

# GOLF COURSE<sup>®</sup> INDUSTRY

THE VOICE FOR TODAY'S SUPERINTENDENT



Players and patrons were encouraged to recycle on the course.

## **Venice Open connects golf, sustainability and the next generation**

U.S. Kids Golf event is first non-professional tourney to achieve GEO Foundation distinction

April 10, 2019

The 2018 U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open has been recognized as a GEO Certified Tournament for its leadership to advance sustainability in and through golf.

The initiative was led by the voluntary leadership of the [U.S. Kids Golf Foundation](#) and [Golf della Montecchia](#), with strong support from the other two host venues – Golf Club Frassanelle and Galzignano Terme Spa & Golf Resort. The event is also backed by the PGAs of Europe.

“Innovation is ingrained in our DNA, as demonstrated by the approach we take at our home base in Longleaf, so it made absolute sense for us to push the boundaries on environmental sustainability and community value at our events,” U.S. Kids Golf Foundation founder and CEO Dan Van Horn said. “The GEO Foundation has been a credible and knowledgeable partner, providing support and now recognition that enables us to promote this important

message more widely. We'd encourage all golf venues and tournaments to get involved."

Paolo Casati, the president of Golf della Montecchia and of PlayGolf54 Group, said the journey has been "based on a commitment to environmental values that started many years ago. Thanks to a valued collaboration with the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation, we are very proud to spread this important message to the new generation."

Coordination and delivery were overseen by sustainable golf expert, Stefano Boni, who used guidance and resources provided by the GEO OnCourse® Tournaments program to work closely with the organisers, venues, hotels, transport companies and caterers, as well as with the children themselves and their families.

The award has been made following a robust third-party verification, which was based on all the evidence that Stefano gathered and reported.

"We are delighted to extend this well-deserved recognition to the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation and the team that stages the Venice Open," GEO Foundation founder and executive director Jonathan Smith said. "Perhaps the most inspiring part is seeing the children and their families getting engaged and expressing such a clear desire to see the sport they love embrace environmental stewardship and social responsibility. We congratulate all the partners on leading the way, and expressing what golf can do to foster nature, conserve resources and build inclusive, healthy and sustainable communities."

The event organizers worked within the confines of the international certification criteria to guide all planning, according to Susie Tomson, an independent verifier. "Without huge capacity or resources, they have managed to engage a lot of different stakeholders, and the players themselves, to generate real results," she said. "They are a model example of a smaller, non-professional tournament that can make a big difference."

Golf della Montecchia has been GEO Certified for seven years and has won the IAGTO Sustainability Award. Golf Club Frassanelle and Galzignano Terme are in OnCourse sustainability program and working towards GEO Certified. All courses are pioneering organic management of new, warm-season grasses, as well as studying sustainable turf, biodiversity and water conservation, and reduced carbon footprint in partnership with NGOs and universities.

Local schools helped organise and stage the tournament, cooperation with local museums to promote the area's history and culture, and fundraising for the Team for Children charity.