

## U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open Achieves World First

Thursday 4 April 2019

The 2018 U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open has been officially recognized as a GEO Certified® Tournament for its inspiring 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.



Dan Van Horn, Founder and Chief Executive of the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation said: “We are thrilled to have achieved this world first. 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. 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, President of Golf della Montecchia and of PlayGolf54 Group said: “Together with all my family we are honoured by this result. It was a long journey, 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 liaise closely with the organizers, venues, hotels, transport companies, caterers and also the children 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.



Jonathan Smith, Founder and Executive Director of GEO Foundation added: “We are delighted to extend this well-deserved recognition to the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation and the team that stages the Venice Open. 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.”

Susie Tomson, the independent, expert verifier said: “The organizers used the international certification criteria to guide all their planning, and then broke it down into very specific and practical tasks, spanning a wide range of actions and issues. In a relatively short time, and without huge capacity or resources, they have managed to engage a lot of different stakeholders, and the players themselves, to generate real results. They are a model example of a smaller, non-professional tournament that can make a big difference”.

**Venues:**

- Golf della Montecchia GEO Certified® for 7 years and winner of IAGTO Sustainability Award
- Golf Club Frassanelle and Galzignano Terme are in OnCourse® sustainability programme and working towards GEO Certified®
- All courses are pioneering organic management of new, warm-season grasses; and studying sustainable turf, biodiversity and water conservation, and reduced carbon footprint in partnership with NGOs and universities.

**Event:**

- Players, caddies and families completed an environmental questionnaire and environmental information family orientation packs
- Sustainability-themed signage across all venues and hotels
- Hotels and restaurants committed to the tournament's sustainability policy
- Recovery of all recyclable materials and water refill stations
- Forty bicycles were provided to families by the JSH Group hotels
- Local sourcing with wine, meat, dairy and most of the vegetables from local farmlands (supplier Nautilus Fish and Wine has very comprehensive sustainability policy, more on their website)
- Local schools helped organize and stage the tournament, cooperation with local museums to promote the area's history and culture, and fundraising for local charity, 'Team for Children'.

Read the full [Venice Open GEO Certification report](#) to learn more.

**Contact**

Moira Fraser – [moira@sustainable.golf](mailto:moira@sustainable.golf)

Alessandro de Luca – [adeluca@federgolf.it](mailto:adeluca@federgolf.it)

Chris Vonderkall - [cjvonderkall@uskidsgolf.com](mailto:cjvonderkall@uskidsgolf.com)

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