



# CHARTING A NEW COURSE for Girls in Chester County



**WHEN YOU THINK OF GOLF**, what do you envision? Well-to-do men in green blazers on a lush country club course? That image is certainly a common stereotype. It's also a view that Girls Golf Revolution is going to change!

*By Eric MacCluen, Director of Instruction, Applecross Golf Academy and Founder, Girls Golf Revolution*

## The Set-Up

In 1989 after I graduated from North Carolina State University, I took a job as a teaching professional at the public Delcastle Golf Club in Wilmington, Delaware. I ran the driving range and served as an instructor, while practicing my golf game under the mentorship of Bill Hackett, the club's owner. As an instructor for four years, I enjoyed teaching and built a large clientele. A few young golfers were turning into low-handicap players, tournament victories were coming to a reality for some of my male and female students.

In the early 1990's high school golf throughout the state of Delaware and in nearby Chester County, Pennsylvania, consisted of teams of boys. Occasionally a girl filled a team position. However, odds were always stacked against the female students to thrive, especially when they had to play against the boys from the same

*Left to Right: Rosie Byrne, Lilly Byrne, Caitlin Brogan, Abbie Bain*

*"Winners of the Applecross 2013 Girls Travel Golf League"*

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tees—playing from the same distance from the holes. Girls also dealt with discriminatory and immature behavior of their male counterparts. Often the boys talked during a girl's backswing and made other attempts to distract her.

No boy ever wanted to lose to a girl. Occasionally, coaches and schoolmates made derisive comments. Once, a coach tossed a pink ball to his male player after the boy was beaten by one of our girls. This supported what I often told the girls—they may be at a disadvantage at the beginning of a match against a boy, but in the end, the mere pressure the boys imposed upon themselves of a possible defeat—the girls could have the advantage in a close scoring match.

Being a huge fan of the underdog, I was proud that three of my female students played number one on their respective boys' high school teams. I watched many opposing coaches shake their head in frustration. Although playing in top spots on boys' teams must have been a boon for these three girls, this was not typical for the masses of girls in the region. The golf course wasn't a welcoming landscape for the average girl who didn't have superb natural talent. Furthermore, at the time it didn't occur to me how hard it must have been for girls to deal with the boys, and to endure the situation that there was no other option but with playing on a boys' team. It had just always been that way.

The three girls—Kim, Collette and Stefanie—earned college scholarships. Kim attended Auburn University where the golf team was ranked first in the country. Collette went to Hill College in Texas, finished second at National Championships and went on to compete on the Futures Tour. Stefanie received a scholarship to Wake Forest University, transferred and graduated from the University of South Carolina and became a successful golf coach at East Tennessee State University. Stefanie has been recognized as "Coach of the Year" 4 times in the Atlantic Sun Conference.

Today, twenty-five years into my teaching career, I enter my fourth season as the Director of Instruction at Applecross Golf Academy at the Applecross Country Club in Downingtown. To date, more than 100 of my students, 60 of them female, have received college scholarships for golf. Unfortunately, one thing has hardly changed. For the most part, girls still must play on boys' teams and their opponents are still males; only a few high schools in our area have girls-only golf teams. They remain the "underdog" when they may have to compete on boys' teams. So, after all these years, I have come to realize that it was time for change...time to bring change for girls in the game of golf.

## Follow-Through

In order to make golf more accessible to girls, I set the goal of raising funds and beginning an organization that would chart a new course for golf for girls.

In a discussion about these goals with Bob and Liz Frame, parents of a daughter in Applecross's junior golf program, Liz simply stated, "Bob and I are going to help you with this." Before I knew it, they connected me with Joe Bellinghieri, a foundation attorney who handled the paperwork to start the organization. With help from a student's father, Rob Heflin, the name of the group was coined—Girls Golf Revolution. Just weeks later, Linzell Harris, head of manufacturing for Godiva Chocolate Company, offered the tag line—"Bringing girls to the game of golf." A follow-through of collective enthusiasm brought Girls Golf Revolution to a reality.

As of February 2014, Girls Golf Revolution is establishing a board of directors and infrastructure. Its goals are to:

-  Promote the game of golf to girls through free clinics, school gym classes and similar activities.
-  Develop a mentoring program to introduce young female golfers and business leaders through the game of golf.



-  Help fund instructional programs for interested players.
-  Create opportunities to educate girls about playing golf as a way to enhance college experiences and future careers.
-  Teach girls about charitable giving and provide opportunities to volunteer at non-profit organizations or at charitable events.
-  Help fund expenses for local golfers to play at national and regional events.
-  Help provide programs at high schools that do not have a team.
-  Establish a junior advisory board/committee, in addition to its board of directors, to help govern Girls Golf Revolution.

Many parents, golf professionals, and local organizations and businesses have reached out with time, funding and in-kind support to help us overcome many challenges. 

## YOU Can Help!



You can join others—Applecross Country Club, Marsh Creek Community Church, staff professionals, Bob Heintz, Mike Reynolds, Cathy Cook Russell, a mobile unit of Rita's Water Ice, Godiva Chocolate and many others—in helping chart a new course in golf. Here's what you can provide:

-  Funds
-  Used clubs
-  Golf balls
-  Teaching aids including golf books, videos, DVDs
-  Public facilities—such as churches, school gyms, soccer fields or local parks—where instructors can introduce the game of golf to both boys and girls in our area.

**For more information, please contact Eric MacCluen at 484.888.6611 or [macleson@applecrosscc.com](mailto:macleson@applecrosscc.com)**

# Bringing *Girls* to the Game of *Golf*

*Eric MacCluen's current and former students along with teaching professional, Cathy Russell, talk about golf—the challenges and benefits and focusing on the positive to give the game of golf their best.*



## *Stefania Fedun*

Nine-year-old Stefania Fedun has played golf since first grade. She loves to swing a club and see how far the ball can go. According to Stefania, she feels confident “because I can play with the boys.” When asked if more girls should play golf, she replied, “Yes, because it is fun to play!” Stefania strives to move into first place on the league she plays on!



## *Rylie Heflin*

Rylie Heflin loves playing golf on sunny days with her dad. The ten-year-old says the game builds her confidence and has learned to remain positive after a bad hole or a bad shot. Two years ago, she won a regional tournament in Florida and ended up delivering a victory speech. “It made me feel amazing!” Rylie recounted.



## *Liddie McCook*

Keep an eye on Liddie McCook, who began playing golf at three years old, started working with Eric MacCluen at age six, and says she likes hitting the ball “really hard.” For Liddie, making new friends and being with old friends are two of the reasons she likes the sport.

Liddie’s biggest golf challenge came in 2012 when she was playing with family members. After a tough hole, she was ready to quit. “My papa said, ‘Liddie, this is when

you need to dig deep and just play your game. Forget the last hole.’ I focused on my swing and continued to play.” She did; a par on the next hole and a subsequent hole-in-one taught her to never give up. “Golf is a great experience!” she asserts. The continuous challenges keep it interesting.



## *Esther Park*

At 13 years old, seventh grader Esther Park has been playing golf for five years. She enjoys spending time outdoors when playing golf with friends and envisions a future in the game. Esther says that the sport teaches her to focus and to know when not to goof off, a lesson that the self-admitted class clown finds valuable. She has won numerous tournaments over the past five years and was the 13 year old scoring average leader for the Philadelphia Section Junior Tour. “I hate when adults say that girls can’t play [golf],” Esther says. “I definitely want more girls to play.”



## *Samantha Staudt*

“Golf is unique,” says Samantha Staudt, a tenth-grade Coatesville Area Senior High School student who has played for six years. “You can play it for the rest of your life. It’s a physically demanding sport, but not a contact sport.” The winner of multiple tournaments points to golf as providing future possibilities—“the opportunity to get into a good college of my choice, playing on corporate teams or in the business world.”



## **Stefanie Shelton**

“I was introduced to the game of golf during a golf clinic with Eric MacCluen when I was 14,” says Stefanie Shelton, head women’s golf coach at East Tennessee State University. “His daily dedication to me as a young golfer allowed me to quickly excel in the game and love the time and process of improvement.

His ability to challenge individuals to be their very best makes Eric not only one of the best golf instructors, but also a tremendous life and golf coach.

Golf is a unique sport that challenges individuals to discover the mental and physical skills needed to succeed: to overcome fear and self-doubt, and to compete with a strong sense of confidence in your game and in yourself,” she continues.

“Every day on the golf course is a day of personal growth.”

The recipient of college scholarships for playing golf and successful university golf coach attributes much of her success to MacCluen’s teaching. She encourages others to pick up the sport.

“Many opportunities and doors are open to girls who play golf including college scholarships, business opportunities, and simply the enjoyment of a game for life.”



## **Cathy Cook Russell**

Applecross Golf Academy is excited to have Cathy Cook Russell join our staff as a Teaching Professional. Both Cathy and her brother, PGA Tour/Champions Tour member John Cook, started their golf careers in the early 60’s at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio and have worked with many of the best and most respected teachers in the business.

Being part of the original team which pioneered the development of The First Tee, Cathy started the local chapter of The First Tee of Cooks Creek in Central Ohio. Currently, Cathy is the head coach of a very successful women’s golf program at Great Valley High School.

“I’m excited to be part of Applecross’ Family of Teaching Professionals and I look forward to bringing a special dimension of expertise in working with women, girls, Little Linksters and especially, families as their own ‘group.’”

Cathy’s favorite quote to her students, “Does this shot scare you? It shouldn’t, here, let me show you how!” Cathy is enthusiastic about the opportunity of helping inspire young girls and women and families, in general, with playing the wonderful game of golf.

Cathy can be contacted via email at [CathyCookRussell@yahoo.com](mailto:CathyCookRussell@yahoo.com) or by text/call to 484.905.2827.



# FREE GOLF LESSONS All Girls Grades 4th-10th

Saturday Afternoons in April  
Marsh Creek Church in Exton, PA  
[www.ericmaccluengolf.com](http://www.ericmaccluengolf.com)

Bringing girls to the game of golf.

Like us on Facebook for updates: [www.facebook.com/girlsgolffleague](http://www.facebook.com/girlsgolffleague)



## 2014 Girls Free Golf Clinic Registration Form

- Please note that all clinics will be held at Marsh Creek Church in Exton, Pa.
- Eric MacCluen Golf kindly requests that you complete one registration form per child for the series.
- All registration forms must be received by March 31<sup>st</sup> in an effort to provide adequate staff.
- We are going to take the first 50 girls in each session. Categories will be: Grades 4-6, 7-8, High School
- Session 1: Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm and Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm
- Session 2: Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm and Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm

Please submit registration forms in person to the golf shop or by mail to: Applecross Country Club, Attn: Eric MacCluen Golf, 170A Zynn Road, Downingtown, PA 19335.

You may also scan and email to: [maclesson@applecrosscc.com](mailto:maclesson@applecrosscc.com)

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Age of Junior: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone 1: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone 2: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

Session Choice: 1) or 2) (Please Circle)

Are you a member of a Country Club? Y or N If yes which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need golf equipment? Y or N Right-handed or Left- Handed (Please Circle)

If yes, what is your child's height in inches? \_\_\_\_\_

For more academy information please go to [www.ericmaccluengolf.com](http://www.ericmaccluengolf.com).  
Eric MacCluen can also be reached at 484-888-6611 or [maclesson@applecrosscc.com](mailto:maclesson@applecrosscc.com).

*"Eric MacCluen and Girls Golf Revolution are offering a great gift to the community and Marsh Creek Community Church is delighted to support that as an extension of our faith. Golfing offers kids and parents a chance to do something together—walking, playing and talking. My family has benefited from the sport and it's great for young women in the community."*

—Joel Schuster, Lead Pastor,  
Marsh Creek Community Church, provider  
of space for Girls Golf Revolution