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## Young Golfers Head To The Links

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Every Friday morning a gang of young people travel a few miles west of Dexter – armed with clubs and ready for action.

No, it's not a biker gang or an angry mob! Instead, it is a group of young people attempting to learn how to play golf.

The Hidden Trails Junior Golf program began early in June with a three-day camp, sponsored by the Bank of Advance, featuring instruction by Hidden Trails PGA Pro John Barge. The young golfers learned the fundamentals of golf – how to handle the clubs and swing, golf rules and etiquette, proper putting techniques and more. More than 50 young people participated in the summer program that will run through the end of July.

The Junior Golf Program is one of this small town's hidden treasures that tends to go unnoticed by many in the community.

As the PGA Pro at Hidden Trails Country Club, passion and love of the game are the only words to describe the dedication that John Barge has given to the Junior Golf Program the past three years. John's a forward thinker who realizes that what you teach and build today can return great rewards for both individuals and the community.

Megan Stuever, Dax Demaree, and Chance Holden assisted Barge in teaching the classes.

Barge said the biggest need for the program during the next month is for some parents of

young golfers to step forward and assist.

“We just want to have more parents involved,” Barge said. More than 50 kids on the golf course is a handful for just a few adults to handle. “We need adults to be out on the course with the golfers,” Barge added, “to help keep them safe, count strokes. It’s not daycare, but helping with the program.”

After learning the basics of the game, the program now offers the youngsters an opportunity to put those lessons to work. Each Friday morning the young golfers participate in Junior Golf at Hidden Trails.

The young golfers are divided into three groups based on age and skill level. The golfers in the oldest group – age 11 and older – play nine holes of golf. This group, Barge said, is in many ways being groomed to be a part of the DHS golf team when they reach high school.

“This is where Bearcat championship teams start,” Barge said. Barge has experience in preparing and advising high school players. He worked with a high school championship team in Illinois, and had an early hand in the development of the championship DHS players that went on to participate in state play – the Christian brothers, Gill, Williams and Jackson.

“This is the first year Bank of Advance has sponsored the Hidden Trails Junior Golf Program,” Stuever, who works at Bank of Advance said. “The Bank gave each young golfer a special t-shirt, tees and balls for their summer experience.”

Barge encourages youngsters to be tenacious and continue to work at playing and improving their golf game.

“You may go to college if you play enough,” he said. “At the very least you get a game you can play for a lifetime.”

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