

BEYOND THE TREE



First Tee Gulf Coast Newsletter



FALL 2026

Marty Stanovich - Executive Director

A few years ago at a Symposium I was listening to a award-winning author and Orange Beach resident Andy Andrews speak...his presentation—wonderful and compelling with a number of very quotable moments—includes one statement that put the hook in me: “It’s easy to raise great kids... The challenge is to raise great adults.” And at that very moment, I came to understand why I so love what I do—and what makes our mission at The First Tee so different from any other sports program...and ultimately so impactful and relevant.

I had the honor in the late 1990s and early 2000s to serve as chairman of the board of this organization, later being honored by being named an honorary board member...before I ever thought about running this organization – – and I think the many friendships that I built that existed solely because of the game of golf. And i think back to a young couple by the name of Alan and London Bounds – – who I knew through work at a time when they were married but no kids – – and another couple who had not yet met – – Derek Vernier who I met through a mutual friend who was his neighbor and his future wife, then Shea Scapin, who I had the honor of teaching as one of my students at Pensacola State (then Junior) College.

Then what seems like the blink of an eye, they are parents, then they have growing children who they honor us by placing in our programs and then they find success, both athletically and academically and then before you know it –



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Marty Stanovich ...continued

...you get a phone call and you sign their college scholarships.

You see them surrounded by family and close friends and coaches and mentors and so many people who pour their hearts into making their lives better...

And then you know your life is full because you can see the greater good being realized... Not just in a moment—but over generations.

So last month when Abby Vernier and Riley Bounds respectively received our Joe and Tracey Durant & Dr. Jim Pewitt Memorial Scholarships, it brings the answers full circle — why we organize our programs, why we raise the money to fund them, and then why we offer college scholarships as an extra opportunity to help our participants cross the next set of steps and challenges.

So in reality I guess I have long known that we are in the business of raising good adults—young people who are armed with both the skills and the values to hopefully find success on whatever path they choose in this life. And it is a process that is still fun to watch.



Meet Our New Tournament Director - Nicholas Dimitroff

This was my first summer serving as Tournament Director for First Tee Gulf Coast, and taking on the role has been a unique and rewarding experience for me. I grew up as a local First Tee participant, attending classes at Osceola and participating in every tournament opportunity there was. As a junior golfer, I wasn't thinking about tee sheets, scorecards, course setup, registration, weather, or any of the other things happening behind the scenes. I just got to show up and play. For much of the past five years, I have been involved with event setup and tournament operations while finishing my education, but had no major role until this May.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity this summer to experience the other side of the events and be able to provide participants with the same opportunities that I now cherish so much.

Golf, specifically through First Tee, has given me some unbelievable experiences throughout my life. I am both a former Summer Tour and Divot Derby Champion. In 2017, I was able to attend two First Tee Participant Opportunities—the Perfect Sense Unified Challenge at TPC Potomac and the PURE Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach—due to my participation and dedication to First Tee. I am still in contact with PGA TOUR members, PGA TOUR Champions members, and First Tee participants from across the country whom I met at these two events. I later went on to play collegiate golf at Coastal Alabama and the University of West Florida, where I was fortunate enough to be a part of the 2025 Division II National Championship Team. Looking back now, it is hard to separate my journey in golf from First Tee and the opportunities, relationships, and experiences the program gave me along the way.



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What I've enjoyed most about this summer, though, is seeing our participants have many of the same experiences I had and knowing I played a role in providing them. I see the kids make new friends, learn the game and get better, and develop the ability to handle the adversity of competitive golf, but more importantly, become better citizens.

The Life Skills woven into the First Tee curriculum are evident in these juniors with the respect and maturity they show on the golf course, and that brings me a great sense of pride.

All of these experiences through First Tee are some of my most cherished, and now, I get to help create those same experiences for the next generation of Game Changers. That's been the most rewarding part of my time as Tournament Director—and something I'm looking forward to continuing in the future.



Save the
Date

2027 Golf Ball Gala
Friday, April 9

at



SCENIC HILLS
GOLF RESTAURANT & EVENTS
EST 1958

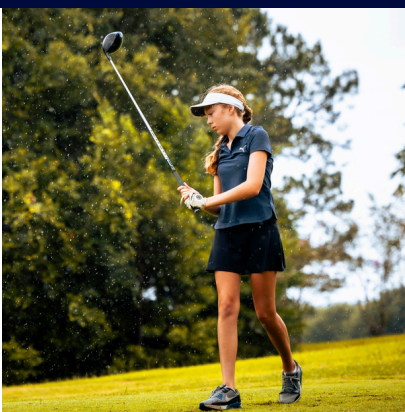
A FEW WORDS FROM OUR CHIEF OF STAFF

Sarah Dimitroff

At First Tee Gulf Coast, a large part of our commitment to the community is ensuring that every child has the opportunity to participate in First Tee Gulf Coast programming, regardless of their ability to pay. This means not just keeping the cost of programs low for working families, but often times providing scholarships to children in need and helping to furnish them with the equipment they need not just to participate—but to thrive.

We are able to keep these commitments through the generosity of our community—through equipment donations, sponsorships, and LOTS of fundraising! There are so many ways you can help support our mission, including joining our Booster Club or Champions Club, participating in (or fundraising for) our 100 Holes of Golf Marathon, and attending our events and fundraisers throughout the year. We host several fun and unique events to help offset the cost of scholarships, including the Downtown Trolley Tapas Tours, Bubba Watson Mini-Golf Championship, Pensacola Mayor's Cup, and our largest event, the Golf Ball Gala.

There are so many ways to get involved and help us make a difference in the lives of local youth...if you need more information, one of our team members can absolutely help! Be sure to and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to learn more about upcoming events, sponsorship opportunities, and registrations---which are all on our website as well!



Stay Involved and Discover Where First Tee Can Take You

LUTICIA BOOZER - LPGA

First Tee is about much more than learning the game of golf. It helps young people build confidence, develop leadership skills, make meaningful connections, and prepare for opportunities that can have a lasting impact on their future. However, many of these opportunities are available specifically to teens who remain active participants in First Tee programming.

Serving as a volunteer junior coach and playing on the GPJGA Summer Tour are both wonderful ways to stay connected, but they do not replace participating in First Tee classes and programs. Consistent involvement gives teens the chance to continue developing the life skills, leadership experience, and relationships that help them stand out when applying for scholarships and national opportunities.

First Tee Gulf Coast participants may be eligible for several local scholarships, including:

- The Joe and Tracey Durant GPJGA Scholarship
- The Theresa Stanovich Memorial Scholarship
- The Dr. James Pewitt Memorial Scholarship
- The William and Chizu Hansche Memorial Scholarship



Active participants may also have the opportunity to apply for national programs such as the First Tee College Scholarship Program and the First Tee Innovators Forum. These programs can provide financial support, mentorship, leadership development, and the chance to connect with other outstanding First Tee participants from across the country.

As our participants get older and their schedules become busier, we hope they will continue making First Tee a priority. The time they invest now can open doors they may not even realize are available. We encourage our teens to stay involved, continue growing, and take advantage of everything First Tee has to offer!



PURSuing ACE

Brad Cooney, Program Director, Operations

First Tee Families,
As a coach with First Tee, one of the greatest rewards is watching our young people grow into confident, capable leaders both on and off the golf course. While our weekly classes focus on building fundamental golf skills and our key commitments, I want to make sure you're aware of the next major steps available to your participants as they enter their teenage years: the Ace Program and National Opportunities.



Ace is the pinnacle of First Tee programming, specifically designed for high school teens (ages 14+) who are ready to prepare for college, careers, and life after high school. Rather than traditional classroom instruction, Ace guides participants through four hands-on projects that yield real-world results:

- Self-Discovery & Reflection: Teens explore who they are, evaluate their core personal values, and assess how they apply life skills like goal-setting and emotional management.
- Education & Career Exploration: Participants research potential career fields, investigate colleges or vocational paths, craft a standout resume, and build concrete action plans.
- Community Investment: Teens design and execute a service project, putting their leadership into action to make a tangible, positive impact in their local community.
- Golf & Life Integration: Participants apply advanced golf skills alongside character-building strategies, seeing how perseverance and discipline transfer directly to their future goals.



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As an active Ace member, teens can unlock access to exclusive National Opportunities, including multi-year college scholarships, elite golf tournaments, and national leadership summits across the country. I have had the privilege to attend many of these events, including the PURE Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach, the Game Changers Academy in Minneapolis, and the National Championship at Notre Dame. Each one of these experiences has a profound impact on the participants who attend and provides them with memories that will last a lifetime.

If your teen is interested in Ace and applying for National Opportunities, we are here to guide them through every step of the process.

See you on the course,

Coach Brad



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New Faces

Laura LeNoir & Teeka Marie

Hi, I'm Laura!

Some of you may recognize me as the libation specialist from the annual Golf Ball Gala and Divot Derby Banquets. I've been helping keep everyone hydrated (and having a good time!) at First Tee events for about seven years..

This summer, I officially joined the team to help manage the social media pages for First Tee Gulf Coast and Goofy Golf. I also run the Greater Pensacola Junior Golf Association's eBay store—which is honestly my favorite job!

Every donated item that comes through our doors is cleaned, sorted, and evaluated. If we can use it here for our athletes, we do. If not, it will find a new home through our eBay store.

Each purchase from eBay helps fund scholarships, equipment, facility improvements, and other programs that support our First Tee kids.

We never sell junior, women's, or left-handed clubs—they stay here where they're needed most!

If you see me roaming around with a camera, filming social media videos, or making mocktails/ cocktails at one of First Tee Gulf Coast events, please come say hello!

And if you need affordable golf balls, bags, clubs or other golf gear, be sure to check out our eBay store. Every purchase helps support First Tee Gulf Coast.

~ Laura



THE SHOT BEHIND THE SHOT



I am Teeka, Photographer & Event Coordinator for First Tee Gulf Coast.

Several months ago, my business partner and I asked if FTGC needed any assistance at the facility for the summer, whereas our business slows down in the summer months. I am no stranger to the charity as I have been supporting First Tee for almost 20 years. I am so grateful to now be a real part of this amazing team!

Even though I knew what tremendous work FTGC did for our community, I had *no* idea just how amazing the organization was until I had on-the-course experience. The care and expertise of the coaches and staff resonates through the young athletes on the links.

There were several magical moments for me, but my favorite had to be the finale at the A Downing Gray Tournament. Not only did I get to meet a legend that day, I got to witness greatness in real time. Getting to document a putt to put the champion of the day 10 under was simply phenomenal! (see page 1)

It has truly been a pleasure watching all of the talent this summer, in all age groups, and I can't wait until next year!

~ Teeka



No image
available

She's behind the lens

ONLINE REGISTRATION
FOR FALL
IS NOW OPEN!



REGISTER ONLINE
TODAY





I'm Jerry, the Facilities Manager for Goofy Golf and First Tee Gulf Coast. If you've visited Goofy Golf, chances are we've crossed paths! One of my favorite parts of my job is helping local organizations create fun, memorable fundraising events. Over the years, groups like the Haji Shriners, Liberty Sertoma, and the Women's Council of Realtors have partnered with us to host successful putt-putt fundraisers—and we'd love to help your organization do the same. First Tee Gulf Coast reopened Goofy Golf in the Summer of 2017... that fall the women's council of realtors of the Bay Area became the very first community group to organize a mini golf tournament as a fundraiser, setting a template for a wonderful partnership between both nonprofits that endures to this day.

Whether you're planning a private event for your members or a community fundraiser open to everyone, Goofy Golf offers a unique venue that's fun for all ages while supporting a great cause. If you have an idea for a fundraiser, let's talk! I'd be happy to show you around, answer your questions, and help make your event a success.

Oh...and if you're just looking for a fun place to celebrate, we host birthday parties, too!

I look forward to seeing you on the course!

Jerry



www.firstteegulfcoast.org



First Tee Gulf Coast is deeply saddened to share news of the passing of Mrs. Gloria Brent, beloved wife of First Tee Gulf Coast Lifetime Honorary Board Member and 2017 Volunteer of the Year, William V. “Coach Billy” Brent...

“Miss Gloria” was a wonderful and generous supporter of our Chapter and our participants and a true light to this world – – a kind beautiful soul who will be missed by many.

Please visit the link below to view her obituary and to offer condolences to Coach Billy and family.



With great love,

Marty Stanovich and the board, staff and extended family of First Tee Gulf Coast

