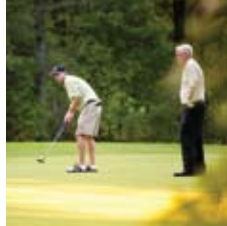


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# Meeting our Mission

Record-breaking attendance at the 2009 MorganFranklin Golf Classic



## The 2009 MorganFranklin Golf Classic

by Melinda Crowley

Despite the difficult economic climate, signs of a recession could not be found on Aug. 31 at the fifth annual MorganFranklin Golf Classic benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project. The sold-out event drew an overwhelming amount of support for the nonprofit organization, which assists men and women of the armed forces who have been severely injured in conflicts around the world. MorganFranklin proudly presented the WWP with a check for \$67,000 that evening, and donations continue to roll in. Proving that a tough economy is no match for the generosity of the community, MorganFranklin has donated \$332,000 to date in cash and in-kind contributions to the WWP.

“Words cannot express how thrilled we are with this year’s tournament. Even in these tough economic times, our participants recognized the importance of supporting the WWP and for the first time in the event’s history, we were sold out,” said event organizers Jeana Foster and Janet Franco.

A record-breaking 248 golfers and more than a dozen volunteers converged on The Courses at Andrews Air Force Base to honor the sacrifices of returning heroes, more than 30,000 of whom have been wounded in recent conflicts. The WWP provides services and programs that ease the burdens of the most seriously wounded veterans and their families, and in the recovery process, smooth the transition back to civilian life.

“The golf tournament was amazing. As usual, MorganFranklin delivered an excellent opportunity for our wounded warriors,” said R.J. Meade, senior benefits liaison of the WWP, who explained that golf is often part of the rehabilitation process for many wounded soldiers. “MorganFranklin has

helped us continue to meet our mission to honor and empower wounded warriors, and we look forward to working together again in the future.”

The morning’s overcast skies quickly blossomed into a beautiful, sun-filled day. Following CIO and President of Public Services Rob Franklin’s welcome speech, Meade thanked the eager golfers for supporting the nation’s greatest citizens—U.S. veterans. Despite some technical difficulties, SFC Patrick Sobolik of the U.S. Army Chorus was unphased by the failing microphone and delivered an a cappella rendition of the national anthem before the golfers loaded into their carts for the tournament’s shotgun start.

In addition to playing a full round of golf—and dodging some pesky gophers—the players also competed for prizes and bragging rights in contests for putting, hitting the longest drive, and landing closest to the pin. But for some golfers, the meaning behind the event took precedence over the competition.

“The tournament is obviously larger than just a round of golf. So when Tom Roland and I found out that we had both hit the longest drives and won new golf clubs, we thought it would be fitting to give them to the two Wounded Warrior representatives to honor their service, albeit a small token of appreciation,” said Jamie Durnil, a senior manager in the Public Services business unit.

After a grueling day of golf, the 62 foursomes returned to the pavilion for the awards and dinner reception, emceed by NBA play-by-play announcer Steve Buckhantz. The tournament winners claimed their prizes, while other participants placed their bets in the silent auction. During the downtime, Buckhantz entertained the crowd with jokes, but his antics were interrupted when a loud jet flew overhead. Once it passed, Buckhantz cleverly remarked, “That is the sound of freedom.”

“It was a fantastic day to be at Andrews Air Force Base, watching Air Force One and Air Force Two land, golfing with all of our friends in the community, and raising money for our wounded soldiers who have sacrificed so much for our freedom and security,” said MorganFranklin CEO and co-founder Bob Morgan.

Undoubtedly the most compelling moment of the golf classic was when WWP Warriors to Work Program Director and double amputee U.S. Army 1st Lt. Ryan Kules delivered a heartrending and uplifting speech recounting his journey as a wounded veteran. Kules lost his right arm and left leg in 2005 when a roadside bomb struck his Humvee in Iraq just months before his tour of duty was ending.

“The day was perfect, but the most amazing moment was when one of our wounded warriors shared his story. Through my own tear-filled eyes, I could see that there wasn’t a dry eye in the room. It really drove home the reason why we hold this tournament every year. He is truly an amazing individual,” said Foster, senior manager of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Receiving a massive standing ovation that lasted for several minutes, Kules shared the story of his injury and recovery, bringing silence to the captivated crowd.

“Ryan has no problem telling his story and sharing his journey. We weren’t the only organization helping him after his injury, but when he had questions and needs, we were there for him to give him a home,” Meade said, noting that Kules, like many beneficiaries of the WWP, is now giving back by helping fellow wounded warriors. “Our logo shows one soldier carrying another. And we hope that when it’s all said and done and that injured soldier is able to recuperate and return from the hospital, they become the one carrying their fellow soldiers.” ♥

