

The Salem Leadership Foundation has had to get creative the past couple years to raise revenue and cut costs.

Historically, the organization has had two big fundraisers: the spring Fancy Dessert and a year-end campaign.

With those two peaks in the year, Skillern says, come two valleys in funding. In tough years, those dips can feel extra tough.

So this year, the foundation decided to do a third event during one of those two valleys — February-March and August-September.

Thus, a golf event during Oregon's rainy season.

"Why not?" Skillern said.

So here's the deal: About 30 players have committed to play 18 holes at Salem Golf Club on Monday morning.

They have each contributed \$100 then appealed to their friends and family to help them raise at least \$1,000.

The total goal is to raise \$50,000 for the foundation.

Those who aren't up to the challenge to golf in Oregon's beautiful February conditions are free to show their support by pledging money or sponsoring a player.

I should note here that this golf event isn't the traditional tournament with a banquet, fancy auction items and big banners.

The golfers Monday will be fed barbecue. It's the organization's style to keep it simple, Skillern says.

In 2010, Salem Leadership Foundation responded to tough times by putting on a second Fancy Dessert event in the fall.

Last summer the entire staff took a monthlong furlough in August.

Its annual budget is about \$550,000, Skillern said.

The thing about this organization is that because of their mission to support and collaborate with other nonprofits, it feels a responsibility not to schedule a fundraiser that conflicts with another.

That's why it won't add to the list of the area golf tournaments during the lovely summer months.

Skillern's exact words: "We wouldn't even consider that."

He and his team are so committed to this that they have a master calendar of all the nonprofit events.

One year, Salem Leadership Foundation rescheduled Fancy Dessert after a month of publicizing to avoid forcing patrons to choose between another event.

For three years between 1999 and 2001, the foundation raised its budget without any events. But the events returned in 2002 at the request of people who wanted to celebrate and hear the foundation's success stories.

As of Saturday night, the National Weather Service predicted golfers would face a chilly day on Monday — but the chance of rain was only 10 percent. That's fortunate, given that rain is very likely today and Tuesday.

So call them crazy, eccentric, unusual or lucky. Skillern already beat you to it.

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