

CASE STUDY

Futures Canterbury: Growing Participation in the Canterbury Region



January 2020





Introduction

Canterbury Golf in partnership with a collective of seven clubs in and around the Selwyn region launched the Futures Canterbury Selwyn Hub in February last year to provide regular experiences for young people and families in those communities. Nearly a year on from the launch, we spoke again with Rachel Thow, Golf Development Manager for Canterbury Golf, to find out how the Selwyn Hub is progressing and their plans for the year ahead

Can you give us an update on the progress that has been made over the last 12 months since the Selwyn Hub was established?

Since the Selwyn Hub was launched, we have seen a steady increase in the number of young people and parents actively playing golf in the region. Compared to a year ago, the number of junior golfers in the Selwyn region has increased 37% which is clear indicator that a collaborative approach to growing participation is working. With the opportunity to participate in weekly events and coaching along with other playing opportunities, young golfers are participating more regularly which is helping us to address the issue of traditionally low retention rates among young people in golf. Growing family participation has been another key objective for the Selwyn Hub, and so far the number of parents involved in the hub through membership and participation has exceeded our initial expectations. As part of our calendar of events, we run regular Family Team Golf events to encourage young people, parents and grandparents to enjoy playing golf together.

What are some of the key learnings so far?

It is evident from the results so far that there is a lot of untapped interest in golf within the community but the feedback from some new participants has been that the golf industry needs to do a better job of communicating what's on offer for those who are newer to the game. We are being proactive about regularly reaching out to the community through various channels of promotion to make people aware of the opportunities available around the region. We have recently joined several community groups on Facebook and have found this to be an effective platform for reaching a wider audience to promote introductory experiences like the Futures Festival of Golf, Golf in the Park and She Loves Golf 6's. The Selwyn Hub has been predominantly attracting new participants to the game and consequently there is the perception within the local golfing community that Futures Canterbury is only for young beginners. One of the key goals for Futures is to provide 'Pathways for young people to start playing golf and support them to reach their level of aspirations' whatever that may be. The events and learning experiences we are planning to deliver will evolve alongside the needs of the participant across all stages of development.

Last time we spoke, you talked about plans for increasing the number of women and girls in golf, and the delivery of pop-up events in the community. What has been happening in that space?

Our long-term plan for growing participation in the Selwyn region is to deliver learn and play opportunities to engage other participant groups beyond young people and families. Our Coordinator Pip Deans recently lead the delivery of a She Loves Golf 6's series, in conjunction with Tai Tapu Golf Club, to provide regular on-course experiences for women who are new to golf. The women were excited to have the opportunity to play on the golf course and make new friends at the event. Overall, She Loves Golf 6's was a big success with 29 women registering to take part in the series and we have plans to work with other clubs around Canterbury to hold more of these events in order to keep the momentum going. Regarding girls' participation, Canterbury Golf is working with Jess Reid at Russley Golf Club to deliver regular sessions for young girls in Canterbury who are getting started in golf. The focus is to bring the girls together as a group to build friendships while developing their skills in a fun environment with a female role model leading the session. We have several girls from the Selwyn region actively involved with the girls' group. As part of our efforts to grow girls' participation, the group recently held a bring a friend session which was lots of fun. This is a great way to get more girls involved and we will be running more of these sessions over summer. We are actively engaging local communities in the Selwyn region through the delivery of have-a-go events in community spaces. We are fortunate to have received funding from the Selwyn District Council to support the delivery of pop-up events in local parks and the result has been that these events, along with our free Sunday sessions at clubs, have made golf more accessible for young people and families in the region.



What's next on the horizon for Love Golf Futures in Canterbury?

After the success of the project in the Selwyn region, we are committed to working collaboratively with more clubs in the Canterbury region to grow youth and family participation. A new North-East Hub has been formed in conjunction with Christchurch Golf Club, Waimairi Beach Golf Club, Bottle Lake Golf and Rangiora Golf Club and we are running a Futures Festival of Golf event in February to launch this exciting next stage for Futures Canterbury. We are also working with NZ Golf to support other golf clubs to benefit from the tools and resources available through Love Golf Futures. There are a number of clubs in Canterbury that have established programmes for young people, and we will continue to support those clubs to grow participation in their local communities.

Results to date

The Selwyn Hub currently has 112 members – 78 young people and 34 parents

Junior membership in the Selwyn region has increased 37% over the last 12 months

The Hub has to date delivered 19 have-a-go sessions, 10 six-week after-school programmes, 9 school holiday programmes and 49 on-course events

To find out more about Futures Canterbury, you can visit the website at www.futurescanterbury.co.nz.