

Club's 5th golf tourney raising funds for child abuse prevention

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By Alexandra Sanders, Journal Register News Service

MADISON — Get out your golf clubs and iron your polo shirt because the Exchange Club will be hosting its fifth annual golf tournament to raise money for child abuse prevention Monday at the Fox Hopyard Golf Club in East Haddam.

The tournament began when a few Exchange Club members who are interested in child abuse prevention and have an affinity for golf wanted to put together a charity event, said club spokesman Ashton Edwards.

The tournament was played for three years at the Madison Country Club, but the members decided that the location wasn't central enough.

"We really are the shoreline exchange club," said Edwards, "Our boundaries range from New Haven to New London."

The fundraiser, sponsored by Bank NY Mellon, benefits the Parent and Child Center of Bristol, Kidsafe CT, Exchange Club Parenting Skills Center, Exchange club Family Life Center, as well as the National Exchange Club. The fundraisers heighten awareness about the issue and contribute to organizations that can make a difference in children's' lives.

"BNY Mellon is pleased to support the Exchange Club's mission of addressing the needs of children at risk and applauds the Exchange Club's focus on the prevention of child abuse through its many and diverse parent aid and child safety programs [and] in its vital fundraising efforts by taking this sponsorship position in its 5th Annual Golf Classic," said Maureen O'Connor, Bank NY Mellon director of sales.

"[The funding] allows them to treat more kids," said Edwards. "I would think that it lets them to have more [mentors] and patients involved in the program."

"The goal is to raise \$70,000," said Edwards. "And I think we'll reach that."

The Exchange Club is one of America's oldest service clubs and every event that they host is geared towards raising money for child abuse prevention. The 5k Leprechaun run in March and Madison Arts Night in October are both popular annual events. Edwards said that the golf tournament is the No. 1 fundraiser, but the Madison Arts Night is a close second.

The club has a partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services, which reported that in 2009, there was an increase of 46 percent of families whose children were able to remain safely at home after discovery of abuse or neglect and an 18 percent decline in those that are taken into custody by DCFS since 2004.

"Having a partner in prevention is absolutely essential if we are going to be effective in meeting the needs of children," said Gary Kleeblatt, communications director for DCFS. "Prevention of abuse and neglect is so important — everyone in the community is welcome in that effort. It is a really big job and we need as many hands on deck as possible."

"Although we are expecting a complete field, we still can accommodate additional players," said Edwards. "We always have four or five people who forget to sign up, but of course we allow them to play."

For those interested, contact co-tournament chairman Bob Graham at bob.graham30@att.net or Vince Dussich at vince@dussick.com.