“Tommy’s Honour” Premiere Movie Event - A Huge Success for TFTMNY

April 12, 2017 - The New York City premiere of “Tommy’s Honour” proved to be a huge success earlier this year, drawing a crowd of 600+ attendees. This movie premiere held at the Lincoln Square Movie Theater raised over $150,000 for TFTMNY.

“We are so thankful to Mr. Whitney and all of our friends who supported this event that raised funds for expansion of our programs in New York City,” said Ed Brockner, Executive Director of TFTMNY. “This wonderful film celebrates the roots of the game of golf that led to the growth of the game that we know today.”

Starring Peter Mullan, Jack Lowden, and Ophelia Lovibond, the Jason Connery directed film explores the complicated father-son relationship of Old Tom and Young Tom Morris of St. Andrews in the 19th century and the popularization of golf as early pioneers in the game.

A Q&A session was held following the conclusion of the movie, where attendees had the opportunity to ask the actors, directors, producers (one of which was our very own chairman - Ken Whitney), and author any questions about the making of the movie and its storyline. Thank you again to everyone who made this movie and event possible!
What do you think the transition from middle school to high school will be like?
I feel like it’s not going to be too hard. I think I’ll be able to handle it (because) we have to take ninth grade classes (now) like Algebra, Earth Science, and U.S. History.

What excites you most about going to Cardinal Spellman?
I haven’t been to Catholic school in a while, so I wanted a new experience. I feel like Spellman is way more rigorous than I’ve ever experienced. I’ll meet a lot of people and will get the support I need. Spellman will give me a wide range of resources, and I think I’ll get better at prioritizing my time and studying.

How has the Path to College Program helped prepare you for Cardinal Spellman?
With the ACE Scholars program, (there’s) a high school aspect, and I’ve learned more about Cardinal Spellman through that. They teach us vocabulary words and how to prioritize our time. That’s great because that’s what I need. They also helped me in the beginning to choose schools to apply to and to figure out what I was looking for.

What has been the most valuable part of that experience?
Tutoring is on the weekends for me, and my tutor Jonathan has really helped me. The tutors are great. They know you; Jonathan knows me, not just as a student but as a person, like a friend. I had to make a PowerPoint one time, and he helped me organize it and make sure I had everything I needed to get a good grade.

What is your favorite subject?
Math, definitely Math.

What are your long-term goals?
I want to be a Computer Scientist. I’d like to go to a good college that offers that program and also play golf on the side. There is actually a Computer Science program at Spellman, so I’d like to join that.

Do you intend to play golf while at Cardinal Spellman?
Yes. They don’t have a golf team, but if I did get enough people and a teacher to support me, I could start a golf club.

Who is the biggest influence in your life and why?
I look up to my parents. I follow what they do. They’re the kind of people I want to be like, especially my mom. They teach me what to do in certain situations, and they help me in life in general. They’re just really good people, and I feel like I’ve learned a lot from them. They’ve guided me on the right track to get me where I am.

If you could play golf with anyone, present or past, who would it be and why?
Lexi Thompson. She’s a golfer and plays in the LPGA. I feel like playing with her because she’s really well known and accomplished. I could learn a lot from her golf-wise and life-wise.

ACE Scholar Olivia Sexton Talks Golf and School

Recently, TFTMNY intern Christina DeBartolomeo had the opportunity to sit down with accomplished golfer and ACE Scholar Olivia Sexton, this year’s recipient of the Pat Boyle Scholarship to Cardinal Spellman High School. Olivia, who will be a freshman at Spellman this fall, shared with us her time as an ACE Scholar, how the Path to College Program has prepared her for this transition from middle school to high school, how she hopes to form a golf club at her new school, and more!

Isaiah Johnson Earns Scholarship

May 24, 2017 - Isaiah Johnson received the 2017 Matthew Wallace Foundation Scholarship at the Mount Saint Michael Academy Sports Awards Dinner.

Isaiah, who will attend Mount Saint Michael Academy and play on the lacrosse team in the fall, was recognized for his hard work and determination both in and outside of the classroom.

In his application Isaiah discussed his academics and involvement in sports as well as his plans for college and his future, according to his mom Krystal. He also discussed how his life experiences related to the legacy that the late Matthew Wallace left behind.

Isaiah had a chance to meet Matthew Wallace’s brother, Mark Wallace, who’s the lacrosse coach at Mount Saint Michael Academy. Mark and Isaiah discussed the lacrosse team, and Mark gifted Isaiah with a lacrosse stick and a ball, so Isaiah can practice and get ready for the fall season.
Weequahic Park Golf Course
Grand Reopening

May 22, 2017 - The grand opening of Weequahic Park Golf Course culminated a year-long process that transformed The First Tee of Essex County’s facility in Newark, New Jersey. Led by County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, who championed the project, a number of speakers and crowd of supporters gathered to mark this exciting occasion.

The renovated clubhouse, parking lot and brand new practice putting green were completed to benefit the kids of our program. “We wanted to make it first class for The First Tee,” said DiVincenzo. “We redid the whole building, fixed up the parking lot, and fixed up all the practice facilities for over 500 kids who come here.” The rain didn’t seem to dampen the day, as attendees walked around and explored the new and improved facilities.

Among those who spoke was Executive Director of TFTMNY Ed Brockner. “This project would not have been possible without the county or the Ryan and Wilf families,” said Ed. “I also want to thank Katie Brenny for the amazing job that she does in running the successful program here at Weequahic Park. Because of her, the kids have a safe place to come to and to mature into adults.”

Katie Brenny, the Program Director of The First Tee of Newark, told the story of Nia, a former TFT participant. Nia, who grew up close to the facility, would spend her days at Weequahic Park. Never having been to a college campus before, Nia got the opportunity from TFT to visit Yale. Through TFT tutoring and guidance, she was admitted to Yale on a full scholarship in 2015. Katie explained that Nia is just one of many participants that take part in the program at the Newark location.

“Thanks to the county and TFT supporters, we now have a beautiful facility to continue doing this work for the kids,” said Katie.

In addition to the Wilf and Ryan families, special thanks also to Jim Rogers and Mike Mikolajczyk of Rogers McCagg for their amazing clubhouse planning and architecture work, and Stephen Kay for his innovative golf course design and site design that our students and the public will enjoy for decades to come!
April 27, 2017 - Each and every year, the Young Benefactors continue to raise the bar, and the 8th Annual 19th Hole on the Square event was no exception. Held at Golf & Body NYC, over 200 attendees came out to support The First Tee’s Path to College Program. Upon arrival, guests were welcomed to a number of silent auction prizes, networking opportunities, and this year’s golf simulator competitions that fascinated the crowd.

Highlights of the night included opening remarks by Executive Director Ed Brockner thanking everyone for attending and showing their support. Ed then introduced Sally-Jane Lombardo-Kaiser of The First Tee who received a $5,000 scholarship from the Young Benefactors. Additionally, Sally-Jane is the recipient of the Lew Rudin Scholarship, which will support her for four years at NYU starting this fall. She thanked The First Tee, the Path to College Program, and the Young Benefactors for the amazing opportunity to attend her dream school.

Young Benefactors Executive Committee Members Chelsea Hanse and Matthew Ricks were also honored as this year’s recipients of the Kate Keller Young Benefactors Founder Award. Chelsea and Matthew have been instrumental in developing more fundraising opportunities and leading the Young Benefactors throughout the year.

“We would like to thank New York Life for its Title Sponsorship of the Young Benefactors and its longstanding support of our Chapter,” said Ed Brockner. “Combined with the personal generosity of our Young Benefactors Committee and event donors, New York Life allows us to have a tremendous impact on students through our Path to College initiative.”

Money raised from this event assists participants in their preparation for college through workshops and other critical tools and skills. Since 2008, the Young Benefactors has successfully raised more than $1 million to support this program through fundraising events, matching grants, and corporate scholarships.
Whitney Family Scholarship Recipient, Sal Rainone

Salvatore “Sal” Rainone, a member of TFTMNY since 2008, has been named one of three recipients of the Whitney Family Scholarship, from which he will receive $5,000 a year for four years to support his college education. Sal will attend Hofstra University in the fall and expressed his gratitude for the scholarship. “I was one of three very fortunate scholars to have received this scholarship,” said Sal. “It will allow me to go to college with fewer loans and a lessened financial burden, and I am extremely grateful.” He also thanked his parents and his golf coach and friend Anthony Rodriguez, whom he looks up to and appreciates for helping him get to where he is today. “The biggest influences in my life are my parents and Anthony,” said Sal. “They only want the best for me. I owe all of my success to them and thank them for being by my side.”

Anthony Rodriguez, Director of NYC Player Development, was thrilled to hear the news. “The first thing that comes to my mind about Salvatore is that he comes from a caring family with strong values and work ethic. That combination and Salvatore’s inner drive to constantly better himself as a golfer and those around him by volunteering younger participants are why I believe he earned this great honor in receiving The Whitney Family Scholarship”.

Sal will graduate from Leon M. Goldstein High School this month and will study engineering at Hofstra. “I will have an opportunity to pursue the field of engineering,” said Sal. “And I will work very hard at it.” While he has engineering on his mind, he also hopes to play for the college golf team, continuing his love for golf, which he showcased on his high school’s team all four years. “I will continue to play golf for as long as possible and hope to play on the golf team at Hofstra,” said Sal. And it’s not just engineering and the college golf team on Sal’s mind. My long-term goal in life is to one day play golf professionally,” said Sal. “It is a dream of mine to play a sport that I love for a living. “It will take a lot of hard work and dedication, but anything is possible.”

When asked who he’d pick if he could play golf with anyone, Sal responded with Rory McIlroy. “He’s the reason why I became so passionate about golf,” said Sal, who has looked up to Rory since Rory’s huge wins in 2014. “He made me want to become better.”

Sal looks forward to continuing his role at TFT as a volunteer, and to the next four years at Hofstra, which wouldn’t be possible without the Whitney Family Scholarship.

Cameren Dawkins Selected for Life Skills & Leadership Academy

Cameren Dawkins of The First Tee of Essex County has been selected to attend the 2017 Life Skills and Leadership Academy, a unique opportunity which takes places at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, from July 26 to August 1. This will be the second time he’s attended the Academy.

Cameren, who will be a junior at Union Catholic Regional High School in the fall and has been playing golf for 10 years, plays for Union Catholic’s varsity golf team and is also involved in various clubs and extracurricular activities.

“I’m looking forward to learning more about golf and improving my golf game,” said Cameren, when asked what he’s most excited for during his time at the Academy. The Academy will also give him the opportunity to check out Michigan State University’s campus and student life. As his junior year nears, he’s begun looking at schools and hopes to study biomechanics.

He’s also excited to take chemistry in the fall and continue playing for his high school’s golf team.
The Presidents Cup Fan Experience - A free, unique event open to the public

The Oculus, the lynchpin of the World Trade Center Transportation Hub that opened last August in lower Manhattan, will host the 2017 Presidents Cup Fan Experience. The $4 billion train station will offer plenty for fans and commuters to do during the week of the tournament, no ticket needed. The Presidents Cup 2017 takes place at Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, New Jersey, Sept. 26-Oct. 1, Tuesday through Sunday of the week, the Oculus will also feature a variety of interactive and fascinating activities.

Attendees will join forces to complete the 44 Million Yard Challenge, attempting to collectively drive a golf ball around the world and raise money for charity. Attendees will also be able to, in the words of Ty Webb, “be the ball,” as the 4D Immersive Dome Experience will give people the chance to experience iconic New York and New Jersey locales from the perspective of a golf ball of a Presidents Cup participant.

Fans will also enjoy delicacies from around the world as part of the Global Tasting Adventure. Plus, the Oculus will feature limited-edition Presidents Cup merchandise fans can purchase outside of Liberty National.

Everyone attending or passing by will have the opportunity to see and hear live updates from Liberty National, take part in potential meet-and-greets and autograph signings with dignitaries from the world of golf, and track social engagements and fan moments captured on state-of-the-art LED screens, including a 6-foot globe that follows the 44 Million Yard Challenge.

Tickets for the Presidents Cup are available via [www.presidentscup.com](http://www.presidentscup.com) or by calling 888-401-8000.