

For the Future

Annual Impact Report



Who We Are

We create experiences that build character.

We exist to enable kids to build the strength of character that empowers them through a lifetime of new challenges. We seamlessly integrate the game of golf with a life skills curriculum to create active learning experiences that build inner strength, self-confidence, and resilience that kids can utilize in everything they do.

First Tee's 5 Key Commitments:

- 1. Pursuing Goals
- 2. Growing through Challenges
- 3. Collaborating with Others
- 4. Building Positive Self-Identity
- 5. Using Good Judgment

A Message from our Director of Development

Dear First Tee – Greater Chicago Community,

Through our collective dedication and community support, together we continue to make strides in expanding access, creating opportunities for youth, and deepening our impact in Chicagoland. Our achievements last year reflect our commitment to making a lasting difference in the communities we serve. Some highlights include:

- Completed our \$500K Capital Campaign for The Evans Course Youth Campus (formerly Canal Shores), paving the way for the 2025 launch of our youth programs in Evanston
- Trained 80 coaches and 130 volunteers, who passionately mentored youth across 11 program sites, serving 2,500+ participants
- Introduced golf and our life skills curriculum to nearly 10,000 youth by partnering with 16+ schools (majority Title I), 20+ community outreach partners, and our registration programs
- Provided 14 teens the opportunity to attend First Tee national programs, where their immersion was focused on leadership and character building
- Raised over \$1.82 million to support and grow our mission

These milestones showcase the power of community support and the lasting impact we are making together. As we continue to grow, we remain dedicated to empowering young people through golf—equipping them with essential life skills and opening doors to future opportunities.

We are deeply grateful for your support. Together, we are helping the next generation build confidence, character, and a foundation for success.

With gratitude,



Jane Seder Conen
Director of Development & Operations
First Tee – Greater Chicago



Parent Testimonial

The Jun Family and their son, Eli, have found a home away from home in First Tee – Greater Chicago. For the past three years, Eli has thrived-building friendships, gaining essential life skills, and finding a deep passion for golf.

“To Eli, First Tee feels like a second home. He sees it as a safe, welcoming, and fun environment where he always encounters friendly faces.”

– Donna Jun
Eli’s mother



Beyond the Fairway

Our programs happen daily at 11 program locations in collaboration with dozens of schools and community partners. Participants ages 4–18 progress through the program over time, deepening their understanding of life skills and golf development.

Kids involved in our programs are more likely to be engaged in school and feel more comfortable around peers.¹



Program Snapshot



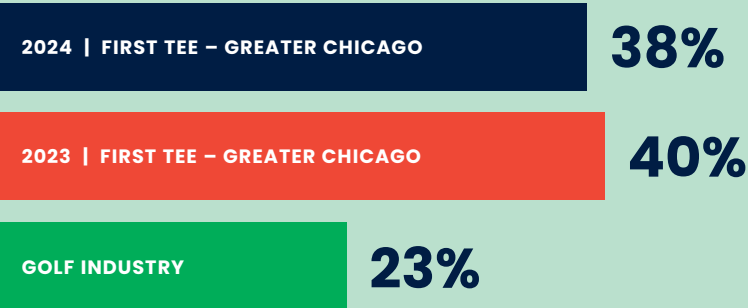
- Over 2,700 registrations in our golf camps, clinics, and character based educational programs
- An additional 400+ kids from at-risk backgrounds participated in our free Community Outreach Programs. 99% of kids engaged through our Community Outreach programs come from Chicago’s most under served communities
- Continued to grow our Junior Golf Program with 37 junior coaches, many who are former participants in our programs
- Expanded our School Program by partnering with about 20 underserved Chicago schools to deliver golf and character education directly during the school day

¹ <https://firsttee.org/impact/>

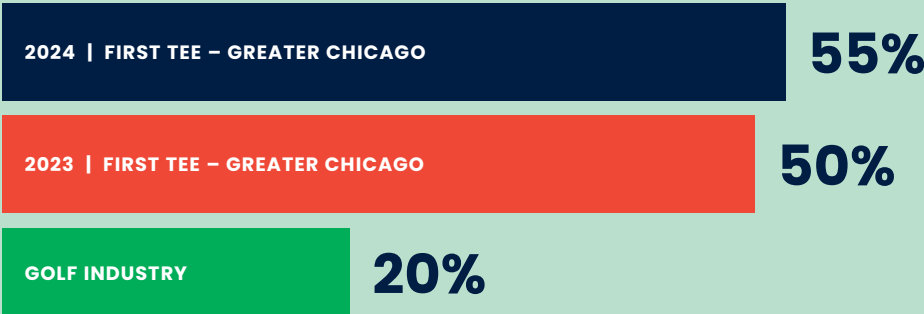
Our 2024 Impact



Female Registrations



Underrepresented Minority Registrations



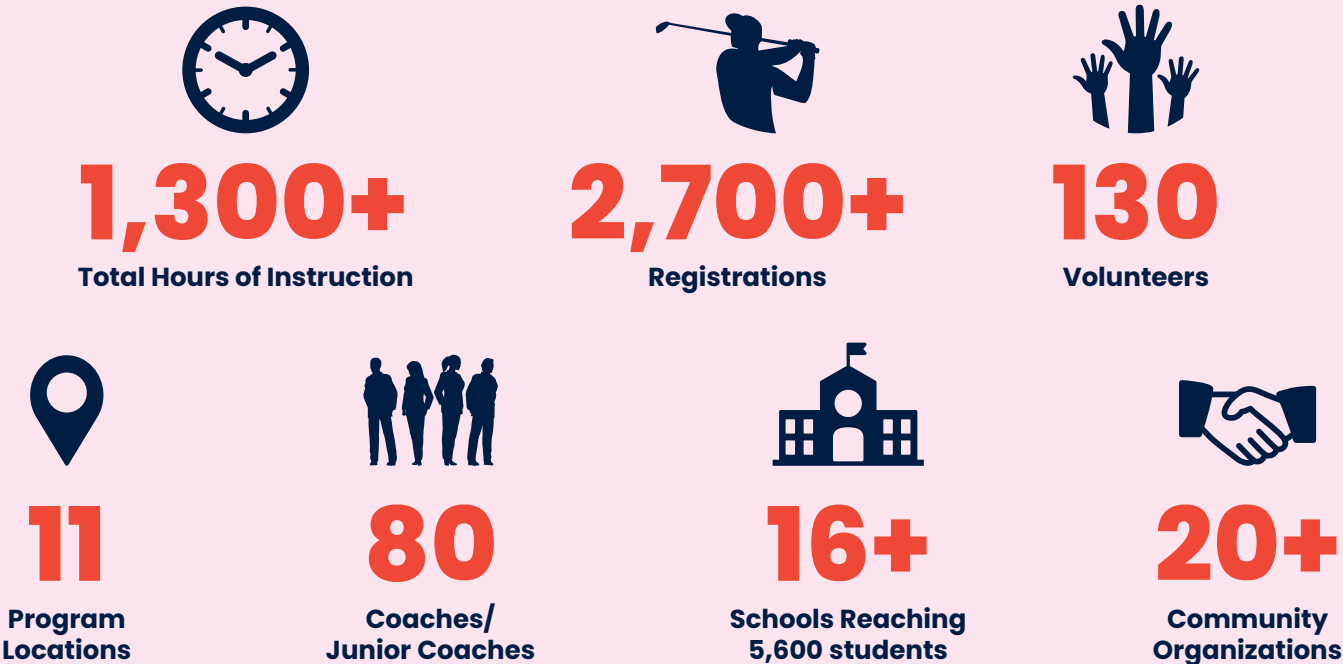
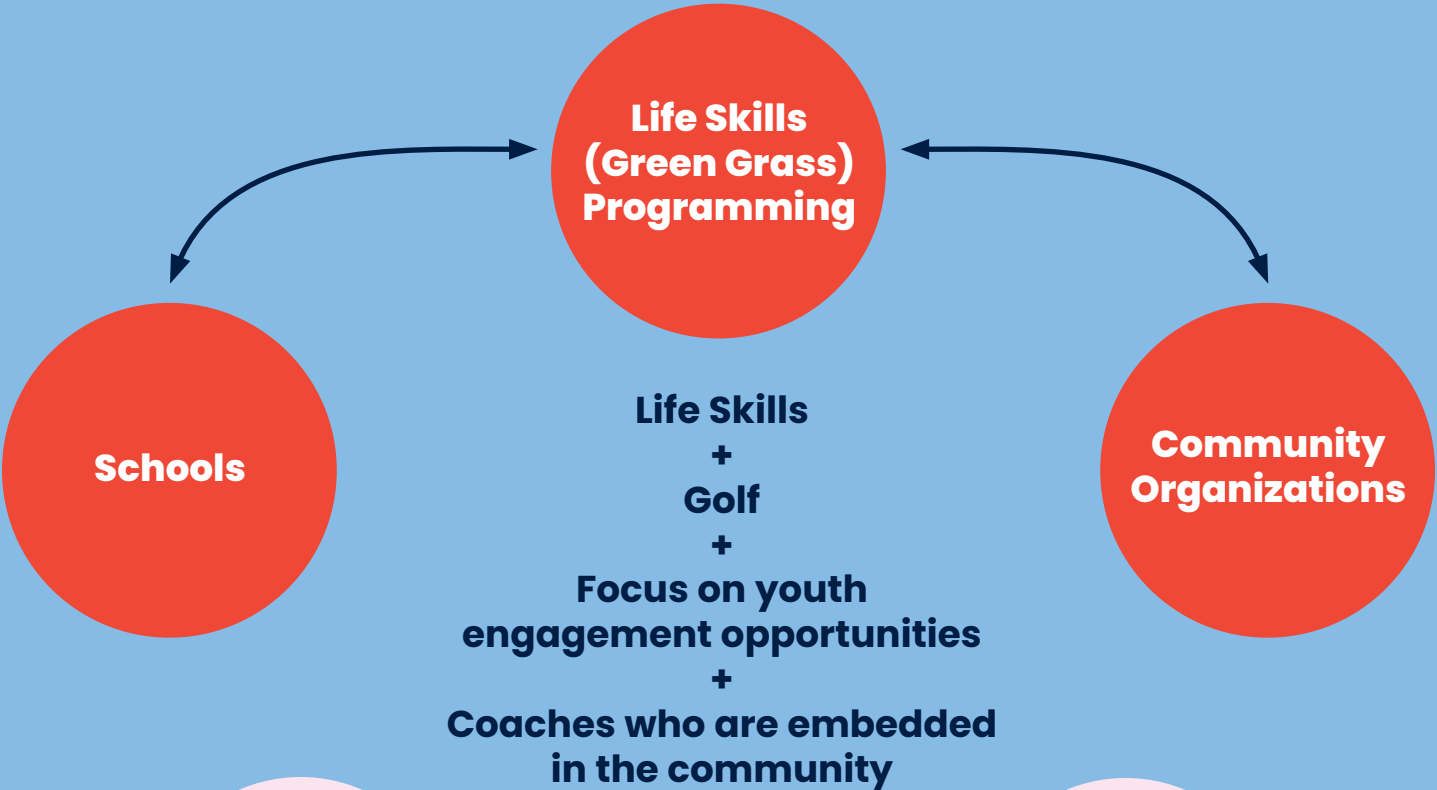
Participation in our programs by traditionally underrepresented groups far outpaces the golf industry as a whole.



Teen Registrations



Our Proven Model



Programming



Life Skills Programming

Our mission goes far beyond teaching the game of golf. While golf provides a platform for growth, our focus is on empowering young people with valuable life skills that extend beyond the course. Through the game, we teach skills that shape the character of our participants and prepare them for success in all aspects of life. We are committed to developing not only skilled athletes but also confident, well-rounded individuals who can navigate challenges and become positive leaders in their communities.

Our programs include week long summer camps, Saturdays, and after-school programs in the Spring and Fall.

Little Linksters

Developed for ages 4–6, Little Linksters introduces golf through fun games and kid-friendly equipment, led by certified coaches to prepare them for future First Tee programs.

After School

Our spring and fall after-school programs help kids build golf skills and life lessons like confidence, discipline, and teamwork—all in a fun, supportive setting.

Saturdays

Designed to fit into busy schedules, Saturday sessions combine golf instruction with character development, offering a flexible option for kids to grow both on and off the course.

Indoor

Our indoor programs keep kids engaged year-round no matter the weather. There's putting contests, skill-building activities, and other friendly competitions—all while reinforcing developmental life skills.

Summer Camp

Our Summer Camps offer five week long sessions for ages 7–13 at our scenic Waveland and Harborside locations. Campers enjoy a full week of putting, chipping, pitching, and full swings—all while learning First Tee's core values. It's fun in the sun!

In 2025, five weeks of camp return to both sites, plus a half-day option at The Evans at Canal Shores, offered in partnership with The Golf Practice.



All programs utilize the 5 Key Commitments for character development

11 Program Sites



1. Harborside Youth Learning Center
2. Waveland Youth Facility
3. First Tee Youth Campus at The Evans Course
4. Buffalo Grove Dome
5. Countryside Golf Club
6. Fountain Hills Golf Club
7. Glenwoodie Golf Club
8. Jackson Park Driving Range
9. Marquette Park Golf Course
10. South Shore Golf Course
11. PGA TOUR Superstore (Lincoln Park)

* **Hub Facilities**



First Tee – Greater Chicago School Program

Our year-round School Program expands our impact across Chicago by partnering with underserved schools to teach both golf fundamentals and essential life skills. Guided by our trained coaches, students engage with the Five Key Commitments—setting goals, overcoming challenges, collaborating, building self-identity, and using good judgment. After three years, 73% of participants report greater academic confidence, gaining the tools to succeed in school and beyond.



Scan to learn more
about First Tee
School Program



Scan to watch
Caleb's story

Caleb's Journey

Caleb's journey is a powerful example of how our programs help shape young lives both on and off the golf course. Starting at just 8 years old, Caleb's dedication to the game has been unwavering, and his growth reflects the core values of perseverance, teamwork, and leadership that we emphasize in every class. His transition from using plastic equipment in our School Program to actively participating in our life skills programs at the Harborside Youth Facility showcases his commitment to learning and growing through golf.

“Opportunities lead to
choices, and choices
shape lives.”

– Principal Eric Dockery, Poe
Classical Elementary



Community Outreach Program

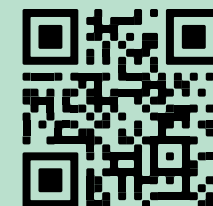


Our Community Outreach Program continues to break down barriers and make golf and life skills accessible, regardless of transportation, equipment, or financial challenges.

Thanks to the generosity of our corporate partners and foundations, our programs extend to recreation centers, golf courses, and after-school facilities throughout the Chicagoland area. By using modified equipment and a curriculum designed to build confidence and reinforce core values, we help kids learn not only basic golf skills but also key lessons in teamwork, perseverance, and leadership—empowering them to succeed on and off the course.



We are purposely bringing outreach partners to our green grass program locations with donor-assisted transportation.



Scan to learn more about our Community Outreach Program

Leadership Opportunities & Scholarships



First Tee Scholar, Mahek Acharya Indiana University

First Tee – Greater Chicago participant Mahek Acharya was honored as a First Tee National College Scholar. Mahek participated in the prestigious pre-college retreat, joining 19 other teens from across the country. During the retreat, they had the opportunity to explore PGA TOUR headquarters, engage in a meaningful service project, attend inspiring speaker sessions, and receive valuable guidance on achieving college success.

College Scholarships Awarded

The First Tee – Greater Chicago College Scholarship Program, launched in 2020, recognizes and supports participants who stay actively engaged throughout high school. Since its inception, the program has awarded \$75,000 in scholarships to 19 recipients, empowering them to pursue higher education and reach their academic goals.

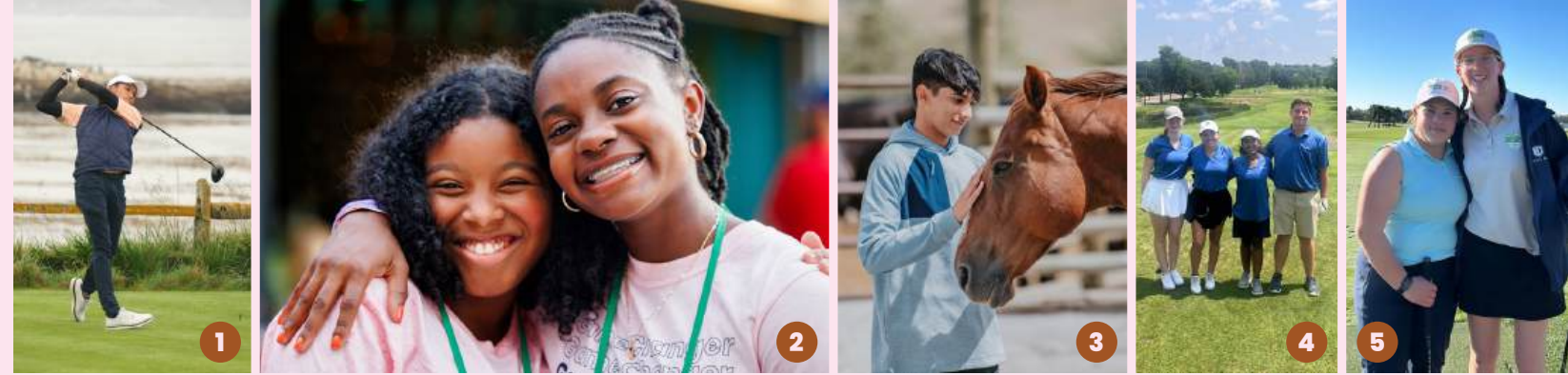
Congratulations to our 2024 First Tee – Greater Chicago Scholarship Recipients:

- Myles Cobb – Washington University in St. Louis
- Brianna Rostescu – Florida Gulf Coast University
- Mackenzie Trovero – Miami University (Ohio)
- Lillian Wallenfang – Fordham University
- Annika Northey – University of Vermont
- Shailen Surati – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



From left to right: Mackenzie Trovero, Brianna Rostescu, Myles Cobb, Lillian Wallenfang

- Will Brown – Northern Illinois University
- Kai Cohlmlia – DePaul University
- Naomi Garcia – Elmhurst University
- Kaylee Dwyer – Western Kentucky University



First Tee National Opportunities

1. PURE Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach

First Tee – Greater Chicago participants Micah Chiong and Evan Rubenstein had the incredible opportunity to compete in the PURE Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach. Playing alongside PGA TOUR champions, this event marked a milestone not only in their golf skills, but their personal growth as well.

2. First Tee Leadership Academy in Atlanta

First Tee – Greater Chicago participants Khloe Hyatt, Jasmine McGhee, and Micah Chiong attended the First Tee Leadership Academy in Atlanta, in partnership with PGA TOUR Superstore.

3. First Tee Leadership Summit in Montana

First Tee – Greater Chicago participants Shailen Surati and Brianna Rostescu attended the Fourth Annual First Tee Leadership Summit at West Creek Ranch in Montana. There, our participants enhanced key leadership skills like relationship building, positive risk taking, and character evaluation.

4. First Tee Game Changers Academy in Minnesota

Noah Miller attended the Minnesota Leadership Summit: First Tee Game Changers Academy, a five-day program honoring Joe Louis Barrow, Jr. Led by RISE and First Tee coaches, this inspiring experience has made a Game Changer out of Noah, who's determined to lead and create a positive change in his community.

5. First Tee Champions Challenge in Naples

Participants Gabby Simons and Caera Owens went to Naples for the First Tee's Golf to Paradise – First Tee Champions Challenge, held alongside the Chubb Classic. Beyond testing their skills on the course, the girls were able to attend a clinic with renowned golfer Notah Begay, take part in a boat ride, and even help out with a beach cleanup. What a trip!

Pathways to the Future



Junior Advisory Council

We are excited to announce the launch of the Junior Advisory Council, a new initiative designed to empower our dedicated First Tee Teens. This year, we introduced the program with 15 inspiring members who will play a vital role in shaping both the future of our program and their own personal growth. The council members will engage in monthly meetings focused on college and career preparation, mentorship opportunities with younger participants, leadership development, and fun activities. By fostering a collaborative environment, we are proud to provide these teens with the tools and experiences to become future leaders in their communities.

Junior Coaches

The First Tee – Greater Chicago Junior Golf Coach Program empowers teens (ages 16–20) to build leadership, responsibility, and mentorship skills by supporting lead coaches during classes and events. Through hands-on experience and First Tee’s life skills curriculum, they earn money, develop character, and help grow the next generation of golfers. With 40 returning coaches, the program fosters community and long-term impact.



Junior Coach Testimonial: Faith McKinney

Faith McKinney’s journey with First Tee – Greater Chicago showcases the program’s transformative power. From a participant in Las Vegas to coaching in Chicago, she’s embraced every opportunity—from meeting Cheyenne Woods to interning with the LPGA. Through First Tee, Faith found her passion for golf and gained life-shaping skills for a bright future.

“First Tee has taught me to embrace every opportunity, because you never know where it might lead.”

Playdates

Playdates offer children the opportunity to experience golf in a fun, engaging environment. These events introduce kids to the sport by bringing them out on the course to enjoy casual play, friendly competition, and skill-building. Playdates help kids build confidence, improve social skills, and develop a love for golf in a relaxed, non-competitive setting.



Community Initiatives

Golf Day at Gallagher Way

For the third consecutive year, we partnered with Gallagher Way to bring Golf Day to Wrigley Field! Local families enjoyed a variety of activities, including our popular mini-golf course, interactive games, exciting prizes, and golf inflatables. This event not only offered a fun-filled experience for attendees, but also served as an opportunity to share information about our programs and facilities, connecting with hundreds of community members and continuing to grow the impact of our work.



Back-to-School Hangout

The Back-to-School Hangout at the new First Tee Youth Campus at The Evans at Canal Shores was a hit! Families explored the facility, met our world-class coaches, and learned about programs for kids and teens. Even first-time golfers joined the fun—plus inflatables like Derf and Golfzilla were a crowd favorite.

Facility Footprint Expansion

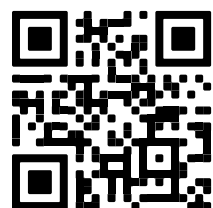
Our Youth Campus at The Evans



\$500K Capital Campaign for our First Tee Youth Campus at The Evans Completed!



Our \$500,000 capital campaign has been successfully completed, marking a major milestone in the development of the First Tee Youth Campus at The Evans at Canal Shores! This achievement will directly support the growth and enhancement of the Youth Campus, now the central hub of activity within The Evans' facility—building on the strong foundation of our first two youth campuses at Waveland and the Harborside Youth Learning Center.



Scan to learn more

David Lipsky donates \$25,000 to First Tee – Greater Chicago

After winning \$25,000 through the RSM Birdies Fore Love competition, PGA TOUR professional David Lipsky, a Northwestern graduate who played under Coach Pat Goss, generously donated his winnings to support First Tee – Greater Chicago. His contribution will make a meaningful impact in helping us empower young people through golf and life skills. We are incredibly grateful for his support!

Signature Events

Fore the Kids

Our 4th annual Fore the Kids fundraiser, hosted at Five Iron Golf, was a tremendous success, raising over \$20,000. More than 200 supporters joined us for a fun and impactful evening, with special appearances by First Tee participants Eli, Caera, Juliana, Gaby, Micah, Camille, and David from our Waveland Youth Facility, as well as Marc and Jasmine from our Harborside Youth Learning Center. We are deeply grateful to Cubs player Ian Happ for his unwavering support of our mission.



Corporate Challenge Golf Outing

Our 11th Annual Corporate Challenge at North Shore Country Club hosted nearly 200 golfers and 36 annual sponsors. Together, they helped raise \$420,000 to further our mission. We are incredibly grateful to all our sponsors and supporters for their continued commitment. A special thank you to our Ace Sponsors—The Bank Family, James Hardie, The Merrill Family, and Old National Bank—for their leadership and generosity. A special shoutout goes to our participant speaker, Shailen Surati, who made the event even more memorable.



Masters Watch Party

Our Masters Watch Party, hosted by our Ambassadors Council, was held at Joe's on Weed Street and was a huge success! The event was filled with food, drinks, and Masters action! Beyond the excitement of the tournament, we had incredible support from our community that truly stood out, as we came together to champion our mission and strengthen our collective impact.



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<i>President:</i> Kevin Callahan Fairway Capital Management	<i>Vice President:</i> Charlie Waddell Faircourt Partners	<i>Secretary:</i> Todd Simpson Goldman Sachs	<i>Treasurer:</i> Matt Stark PricewaterhouseCoopers
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Honorary Chairman:
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Professional Golfer



Ian Happ
Chicago Cubs
Outfielder &
Second Baseman



Doug Ghim
PGA TOUR
Professional



Nick Hardy
PGA TOUR
Professional



Patrick Flavin
Professional Golfer

Supporters

Ambassadors Council

A 100+ strong network of young professionals from various industries across Chicago committed to supporting the First Tee – Greater Chicago via generating awareness, fundraising and volunteering.



Scan to see our
Ambassadors
Council

Testimonial from Ambassadors Council – Alex Burge

Alex Burge, a former University of Illinois golfer, has served on the First Tee – Greater Chicago Ambassadors Council for over five years. Passionate about golf’s power to teach life skills, he supports fundraising as part of the Development Committee and champions programs that build patience, resilience, and confidence in local youth.

“First Tee – Greater Chicago truly changes the lives of youth in Chicago, and I’m excited to play even a small role in that mission.”



Partners



Scan to see
our partners

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Our Team

Administration & Development



Jill Sylvester
Interim CEO
jsylvester@firstteechicago.org



Brandon White
Vice President of
Programming & Operations
bwhite@firstteechicago.org



Jane Seder Conen
Director of Development & Operations
jseder@firstteechicago.org



Jesse Steinberg
Marketing & Communications Manager
jsteinberg@firstteechicago.org



Dinna Trovero
Volunteer Manager
dtrovero@firstteechicago.org

Programming



Erika Shavers
Director of Community Outreach, South Side
eshavers@firstteechicago.org



Elijah Royal
Lead Coach, Harborside
eroyal@firstteechicago.org



Margo McClintic
Lead Coach, Waveland
mmcclintic@firstteechicago.org



Leo Erickson
Lead Instructor, North Region
lerickson@firstteechicago.org



Abdulha Abdul
Youth Golf Coach, South Region
aabdul@firstteechicago.org

Guiding the Mission Forward

"At First Tee – Greater Chicago, we envision a future where every young person is empowered with opportunities for growth, education, and achievement. Our goal is to cultivate a generation of confident, capable leaders prepared to thrive in all areas of life."

–Jill Sylvester, Interim CEO,
First Tee – Greater Chicago





First Tee – Greater Chicago is a 501c3 nonprofit youth development organization based in Chicago, IL. Since the year 2000, the organization has helped over 100,000 kids from all backgrounds build their resilience and strength of character through the game of golf.

First Tee's character-building golf-based curriculum is taught at Chicago Park District facilities and public golf courses throughout the Chicagoland area. Partnerships with numerous school districts, park districts, and youth development organizations brings First Tee's programming to thousands more kids each year in Chicago's most underserved communities.

Young people who become members of First Tee – Greater Chicago enjoy a variety of opportunities to build leadership skills and develop their inner strength and self-confidence to help them grow as individuals and prepare them for a lifetime of challenges.



3701 N. Recreation Drive
Suite 2
Chicago, IL 60613

info@firstteechicago.org
(312) 761-4664
www.firstteegreaterchicago.org