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MERCER COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN TO LINK GOLF SKILLS WITH LIFE LESSONS



Pictured: Matt Bailey, PE Teacher at Mercer and Melrose Elementary Schools, Ashley Hamilton, Director of The First Tee of West Virginia and students.



Pictured: Elementary School Principals of Mercer County and Ashley Hamilton, Director of The First Tee of West Virginia

(Princeton, WV) – Starting this spring students at all 17 elementary schools in Mercer County will be introduced to the basic skills of golf along with character and health education in their physical education program. It will be taught by physical educators using safe, fun lesson plans provided in The First Tee National School Program curriculum. The health activities were recently added for students to learn about physical, social and emotional wellness.

Funding for the program was provided by the June Oblinger Shott Foundation which helps fund programs that focus on children and athletics. Nationwide, more than 10,000 schools in 1,400 school districts have been introduced to The First Tee National School Program. There are currently a total of 25 counties and 122 schools offering the program in West Virginia.

“This program will offer a brand-new experience for our students. Most of them would never have the opportunity to learn or practice golf” says Matt Bailey, PE Teacher at Mercer and Melrose Elementary Schools in Mercer County. “Not only will the program benefit our elementary students it builds a foundation for our middle school and high school programs. We are excited to begin implementing The First Tee National School Program.”

Launched in 2004, The First Tee National School Program helps students develop an appreciation for the positive personal and social values associated with golf. Students engage in safe, fun lesson activities that lead to motor skill development all while gaining an introduction to a lifelong recreation and health-enhancing activity.

“We are thankful to be able to provide the opportunity to teach the skills and values of The First Tee National School Program” added Kelli Stanley, Principal of Mercer Elementary School. “Plus, it is extremely beneficial that they are learning the necessary skills to promote lifelong physical fitness through an activity such as golf.”

The curriculum was developed by The First Tee along with leading experts in physical education and positive youth development. It is aligned with and meets national standards developed by the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE). Physical educators delivering the program are formally trained and certified by The First Tee and use safe, developmentally-appropriate lesson plans and equipment in their classes.

The lesson plans include The First Tee Nine Healthy Habits, which were developed in partnership with the ANNIKA Foundation and Florida Hospital for Children.

According to a survey among 860 physical educators using The First Tee National School Program curriculum, 66 percent reported using The First Tee Nine Core Values—character education seamlessly delivered as part of the program—in other

sports and activities they teach beyond golf. A third-party case study conducted in one Midwestern school district in 2011 further validated the program where administrators and physical educators reported finding great value in the program.

For more information about The First Tee National School Program, visit www.thefirsttee.org or about The First Tee of West Virginia, visit www.thefirstteewestvirginia.org. For more information about Mercer County Schools, visit <https://boe.merc.k12.wv.us>.

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ABOUT THE FIRST TEE OF WEST VIRGINIA: The First Tee of West Virginia is a state-wide youth development organization operated by the West Virginia Golf Association, focused on introducing the game of golf and its inherent values to young people. On golf courses, in elementary schools and on military installations, The First Tee has helped shape the lives of young people from all walks of life by teaching values like integrity, respect and perseverance. Our mission, supported in part by Smith Land Surveying Inc., Little General Stores and Tri-State Roofing & Sheet Metal Company is to impact the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character, instill life-enhancing values and promote healthy choices through the game of golf. Through our programs young people discover how skills essential to success on a golf course can also help them flourish in life.