



“I ♥ Golf” Program

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Sponsored by Angels for Hearts

By Patrice Wohl

For those of us who love golf, it's only natural to share that passion with our children out on the greens. Through golf, our “littles” learn etiquette and values, spend time outdoors, and connect with family and friends. For children with a congenital heart defect (CHD) who shouldn't participate in rigorous or contact sports—golf is an ideal activity.

In 2014, Sacramento-based nonprofit Angels for Hearts developed a first-of-its-kind “I ♥ Golf” program giving heart kids and their siblings the opportunity to learn and grow the game of golf.

For many children with CHD, it is the first sport they have ever played. “I ♥ Golf” is a series of golf clinics, held at Haggin Oaks Golf Complex, hosted in partnership and affiliation with the Morton Golf Foundation and The Northern California Institute of Golf—all at no cost to participating families. In fact, each golfer receives their own clubs and a collared golf shirt!

Angels for Hearts' mission is to bring normalcy to pediatric heart patients ages newborn to 18, both in and out of the hospital. The nonprofit reminds heart kids that first and foremost they are kids before being heart patients.

According to John Chin, MD, Medical Director, Advanced Heart Failure and Cardiac Transplant Program, Sutter Heart and Vascular Institute, “Golf is a fantastic game for heart

kids for multiple reasons. First, playing golf is great fun and offers a wide range of mental and physical benefits. It is a social event that allows the kids to get out and mingle. Just a good walk in the fresh air does wonders for endorphin and serotonin levels, leading to improved mood and reduced levels of stress and anxiety.”

Dr. Chin continues, “A round of golf is great for physical fitness—it isn't overly strenuous, yet exercises muscle groups of the arms, legs, back and abdomen. Walking the course and a full, 18-hole round of golf involves a walk of around 5-7 miles or more. The less energetic players can choose to ride in a golf cart and play 9-holes or just putt and chip, still expending a significant amount of energy.”

Through the generosity of local donors and volunteers, and incredible support from the Northern California community, Angels for Hearts has served 1,500 heart kids and their families over the past 11 years.

“Angels for Hearts is a program that will forever hold a special place here at Haggin Oaks,” shared Ms. Kelli Corlett, Director of Jr. and Disabled Golf at Haggin Oaks. “We love the program, what it stands for and the participants and families are the most gracious of any group we partner with. It is a true pleasure to be a part of their team.”

On behalf of Angels for Hearts, we sincerely thank Kelli Corlett for providing our golfers a wonderful learning environment, the Morton Golf Foundation and The Northern California Institute of Golf for their generous support of “I ♥ Golf.”