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Rotary Club sees success in 2021 golf tournament

By Lance Lawton

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VALLEY — The weather was perfect early last week for the Western Douglas County Rotary Club Scholarship Golf Tournament.

On Monday, July 19, the Rotary Club hosted its annual golf tournament at The Pines Country Club in Valley. All proceeds from the tournament went towards the Rotary's scholarship program, which awards a \$1,500 scholarship to one lucky senior from Elkhorn, Elkhorn South and DC West, along with Elkhorn North.

According to Mike Ough, organizer of the golf tournament for the Rotary, the club has been holding its scholarship golf tournament for over two decades.

"The pressure was on last year," he said, "on if we were going to continue this event. With the addition of Elkhorn North's first senior class for 2022, we needed to figure out how to expand our efforts to now provide a scholarship for four schools. But, with the continued support we receive, we're on our way to awarding these scholarships for years to come."

Last year's scholarship tournament brought in 13 teams. Last week's event saw numbers rise to 18 teams, equaling 72 golfers total.

With 26 individual and corporate sponsors, and plenty of help from Rotary members and The Pines staff, Ough said he is grateful to have such support and connections to help bring the tournament back every year.

"Everything has led to the fact that we will be meeting this year's goal," Ough said. "We wanted about \$6,000, and I believe we should be clearing \$7,000 from this



Lance Lawton, Douglas County Post-Gazette
Gabe Hansen (right) and a couple of golfers watch as Hansen's ball approaches the hole on a putt during the Western Douglas County Rotary's Scholarship Golf Tournament on July 19 at The Pines Country Club in Valley.

outing. It's just fantastic to see. The Pines staff has always been great to work with, the course is always in good shape and the weather is always beautiful. It all just comes together so well."

Jon Richards, an Omahan golfer who participated in the scholarship tournament, said the event is a perfect opportunity for everyone involved.

"It's a heck of a lot better than being at work," Richards laughed. "Being able to give people what they don't have is very important to me, so it's awesome to be out here. Seniors need everything they can get, especially when preparing for college and the real world, and sometimes they don't understand how expensive things can be. So, it's great for these guys to have this tournament.

"There's a lot of people here supporting our local seniors, so it's awesome to see people take time out of their day to come out, play some rounds and raise money."

Ough said rather than just pulling out money for the scholarships, the golf tournament idea was an easier and more fun way of raising money.

"My team consists of my son-in-laws and a grandson, who I don't really get to golf with," he said. "I know Tod Ringenberg has family on his team, too, which is the case for many of the golfers here. With a low entry fee and nice weather, it's a great time for friends and family. We do have some prizes available throughout the day, but it really is more about having fun. People just want to enjoy themselves with some golf."

Ringenberg, president of the Western Douglas County Rotary Club, said with all components combined, this year was the most successful golf outing to date.

"The Rotary has been hosting this fundraising event for over 25 years," Ringenberg said. "We had teams of various Rotarians and guests, including the District Governor and Assistant Governor of Rotary District 5650 (eastern Nebraska and western Iowa). In addition to the \$6,000 in annual scholarships, the Rotary provides financial and volunteer support to COPE (Christian Outreach Program of Elkhorn), DC West's monthly Food Drives and the Salvation Army's holiday bell-ringing. Through COPE, we continue to provide on-going aid to victims of the 2019 floods.

"Our golf outing is our primary means of funding all of these efforts. Community support has been instrumental to the success of all of our activities."

With another year down, Ough said it's always a delight to raise money to help support seniors at the local high schools.

"My background includes 40 years in education, so being able to organize this event to help students is awesome," he said. "To have money to give to students who work hard, keep their GPAs high and may even work a job or two on the weekends is an incredible feeling. We want to see kids like that, who want to move to the next level, whether it's attending college or trade school, or wanting to become a nurse, a teacher or anything else.

"It just feels good to know we're giving them a little extra incentive to just keep going."