

by **Patti Murphy**
photography courtesy **EWGA**

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—C.J. Ensign



FOR THE LADIES

The Executive Women's
Golf Association



The EWGA's "Big Break" event features various competitions like putting, driving and chipping.

[T]here is an urban legend that claims the word golf stands for "Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden."

Although the would-be acronym has no real foundation, one can see how easy it might be to buy into such an idea, given that golf has historically been associated with men conducting important business on the links, while their women waited at home for them.

In truth, women golfers across the country now number in the millions, and organized ladies golf groups are both the impetus for, and the benefactor of, women's growing interest in the sport.

The largest of these groups is the Executive Women's Golf Association (EWGA), which was founded in 1991 and currently boasts more than 20,000 members in 120 chapters across the United States, Canada, and France. Idaho has its own chapter in the Boise/Treasure Valley area, which has grown from 18 members to more than 215 since its inception in 2002.

EWGA members are all ages, all skill levels, and range from elected officials, bankers, lawyers and realtors, to authors, personal trainers, government

employees, small business owners and yes, golf pros.

Although the members are as diverse as their individual handicaps, a common theme surfaces when asked about the benefits of EWGA membership. Almost unanimously, they point to the friendships that have been made while learning and playing golf in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment.

"It's a fun, inclusive organization that welcomes women of all—or no—golfing skills," said Garden City Councilwoman Pam Beaumont, who has been a member for nine years. "Women are able to play and improve their skills in a non-threatening, non-competitive way. For me, the most beneficial thing has been meeting new women to golf and socialize with, many who have become good friends off the golf course."

Laura Canales, a Boise CPA, agrees and tells the story of her first year in the organization when she was paired-up in a scramble with Deb Hess, then EWGA's regional and national champion. "She made me feel as if the difference in our skill levels was irrelevant," Canales said. "We were there to have fun and she never made me feel that my

ability hampered the progress or the efforts of our team. That sort of patience and inclusiveness is so common among our members."

EWGA hosts a full calendar of clinics, networking activities, rules and etiquette seminars, mentor matchups, casual play, charity tournaments and national and a local championship series designed to include golfers of all playing abilities. The organization even finds golfing partners for its members. Eagle resident Diana Tetreault said her handicap has dropped to 33 from over 40 in just two years of EWGA membership, which she said is, "a direct result of the support from the other women, clinics and practice."

But EWGA isn't all golf, all the time. The chapter also hosts cooking classes, bowling, self-defense classes, parties and shared events with EWGA chapters in other states. In addition, it is deeply committed to supporting several charitable organizations, according to Boise/Treasure Valley Chapter President Deborah Hess.

"The Boise/Treasure Valley Chapter has raised and donated more than \$100,000 to the *continued on page 30*

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FOR THE LADIES

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community in the last nine years," said Hess. Last year's beneficiaries were Idaho Food Bank, Women's and Children's Alliance, Dress for Success, the LPGA-PGA Junior Girls Golf and The First Tee, which focuses on giving young people an opportunity to learn golf and develop values like honesty, integrity and sportsmanship (see story page 10).

"Additionally," Hess added, "we help raise between \$8,000 and \$10,000 annually in the Rally for a Cure event, which we co-chair with the Spurwing Ladies Association, and we have a holiday giving event that raises money to purchase gifts for up to four needy families each year."

And what about the idea of conducting business on the golf course? While not a primary reason for joining, some members have found that the excellent networking and friendship opportunities can lead to new business.

Lynn Stroud, a Certified Personal Trainer and Weight Management Coach, said that playing golf with a constantly changing group of new people has given her many opportunities to share information about her business in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. Boise resident CJ Ensign, a Treasury Management Specialist with U.S. Bank, noted that last year the EWGA networking group encouraged members to invite clients to play golf.

"We discussed what to do and how to do it, what to wear, and how and when to bring up business topics during the game," she said.

And Canales said she also has gained new clients, but more importantly, she often refers business opportunities to fellow EWGA members because "I know and trust these women."

Trust, fun, learning and, most of all, friendship are the common words EWGA members use to explain their involvement in the group. The personal relationships fostered by EWGA have been life changing for some, including Ensign who talks about the support she



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The annual "New Member Mixer" is an opportunity for Board Members to get together with new members to help the new ladies learn about EWGA and set the stage for fun.


received as a new member when her husband died suddenly in 2009.

"A lot of what went on at that time is still a blur to me, but what is very clear is how my new EWGA friends called me, brought me food, kept me company and helped me wade through paperwork and processes. God bless them," she said


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—Garden City Councilwoman Pam Beaumont


Ensign recalls how Beaumont organized other members and made all the arrangements for the reception at her home after the funeral. "The Ladies came, they took over and they cleaned up. When I thanked Pam again for everyone's kindness she told me, 'If it was someone else you would have been at the front of the line to volunteer, too.' And she was right.

"I often tease Pam and say for an annual membership of about \$100 I get more than 100 friends for less than a dollar each, and every one of them is worth the world to me." 

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