



94% of Dataw Island club members are involved in volunteer work. Golfing for good, these Dataw Island golfers raise money for the Beaufort Memorial Hospital Foundation, the Keyserling Cancer Center, veterans associations, and others.

Golf for Good

Playing a Round for Worthy Causes and Better Communities

by JG Walker

At country clubs, in golf communities, and on public courses across America, players gather every day (weather permitting) to enjoy some fresh air and healthy exercise on the links. Equally important are the social aspects of the sport, from the friendly competition and leisurely conversations on the fairways and greens to the good-natured “settling up” at a favorite 19th hole in the clubhouse.

But the game of golf puts its best foot forward when

playing a round supports a good cause. Nearly every golf course in the country hosts at least one annual tournament event, where local volunteers, staff members, small-business sponsors, and paying players donate their time and money to raise funds for local charities. And some golf clubs do much more, going above and beyond the call of duty and maybe even helping to save some lives along the way.



DATAW ISLAND Beaufort, SC

Dataw Island is an upscale residential community located in the idyllic heart of the South Carolina Lowcountry, about 15 minutes from the historic town of Beaufort. It's also home to the Dataw Island Club with year-round recreational amenities that include two of the region's premier private golf courses. A recent survey found that 94% of club members are active in volunteer work that benefits a wide range of area charities. And twice a year the entire Dataw community comes together for a pair of signature golf fundraisers that have become local traditions of hope and honor.

Every spring since 2002, the Dataw Island Ladies Golf Association has coordinated "Community for a Cure," a weeklong series of events to support the Beaufort Memorial Hospital Foundation and its Harriet Keyserling Cancer Center. A golf tournament and putting contest are among the annual high-

lights that also include tennis and pickleball competitions. Along with a big silent auction, each year's event has a featured fundraiser like a fashion show, themed dance party, or battle of the bands. In 2024, those combined activities raised nearly \$32,000 for Keyserling Center equipment and patient services, bringing total donations over the past 22 years to more than \$500,000.

Dataw Island Club member Celeste Nalwasky has been involved with Community for a Cure since becoming an island resident in 2007. She has served as the event's chairperson, remains active as one of dozens of organizing volunteers, and brings a personal perspective to the cause.

"I'm a cancer survivor and I want everyone to have the advantages that I had, the resources and support that I had when I went through the trauma of battling cancer," says Nalwasky. "We are all affected by cancer in some way, so we morphed from a 'golf' event to a 'community' event. The inclusiveness and community spirit bring the island together. We raise sig-

“Coordinating our Veterans Week activities is a true labor of love. The response of our residents, members, and guests is astounding, not only through their participation and generosity, but also in how it showcases the true spirit of our Dataw community.”

-Phil Marshall, Vietnam vet and Dataw Veterans Week chair

nificant money, but even more importantly, we raise hope.”

Eighteen years ago, the Dataw Island Men’s Golf Association sponsored the first Dataw Veterans Golf Tournament to support organizations like Wounded Warriors and Folds of Honor. In 2017, the association teamed with Tee It Up for the Troops, a national non-profit that raises money for a variety of service-related causes, and the Dataw event expanded to a full

“Veterans Week” of activities.

In addition to the centerpiece Veterans Golf Classic, with a field that includes 75 guest veteran players, there’s a Big Break-style tournament and a Golf Marathon where club staffers push the limits to play 250+ holes in a single day. The week’s events also include a parade and flag ceremony, an auction, a barbecue cookout, the year’s big-

gest happy hour at the Dataw Island Pub, performances by the Dataw Singers and the Lowcountry Symphony Orchestra, an awards breakfast, and other activities.

Dataw Veterans Week in 2024 raised \$82,000 for Tee It Up and local veteran’s organizations, pushing the total over the years to more than \$715,000 for an annual event designed not only to raise money, but also to honor the service of veterans and their active-duty counterparts.

“These men and women sacrifice so much for this country, and they deserve our full support,” says director of golf Chris Fearn. “Whether that is donating to a good cause or just simply being there for a veteran and telling them ‘Thank you’ for their service and sacrifice.”

“Every year our members come together in support of veterans, and every year they outdo themselves,” says Dataw general manager Ted Bartlett. “The sacrifices made to present all these events and the fundraising efforts are simply phenomenal.”

For more information about Dataw Island and participating in the 2025 Community for a Cure and Veterans Week events, go to Dataw.com.



THE CLUBS AT ST. JAMES Southport, NC

Located on the North Carolina coast near the seaside town of Southport, the St. James residential community features an unrivaled recreational centerpiece—The Clubs at St. James. Managed by industry leader Troon Golf, The Clubs offers 81 holes of on-site play with three 18-hole gems by acclaimed designers PB Dye, Nicklaus Design, and Tim Cate, plus the 27-hole Hale Irwin layout. It’s a year-round golfer’s paradise,

which club members and residents put to good use with six major annual fund-raising events.

First up on the schedule every March is the St. Paddy's Day Tournament for the North Carolina Dementia Alliance. This year's event celebrated its 20th anniversary at St. James with a field of 180 players on the three nines at the Members Club, which has the facilities to serve as the headquarters for all of the community's big golf fundraisers.

The newest charitable event at St. James was an April 27 benefit to support the vital work of the Wounded Warriors Project. The 380 golfers who participated teed it up on the Members, Founders, and Reserve courses, raising more than \$130,000 on the links and at the post-round dinner for nearly 500 attendees.

On September 7, the 4th annual Captain Austin Murga Memorial Golf Tournament was held to support the Stop Soldier Suicide organization. Sponsors, volunteers, and 184 golfers combined efforts to raise \$115,000 at the 2024 event. Just a few days later, on September 11, the St. James community rallied again for the Tunnels to Towers tournament that helps to fund mortgage-free homes and support services for the families of fallen first responders and Gold Star heroes.

"St. James has a very active veteran and military presence in the community and we want to be as supportive of these groups as the residents have been over the years," says Kent Silhanek, general manager of The Clubs at St. James. "It truly is an honor to have a role in raising funds for the worthy causes our community supports," Silhanek noted

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that Troon and The Clubs had contributed the equivalent of \$65,000 to support the six major fundraisers in 2024 and a total of more than \$100,000 for local charities during the year.

The final annual event on the calendar, held on October 15, was a golf tournament and social events to support the Little Pink Houses of Hope, a group that funds initiatives like week-long retreats for breast cancer survivors and their families. Now in its fifth year at St. James, the 2024 event included 150 players and raised \$40,000.

"We're proud of our residents at St. James and their dedication to so many special causes in the community. They are always ready to volunteer, to donate their time, and make contributions to different organizations," says Jay Atkinson,

president of St. James Properties. "The Clubs at St. James' members are especially service-oriented and golf tournaments are just one way that they give back to the community, both locally and regionally."

And while the golf events certainly draw the biggest crowds, St. James residents also support more than two dozen additional local charities with their volunteer time and fundraising efforts. "I cannot imagine another community that is as giving as our St. James residents have been in the past and will surely continue to be in the years ahead," Atkinson concludes.

For more about the St. James community, go to StJames-Properties.com.



ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Ocala, FL

The Candler Hills Golf Club at On Top of the World (OTOW) hosted the 19th Annual Ocala Open in March 2024 and it was a record-breaking success. The three-day championship drew professional golfers from country clubs throughout the Southeast to compete for the largest purse in Ocala Open history. But the real winners were named after the week's kick-off event, a Pro-Am that raised \$100,000 for two local non-profits.

Interfaith Emergency Services provides food, shelter, clothing, and free healthcare services to area residents in need. Hospice of Marion County, Inc., offers compassionate comfort care and counseling services to the terminally ill and their families. Each charity received \$50,000 thanks to the contributions of sponsors, players, and volunteers. The 2024 event pushed the total raised by the Ocala Open over the years to more than \$1 million.

"It's truly remarkable to see the continuous support from our sponsors and the local community to reach this milestone," said OTOW director of golf, Matt Hibbs. "Their generosity allows us to make a meaningful impact on organizations that provide invaluable assistance to our community and its residents."

The 20th Annual Ocala Open returns to Candler Hills Golf Club from March 19-21, 2025, with the Charity Pro-Am scheduled for March 18. For more information about playing in the Pro-Am and VIP tournament access, go to OcalaOpen.com.

In addition to Candler Hills Golf Club, the OTOW Golf Club features two of the region's finest private 18-hole layouts and a new, coming soon, nine-hole pitch-and-putt course. Among OTOW's 175 community clubs are a variety of charitable service organizations and other groups that sponsor fundraisers and local outreach events.

OnTopOfTheWorld.com