

# Filling 'Wish for Our Heroes' coffers

## Burnt Store residents golf for a good cause Memorial Day

The golfers who took to the course at the Burnt Store Golf and Activity Club (BSGAC) on Memorial Day weren't too concerned about their score or how well they putted.

They were out to support those who are fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan and struggling with the realities of life and war.

While Memorial Day is about those who died to defend our freedom, the club decided to make this year's event about those who are doing so now.

Thus, the "Wish For Our Heroes" Memorial Day event was created, and 77 golfers made their way around the course to raise funds for a new organization that grants wishes and financial assistance to soldiers in desperate need.

When it was over, the BSGAC obliterated its original goal, and it hadn't even counted items they had put out for auction or raffles.

"We set a goal to raise \$5,000 and we set that goal, then we set it for \$7,000 and we broke that," said Joyce Brown, who chaired the auctions and raffles.

In the end, they raised almost \$8,000 for the Wish for Our Heroes foundation, whose representative, Bernie Teich, attended the event and spoke on behalf of his organization during the ceremony afterward. Teich served in the mili-



Chuck Ballaro  
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tary until 2007, when his legs were badly injured after an IED exploded while he was on duty in Iraq. One of his legs would be amputated.

One of the activities Teich took part in for his rehabilitation was golf.

He and a friend, Capt. Jeff Wells, helped form Wish for Our Heroes in November and have already granted 35 wishes to servicemen and raised nearly \$60,000 before this event.

Teich said such an organization is badly needed and has filled a void.

"There are so many organizations for wounded soldiers, and there should be," Teich said. "But there isn't one for the everyday soldier. Every service member needs help."

Most of the wishes come in the form of gift cards or cash for military personnel and their families, Teich said. Many simply want to have their cars fixed or groceries in their cabinets.

However, some have benefitted others like a Boy Scout troop whose equipment had been vandalized.

During his speech, Teich spoke about his troubles after returning

home.

"I lost my livelihood, my job, my wife. It sounded like a bad country song," Teich laughed. "I thought my days of serving my country were over."

He came to the club through a mutual friend of the family. Janet Woods and Teich's mother were friends for decades.

"She thought Burnt Store had such a family atmosphere and asked if it would be the place for such an event," Woods said before choking up and adding, "I said it would be an honor."

Cliff Ritterpusch, BSGAC activity director who has done something to commemorate Memorial Day every year, got the ball rolling and made the contacts to make the event a reality.

"We made sure the event was open to the public so non-members can play," Brown said. "We also made it so active military personnel could play for free."

Among the items up for auction were autographed pictures from Olivia Newton-John, Nolan Ryan and Steve Young, among others, and an original painting from local artists San Priest.

"I came to the club two weeks ago and I had no idea I'd give something away," Priest said. "I always give away art for a cause and I volunteered to make one especially for today."



HERALD PHOTOS BY CHUCK BALLARO

Bernie Teich holds the check for the funds collected by the club during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club. The club exceeded its original goal by more than 50 percent.

Among the features on the course were the two par-3s where for a dollar you could let a pro shoot for you.

Ray Davis and Debbie Burns had no problem collecting dollar bills from players as nearly everybody paid the price to have the ball end up somewhere on the green.

"Cliff and Bernie tag-teamed me," Burns laughed as she sent another shot toward the green. "They said it was an honor and I fell into that. It's for a great

cause. People have been excellent in support."

There was also a raffle for items such as gift certificates to local restaurants such as Porto Bello or Dean's South of the Border and rounds of golf.

After their round, there was a picnic lunch or lunch inside.

After lunch, there was a salute to the fallen, with the "National Anthem," "Pledge of Allegiance," the laying of a wreath in front of the flagpole, a prayer from Jack O'Neill and Teich,

the guest speaker, who was given his check after he spoke.

The event wrapped up with the drawing for the winners of the raffle and silent auction.

"Bernie's leaving too soon. I can't believe the invitations he's received," said Janet's husband, Bob. "We've done events for other veteran organizations. We've never had a response like this."

And who won the scramble? Wish for Our Heroes did.



Club champion Debbie Burns aims for the green during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club. Golfers paid a dollar for a pro to hit their tee shots for them.

Bernie Teich launches a tee shot during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club. Teich, who lost a leg in an explosion in Iraq, is the spokesman for the foundation, which has granted 35 wishes since November.



Karsten Kuhr putts during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club. Kuhr fought for the Germans in World War II, then for the U.S. during the Korean War, and takes part in events like this annually.



The Baltimore County Fire Department Honor guard salute the flag during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club.



From left, Janet Wood, Bernie Teich, Bob Wood and Cliff Ritterpusch during the Wish for Our Heroes Memorial Day event at Burnt Store Golf & Activity Club. Janet and Bob were instrumental in bringing Teich to Burnt Store.