

The First Green Foundation — Environmental Education Outreach in Action

Most primary grade teachers and students have never been on a golf course. In the state of Washington, this is changing.

BY FRED SOLLER

On a cool fall day, Kristen Larson's Advanced Placement science class walks from nearby Sammamish High to Glendale Country Club in Bellevue, Wash., near Seattle. When they arrive, they grab clipboards, waders, and an orange. They head to Kelsey Creek, a stream that traverses the golf course, and the students will test the stream's water quality and oxygen level. They also will calculate the stream's volumetric flow rate, but first they must measure the stream's dimensions and its velocity (that's where the orange comes into play). Before the trip to Glendale is over, the students have learned about the golf course property, some of the maintenance and management programs for course care, and, most likely, even tried their hand at putting, many for the first time.

Golf courses provide real-world examples for all subject areas. Steve Kealy, superintendent at Glendale, has worked with Lynn McKay's advanced horticulture students and the City of Bellevue to restore a portion of the Kelsey Creek streambed, an active salmon spawning stream, when a big storm tore through the course. Lynn's students designed the plantings and planted them at the course when Glendale received the city grant.

In Spokane, Wash., approximately 10 classes come to Spokane Country Club each year on Planting Day. The students help grow some of the plants beforehand, and when they all arrive at the course, they put in the plants, enjoy a BBQ hosted by golf course superintendent Jeff Gullikson, CGCS, and even learn some golf course etiquette on the putting green.

LINKS AS LABS

The field trips described above are made possible through First Green Foundation, an innovative environmental education outreach program that uses golf courses as environmental learning labs. Golf course superintendents and/or local golf course representatives host students on field trips to the course, where they may test water quality, collect soil samples, identify plants, design plantings, assist in streambed restoration, and are

involved in learning the ecology and environmental aspects of the golf course. In addition to the course itself, students also may be introduced to other aspects of the golf world — maybe the food and beverage or golf operations side of the business.

The Washington State Office of Public Instruction has provided credit to teachers who have participated in First Green workshops. The workshops are designed to provide the teachers with an understanding of the learning



Teacher group hearing how rainwater runs off hard surfaces (like asphalt) and into storm drains, and how all people need to think where water that leaves their property ends up.

