

Y kids take a swing at life lessons, thanks to Tom Sager Golf Academy

Former Holy Family Hospital CEO Tom Sager was passionate about golf. He believed it was a good way to learn how to deal with frustration, gain discipline and build relationships. This summer, eight boys and girls from the Lawrence and Methuen YMCAs got the chance to learn those skills while participating in the Tom Sager Golf Academy.

This joint venture of the Merrimack Valley YMCA, Renaissance Golf Club and the Sager Family Trust was started in 2011 in memory of Sager, an avid golfer who passed away in 2009. His wife, Barbara Sager, says she hopes the experience will have a positive, lifelong effect on the kids.

Among this year's participants were these Methuen YMCA youngsters: Dylan Cavanaugh, 12; Ezekiel Andino, 11; and Isaiah Andino, Zachary Vermette and Zachary Merlina, all 13.

During a breakfast held to kick off the season, Barbara Sager told the children how her husband borrowed a set of clubs

from his grandfather when he was a boy and learned to play golf on the public golf course across the street from his house. She told them he would be happy to know they are getting the chance to learn the game he loved and the life lessons that go with it.

Merrimack Valley YMCA Chief Operating Officer Frank Kenneally congratulated the kids for earning a place in this academy and advised them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn golf, learn leadership, and learn as much as they can about themselves.

The children attended the academy twice a week throughout the month of July – learning the mechanics and the rules of the game from golf pros, using equipment provided to them by the program. Coaches from the Merrimack Valley YMCA helped out with the program. In addition to the golf lessons, the children had the opportunity to eat lunch, swim in the pool, and take tours on a golf cart with Mrs. Sager.



Shown at the Tom Sager Golf Academy are (from left) Dylan Cavanaugh, 12; MVYMCA coach Mike McVeigh; Zachary Vermette, 13; Khimora Estevez, 11; Ezekiel Andino, 11; Barbara Sager; Misha Torres and Isaiah Andino, both 13; Edwin Durran, 11; MVYMCA coach Ryan McVann; and Zachary Merlina, 13. Courtesy photo

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recent past and co-sponsored their Spotlight on San Antonio itinerary and also their Spotlight on New Orleans program. We are familiar with the wonderful Spotlight concept and will be working with Collette in 2020 in connection with their Spotlight on Tuscany tour. The trip will begin and end in Methuen. A representative from our travel agency will accompany the group and act as liaison between our passengers and the Collette Tour manager.

Following is a description of what Collette's Spotlight in Tuscany entails:

Tuscany is a region in central Italy known for its history, its influence on the arts and its rolling countryside landscape dappled with lush vineyards and quaint villages. Tuscany and its regional capital Florence are recognized as the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. Tuscany is a major producer of wines, most notably Chianti. With its strong linguistic and cultural identity, Tuscany is often considered to be a "nation within a nation." Tuscany has become one of Italy's most popular vacation destinations. Its major tourist spots are Florence, Pisa, Siena, Lucca and San Gimignano. Collette's Spotlight on Tuscany itinerary includes visits to all five of them.

Florence is home to many masterpieces of Renaissance art and architecture. One of this city's most recognizable sights is the Duomo, a cathedral with a terracotta-tiled dome and magnificent bell tower by Giotto. Throughout the city's many galleries and museums, works of art by Michelangelo, da Vinci, Raphael, Titian and Botticelli are on display. One of Florence's architectural highlights is the picturesque Ponte Vecchio, a medieval stone arch pedestrian bridge, nowadays filled with jewelry stores. On the Spotlight tour, a full day is spent in Florence. After a morning city highlights

tour, the afternoon is at leisure, giving everyone the opportunity to explore the attractions most appealing to them.

No trip to Tuscany would be complete without a visit to Pisa and its famous Leaning Tower. Of course, a photo stop is on the agenda. But there's more to Pisa than just the Tower. There are more than 20 other major points of interest in Pisa, including museums, palaces, churches and bridges. After spending time in and around Pisa, the evening holds a special treat – a side trip to the Tuscan countryside for a cooking class featuring traditional Tuscan cuisine that takes advantage of the bounty of fresh local ingredients.

The day in Siena combines historical sightseeing (the city was first settled in 900 BC) with a visit to a Tuscan winery to meet the people responsible for some of Chianti's finest wines. Naturally, wine tasting is on the schedule. Lucca may be Italy's best-kept secret. It is a photographer's dream! Lucca is a walled city, with its Renaissance-era city walls still intact. Palaces, villas and museums abound here.

The hilltop village of San Gimignano is one of the most picturesque places in Tuscany. Vistas overlook the vineyards and landscape of Tuscany. A visit to a pecorino cheese farm includes an informative presentation and a cheese sampling. Later in the evening, a "Farewell to Tuscany" dinner party celebrates our last night in the magical, marvelous Tuscany countryside.

A completely free day has been set aside in the middle of the Tuscany stay to allow the chance to relax at leisure and enjoy the surroundings and quiet atmosphere of the resort hotel in the countryside. But for those who prefer to keep busy, an optional all-day excursion by train to the coastal area of Cinque Terre (Five Villages) is also offered.

All things considered, Collette's Spotlight on Tuscany program is a wonderful way to visit one of the most popular regions of Italy, steeped in history, art and culture, with a taste of local cuisine and wines. In May 2020, we will be experiencing this

extraordinary travel adventure.

Jim Keogh is the president of Cosmopolitan Travel & Cruise Center of Methuen.

ITALY

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Services of Collette Tour Manager.

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