



PGA

Northern California Section

NCPGA Best Practice: Teaching

Offering golfers free lessons in exchange for supporting a can food drive during PGA Free Lesson Month



John Snopkowski is the PGA Head Golf Professional at Santa Teresa Golf Club in San Jose, Calif.

John Snopkowski on the importance of giving back to the community:

At the Santa Teresa Golf Club, we not only wanted to give back to the community by taking part in the PlayGolfAmerica program “Free Lesson Month,” we wanted to take it a step further and tie it to a can food drive to help local charities. Free Lesson Month, which takes place in May, encourages golfers who are new to the game and those who have not played in a while to take advantage of a free lesson to learn an introductory skill or to work on a past weakness. Because of the down economy and my affiliation with the church, I knew that the food banks were suffering more than usual.

I decided to promote Free Lesson Month by encouraging people to donate canned food in exchange for a free golf lesson. The campaign was called, “Golf is like a Can of Corn.” This was coined after the familiar baseball expression “can of corn” when someone easily catches a fly ball. I wanted to convey the message that learning golf was easy.

I created flyers and posted them around the complex in the golf shop, near the ball machines and at the learning center. We started the promotion in April, approximately two-three weeks prior to the start of Free Lesson Month. There was no minimum donation – and some people who did not bring a can of food offered a small cash donation.

At the end of the campaign, I was able to donate two large ice chests full of canned food to my church for the food banks. I also received \$30 in cash donations, which I gave to a homeless woman I met when I was on the way to work early the next day.

John Snopkowski on the business impact of Free Lesson Month:

Participating in Free Lesson Month was a terrific public relations campaign. It created a business enhancement for the driving range and generated some recurring business for me as a golf instructor. Over a seven-hour period, I was able to provide individual and small group lessons to approximately 35 people. Some lessons were only 10-15 minutes to help someone hone a skill. People were generous and donated between 1 to 10 cans of food each.

It was a positive experience and one that I look forward to managing again this year. In fact, I have new ideas on how to implement it differently to make it even more impactful.

Rather than teaching all seven hours of free lessons in one day, I plan to have 10-minute free lessons over the course of the five Saturdays in May – breaking it up into two hour increments of total teaching time. This will allow me to offer more free lessons and reach many new golfers.

This year, I have selected the “Bread of Life Ministry” food bank in Gilroy as the charity to benefit.

Overall, it is a wonderful experience that I encourage all golf facilities to undertake. While it is great to align it with Free Lesson Month, I think it is always a good time to give back to the community, so really this program can be done during any month. It helps us show that golf professionals are leaders and role models, who are interested in giving back to the community.