

# Pusch Ridge golf non-profit raises funds to support reopening course

AUSTIN COUNTS  
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A local nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the Pusch 9 golf course succeed when it reopens next fall held its first fundraising event at the Oro Valley Community Center course on Wednesday, April 7.

Friends of Pusch Ridge Golf celebrated their recent establishment, along with the Town of Oro Valley's new commitment to reopening the course in November, by hosting a nine-hole golf tournament scramble. Due to cart limitations at the course, the competition was restricted to 44 positions. Those spots to register sold out within a couple of hours of opening, according to the organization's president Tony D'Angelo. He is also a member of the El Conquistador Resort Patio Homes HOA.

"Historically, our neighborhood would do a little golf tournament this time of year around tax day on the Pusch Ridge course. Of course the last few years that's been closed," D'Angelo said. "So, with the forming of Friends of Pusch Ridge Golf, we decided to open it up to our members and just do it up at the community center courses."

The volunteer organization's president said the fundraiser only made \$300, but money wasn't the focus of the event—bringing the course's residents and supporters together for a fun afternoon of golf was. He



*Courtesy photo*

Nonprofit Friends of Pusch Ridge Golf held their first tournament to celebrate the upcoming Nov. 1 reopening of the Pusch 9 golf course at The Oro Valley Community Center on Wednesday, Apr. 7.

said he's looking forward to when the nonprofit can open the tournament up to all of the group's 220 members, but being able to host this event was a sign of progress.

"People are really really excited about supporting this new group," D'Angelo said. "We hope the town follows through in terms of getting the Pusch Ridge course back open. The group has been working the last month or so getting organized, establishing ourselves as a nonprofit, and getting the website up and running. So, this tournament was more for fun and a recognition thing."

D'Angelo said the or-

ganization's mission to help the course be successful by making sure there is sufficient play to make sure the Pusch 9 stays open even if the town is unable to find a company willing to lease the course in the approved three-year period. Last February, the Oro Valley Town Council voted to renovate, reopen and maintain the course for three years while attempting to find someone to run the course.

"We're talking about bringing back the Quails group, which is a women's golf group that has been around for over 30 years that used to play the course year-round. We're also looking at creating a

men's league and a couples league in conjunction with some social activities at the resort," D'Angelo said. "If we can get some good base business in terms of leagues and then go after charity events and tournaments, I think that could be an aspect to make the course viable."

Carolyn Weinig, a volunteer for the nonprofit and part-time neighborhood resident, played in Wednesday's tournament and said it felt amazing to be on a course with her neighbors again.

Weinig is also a member of the Quails women's golf league. She said she's excited the group will soon be able to use the links

they've have played on for decades.

"I immediately spread the word to all the Quails and most all of us signed up. It was an easy decision to become a part of the group," Weinig said. "We want to do everything we can to ensure the success of the course's reopening. I feel like we've been given a three-year window, sort of on a trial basis, to make this course successful."

Eight years ago, Weinig and her husband purchased their home that sits near the course's fourth green. The town has operated the nine-hole since 2015 but chose to lease it to HSL Properties in February 2020 after several

years of losing money on the venture. The terms of the agreement allowed HSL one year to take over and resume operations and they had set a Oct. 1, 2020, reopen date. However, the course never reopened due to HSL's financial concerns surrounding the pandemic and the town retook control of the property on Jan. 31.

Weinig said watching her home's picturesque views deteriorate for more than a year while waiting for the nine-hole to reopen was depressing.

"It was really sad because like most of the other residents we bought here because we wanted to be on a golf course for the view and the green grass," Weinig said. "It was just really depressing, especially because we were thinking that it might never reopen. It's much more tolerable now because we know that it's going to get green again."

Oro Valley Town Manager Mary Jacobs said she's happy the residents are enthused for the anticipated reopening of the Pusch 9 golf course on Nov. 1 and views the nonprofit as a partner in helping keep the course active.

She said that Friends of Pusch Ridge "understand full well that their job is not to be working on the course. What they're excited about is getting word out and hosting tournaments. They're very engaged and enthusiastic. We're glad they're going to help this success all around."