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# Clinic at Fieldstone GC introduces golf to youngsters with bleeding disorders



BY TONY REGINA

**A** longstanding cliché tells us that golf is the game of a lifetime. For those with hemophilia and other bleeding disorders, it can be a sports' lifeline.

The Brandywine Valley Hemophilia Foundation imparted that message throughout a three-day golf camp conducted in August at Fieldstone Golf Club. Open to those 18 years of age and younger, it provided participants with five, size-fitted clubs, a golf bag and instruction on mechanics and etiquette.

"I was talking with one of the board members in the winter time, and she asked me if there are any golf opportunities for children with bleeding disorders," Michael Gowen, a founding member of Fieldstone who sits on the foundation's board, said. "I got to thinking: there's probably an opportunity for us to do something here at Fieldstone. So I approached [Director of Golf Jim Larkin] and they welcomed us with open arms."

"The membership here at Fieldstone has been tremendously supportive of many charities throughout the years," Larkin added. "We thought it would be special to get the kids out on the golf course. It's very rewarding to expose

them to golf." John Rudolph, head professional at Fieldstone, spearheaded the camp effort as well.

The Brandywine Valley Hemophilia Foundation, a volunteer-led organization founded in 1972, offers services, events and programs that advocate, educate and support all members of the bleeding disorder community. Christine, whose last name is being omitted for personal reasons, has been involved with the foundation for 13 years. Her children — Alex, 13, and Courtney, 11 — were diagnosed with von Willibrand Disease, a bleeding disorder that affects 1 out of every 100 individuals, according to the foundation.

"It's been overwhelming — the resources that they provide to families and their children, from the educational presentations on how to manage your hemophilia and the activities they have to meet other individuals who are affected by hemophilia," Christine, 46, of Lansdale, Pa., said. "It's been good for bonding."

Christine's family, like most, attended the foundation's camp at Fieldstone to learn a sport that's safe for those with hemophilia. Kim, a BVHF board member, believes golf is one that can resonate with her son Cole, 10.

"I welcome the opportunity to expose Cole to different types of sports that aren't likely to trigger bleeds like football or lacrosse, that



won't stress his joints," Kim, 47, of Landenberg, Pa., said. "I like to get him involved in this early because I hope it can be a lifelong sport for him. I thought it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to offer kids the exposure to golf, especially starting out when they're young. It's something they can continue to grow from."

Kevin, 14, of Elkton, Md., and Luke, 17, of Newark, Del., met and became good friends through the foundation. Both gave golf a try at Fieldstone.

"The pros taught me a lot about putting and having better form," Kevin said. "Having hemophilia has kind of been a setback in a lot of ways. You can't really play certain sports or do certain things without making sure you're safe. Golf is a non-contact sport. It's a lot easier on your joints." ○