



**SHOW ME THE MONEY** \$  
BY JIM BAKER

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## Making the Most of the Dog Days of Summer

Michigan shelter tees up profitable golf outing fundraiser

Usually the only animal to benefit from golf tournaments is the Tiger—Woods, that is.

But in Menominee, Mich., Julie Derusha has figured out how to squeeze big dollars out of long drives, sinking a hole in one for shelter animals.

Derusha's been in charge of the annual Dog Days of Summer golf outing for the Menominee Animal Shelter since the event started in 2006. She's a founding director of the shelter, its current president, and co-chair of its fundraising committee.

Under her direction, and with the help of volunteers, the Dog Days event has been a success at bringing in money for the shelter, which has an annual budget of about \$245,000. The fundraiser—the next one will be Aug. 27—typically grosses \$8,000 to \$9,000 and nets the shelter about \$6,000.

It costs \$60 per person to participate, and the fee includes 18 holes of golf plus dinner at Riverside Country Club in Menominee. The tournament usually draws about 60 golfers, who play in foursomes. The entrance fees are enough to cover the expenses to put on the fundraiser.

But the lion's share of the money raised at the event comes from other sources. "The whole key is to get sponsors. So we'll call local businesses and say, 'We're having this golf outing, we're asking you to sponsor a hole, and the cost for sponsorship is \$100. We can send you a bill. How do you want your name on the sign?'" Derusha says. "If we can get 36 sponsors, which means two signs on each of the holes, that's \$3,600 right out of the gate."

It's been a successful strategy. "Last year, for example, we had 43 sponsors, and that's nothing other than having a couple of volunteers sit down and call the businesses. We figured if we could get 36 sponsors, we'd put up one sign at a tee box and one where the greens are. Well, now we figure if we stick six signs up along the fairway, we're OK, too," she says.

The signs are professionally made and resemble real estate signs, and the shelter uses them to display pictures of adoptable animals along with sponsor names.

A big draw for the tournament is the opportunity to win major prizes for scoring a hole in one. There are four hole-in-one prize packages, each of which is associated with a different hole on the course; players can win \$10,000 in cash; two round-trip airline tickets to anywhere in the United States; an array of electronic equipment (audio, video, computer); or a set of Callaway Big Bertha driving irons. The shelter actually has to buy hole-in-one insurance, just in case participants do hit a hole in one.

There has to be a witness at each hole where golfers can win one of these prizes, so a shelter volunteer is stationed at each throughout the day. Derusha's found a way to capitalize on this use of manpower. "So while the volunteers are sitting there, we give them a roll of tickets and have them sell 50/50 raffle tickets. Say you buy five tickets for \$20. The \$20 goes into the pot, and at the end of the day, we draw a number out of a bucket. The winner gets half the money that was raised in the pot that day, and the shelter gets the other half," she says.

The Menominee Animal Shelter in Menominee, Mich., launched its Annual "Dog Days of Summer" golf outing in 2006. Left to right: Gina Panske, shelter board member; Carol Lindbom, former board member; Julie Derusha, shelter president and co-chair of the fundraising committee; and Terri Derusha, hole sponsor and shelter supporter.

Derusha also sets up a volunteer at a mulligan table, where golfers can buy a mulligan (a golfing term for a do-over or a retaken swing) for \$10 apiece, with a limit of two per participant. There's also a table set up with silent auction items, where golfers can write down their bids; that's a moneymaker, too.

Derusha finds every possible way to bring in more cash for the animals, and she has advice about how to make such a fundraiser a success.

First, keep the entrance fee down. Some people have advised her to raise the fee to play to \$200 per person in order to bring in more money, but Derusha resists that idea. She says that in her community, few would be willing to pony up that kind of cash to play in a charity tournament.

Second, make it a quality event. Treat participants to a good time and give them their money's worth. "A fun event is going to attract people who are not such good golfers, as well as people who are good golfers," Derusha says. "Give them something that other people [doing fundraisers] aren't giving them." AS

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