



First Tee – South Puget Sound

First Tee – South Puget Sound is a youth development organization dedicated to empowering children through the game of golf. With a mission to build inner strength, self-confidence, and resilience in kids, First Tee seamlessly integrates golf with life skills education, creating transformative experiences that shape young lives. For the past seven years, First Tee – South Puget Sound has partnered with Greater Giving to enhance their fundraising efforts, particularly through two key events: “Tee Up & Wine Down” and the “Harbottle Golf Classic.”



Challenge

As a nonprofit organization focused on youth development, First Tee – South Puget Sound faced several challenges in executing their annual fundraising events. A key challenge was to diversify their donor base, and focus on more frequent touch points throughout the year. Additionally, they sought to create a more seamless and engaging experience for event attendees, balancing the need to raise funds with ensuring donors felt appreciated and valued. The challenge was to increase participation and donor engagement while maintaining the quality and impact of the events.



Greater Giving Fundraising Software played a crucial role in the success of both events, offering a user-friendly platform for **online bidding**, auction management, and ticket sales.

Solution

To address these challenges, First Tee – South Puget Sound introduced the “Tee Up Wine Down” event, specifically designed to engage a female-focused audience and broaden their supporter base. This event showcases mission-focused activities where attendees get to participate in live workshops much like a traditional First Tee program, all while in a fun and inviting environment.

For the “Harbottle Golf Classic” they collaborated with [D&K Events](#) to manage registration and event execution, ensuring a smooth process for attendees. By raising the price slightly, and bundling all-in-one entry fees that included raffle and drink tickets, they reduced the number of asks at check-in, creating a more streamlined experience that encouraged generosity during the Gala portion of the event.

The [Greater Giving Fundraising Software](#) played a crucial role in the success of both events, offering a user-friendly platform for **online bidding**, auction management, and ticket sales. The ability to run outstanding balances reports and customize receipts further enhanced post-event wrap-up and donor retention. The software’s event management capabilities allowed First Tee to replicate successful event layouts from previous years and track donor engagement, while the support from Greater Giving’s team ensured any issues were promptly addressed.





Results

The combined efforts led to outstanding results for both events. “Tee Up & Wine Down,” a ladies-only event designed to immerse participants in the First Tee experience, raised \$21,000, with a net revenue of \$13,000. The “Harbottle Golf Classic,” held in memory of founding board member John Harbottle III, surpassed expectations, generating over \$200,000 with a net revenue of \$150,000. These funds are crucial for supporting the program, especially as 60% of participants receive financial aid, and partnerships with groups like [BGCA](#), Kings in Training, and JBLM families enable free registration for many.

Both events saw high levels of engagement, with 104 attendees at Tee Up & Wine Down and 144 golfers (and up to 180 at dinner) at the Harbottle Golf Classic. The involvement of board members, sponsors, and new attendees helped strengthen relationships and expand the organization’s impact. The inclusion of unique auction items, such as a Jordan Spieth caddy round and signed major flags, added a special touch that resonated with participants.



Tips from First Tee – South Puget Sound

For organizations looking to host similar events, First Tee – South Puget Sound offers several valuable insights:

- **Streamline Attendee Experience:** Bundling tickets and minimizing asks at check-in can enhance donor satisfaction and increase overall generosity during the event.
- **Leverage Relationships for Auction Items:** Engaging board members and past donors can be instrumental in securing high-value auction items that resonate with your audience.
- **Invest in Donor Experience:** Ensuring donors feel valued and offering them a memorable experience can lead to higher returns in the long run.
- **Utilize Event Management Software:** Tools like Greater Giving can simplify event organization, enhance fundraising efforts, and improve post-event follow-up, ultimately contributing to the event’s success.
- **Create Lasting Traditions:** Building events that attendees look forward to year after year can strengthen donor loyalty and ensure long-term success.

By focusing on these strategies, First Tee – South Puget Sound continues to build character and change lives through the game of golf, one event at a time.