

Golf

A golf association run by women, for women

Markham resident started club that offers programs, instruction and events for women golfers

By **BRUCE STAPLEY**
Correspondent

The National Women's Golf Network expects 1997 to be a season of continued rapid growth.

The network saw its membership catapult from 400 to 900 in its first two seasons, with an anticipated 1,000 female golfers in the Greater Toronto Area expected to take part this year.

Founded by Markham resident Mary Kraus, the network offers a golf program for females which includes instruction and weekly play and social activities.

At present there are 40 courses in the GTA acting as host clubs, with 10 in the Stouffville-Markham area.

"I believe this is a valuable program," said Kraus, who is the president of the network and teacher at Markham District High School.

She took a one-year leave of absence from her job to involve herself on a full-time basis with the women's golf outfit.

"We as women need a program that represents us."

Members meet at 5 pm on a specified afternoon to play nine holes of golf at the host club of their choice.

A pro is on hand to give tips to individual golfers before they tee off.

"Each course has a host club director who is a volunteer member of our organization," said Kraus.

That person oversees the program, from golf through the social aspect.

Events bringing together members from all participating clubs are also planned.

Members are invited to a champagne and orange juice brunch at the Sporting Life at Sherway Gardens in Mississauga, May 25. The women are then gathering for shopping, followed by a two-hour golf clinic at the nearby Lion Head

golf course. Markham's Angus Glen golf course will also offer clinics for members at discounted prices this season.

The association will host three charity tournaments throughout the 1997 season.

In addition, a golf excursion to a Collingwood area resort has been scheduled for July.

Today, there are approximately 30 members from the Stouffville area.

The Maples of Balantrae Golf Club and 4 Seasons Golf and Country Club in Claremont are among the host clubs.

While the membership list currently includes mostly GTA residents, Kraus is out to make the network a

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Canada-wide organization.

To that end, she is inviting women's golf leagues from across the country to participate in the National League Challenge.

The event will see each league send its top three golfers to a championship playoff at the Angus Glen facility.

Leagues must only have 10 members to take part, although the Spalding company has

offered to donate a set of golf clubs to any league of 50 or more.

Kraus said the Spalding offer is typical of the assistance the network is receiving as golf-related companies set out to attract the growing number of women players.

"We're getting lots of corporate support."

Kraus said the network is becoming popular because women are becoming mainstream players on the fairways of Canada.

"It's being run by women, for women. In golf, women have always been left on their own and basically told 'Good luck.'"

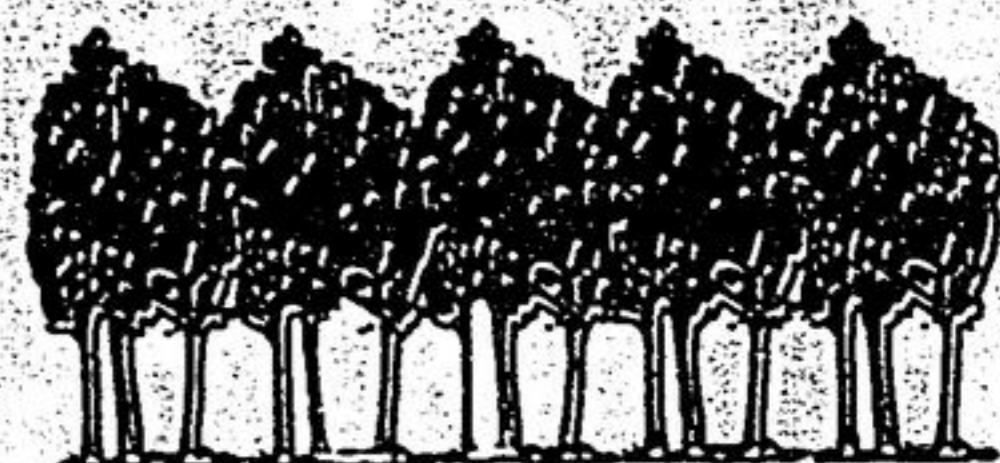
She said the response to the organization is indicative of the demand.

"Every time we do a mail out, we get 100 calls a day. The network is the only one of its kind in Canada."

fees are \$135.

For details contact the National Women's Golf Network at 905-415-1270.

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