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WILLIMANTIC -- The old adage 'Drive for show and putt for dough' was never used more appropriately than on Sept. 11 at the Golf Club at Windham when the St. Joseph's Polish Society of Colchester presented its 20th Annual Memorial Scholarship Golf Tournament. A field of 120 golfers toured the par-72, 6,225-yard layout from the green tees (5,211 yards from the red tees for the ladies) under sunny skies for a day featuring fun as well as respectful memories of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001.

And when the final numbers were tabulated on the scorecards as well as the balance sheets, the hard-working group of golf committee members, members of the St. Joseph's Polish Society, the golfers who competed and tournament director Joe Abbatematteo could finally take a bow in recognition for a job well done.

"We started the day by remembering 9/11, mentioning that it was exactly 20 years ago to the day, and how lucky we all were to be here enjoying such a beautiful day and event together," said Abbatematteo, who also recognized all first responders who risked their lives in New York City that day two decades ago, all first responders in general and members of the military, past and present, during his introductory comments to the golfers before they scattered to various tee boxes.

"We placed American flags on every golf cart and every tee box, we played the National Anthem and it was a great way to show our respect for the great country we live in."

And then they were off, a total of 30 4-somes testing their skills in a scramble event that included a number of 'in-tourney' prize teasers including closest to the pin on a pair of par-3s, long drive on Hole No. 8, putting contest on the 16th green, closest to the line off the first tee and a hole-in-1 prize (\$500 Chris Cote gift card) on Hole No. 3.

Hungry golfers munched on a quick snack of burgers and dogs at the turn, a palate-cleansing dessert of jello was available on the third hole and two kegs of Diet Pepsi quenched everyone's thirst on Hole No. 3 and the turn.

But the real deal that satiated everyone's appetite was the amount of money that the St. Joseph's Polish Society (over \$11,000) raised for a cause near and dear to the club's collective heart -- scholarship monies for local students eager to further their educations at colleges and universities.

Bender's Oil of Lebanon and Enterprise Builders, a general contracting firm out of Newington that employs a number of locals, provided corporate sponsorship for the event.

General manager Rachelle Campbell and director of golf Bryan Mooney from the Golf Club at Windham, along with their respective staffs, provided much-needed support before and during the event.

President Frank Zeleznicky of the St. Joseph's Polish Society and all the members of the club have been unrivaled for their contributions to the event over the years.

Local businesses, individuals and volunteers who donated their time and money helped make the annual event a success and tourney committee members Claudio Bazzano, Carl Guzzardi, Troy Malevenda, Erik Randlov, Kori Phillips, Bev Tarnowski, Art Tarnowski and Dave Hurlbut sacrificed hours of their time and provided valuable insight focused on planning and executing a successful event.

“The course was in pristine shape and we can’t thank Rachelle and Bryan enough at the Windham Club for what they’ve done for us,” said Abbatematteo. “The entire staff did a great job.

“And our corporate sponsors, all the businesses and individuals who donated, our club members and people who served on the committee all came together to make this event very successful. I can’t tell you how much we appreciate everyone and everything that made that day run so smoothly after months and months of planning and preparation.”

And because of those months of planning and preparation, a number of deserving students with dreams of extending their education beyond high school will soon benefit from the event’s success.

A scholarship questionnaire was forwarded to a number of local high schools and interested students were evaluated on criteria including financial need, scholastic record, attitude and leadership.

A short essay detailing the prospective recipient’s motivations and ambitions as well as their belief in why they are deserving of a scholarship is a requirement.

After deliberating, the golf committee’s recommendations are presented in the form of scholarships aimed at helping students defray the costs of a college or university education.

“It might be in the amount of \$500 or \$1,000, a number of scholarships in that range that might help with tuition or pay for books ... anything a deserving student needs when he or she is thinking about planning on going to school,” said Abbatematteo. “We’re just happy to do our part and help out where we can.”

Want to know the best thing about this event?

The 21st Annual Memorial Scholarship Golf Tournament presented by the St. Joseph’s Polish Society of Colchester is less than a year away. ...