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## **The First Tee Enters Agreement with Henrico County to Operate, Manage Historic Belmont Golf Course**

***Organization Plans \$4-Million-Plus Renovation Led by Love Golf Design to Include Driving Range, Short-Game Course, Short Course, Putting Course***

**RICHMOND, Va. (Dec. 11, 2019)** – The First Tee of Greater Richmond today announces a partnership with Henrico County allowing the nonprofit to take over the operation and management of Belmont Golf Course, the only golf course in Virginia to host a PGA major tournament.

On Dec. 10, the Henrico County Board of Supervisors voted to approve a proposal from The First Tee of Greater Richmond that will transform the historic, yet underperforming, golf course into a community-focused, inclusive and affordable public golf facility for all ages.

While Henrico County will continue to own Belmont Golf Course, The First Tee has signed a 20-year lease to manage the facility and will invest more than \$4 million to reimagine the golfing experience to include a driving range, short-game practice area, short course, putting course and 12 championship-level holes that celebrate the legendary design of course designer A.W. Tillinghast.

“This is an incredible opportunity that we couldn’t pass up because Belmont is a perfect fit for us to carry out our vision of strengthening the character of our community,” said Brent Schneider, CEO of The First Tee of Greater Richmond. “We are uniquely qualified to meet the county’s needs and goals for Belmont having served as longtime partners of Chesterfield County and the City of Richmond. We couldn’t be more excited to ensure that golf will continue to be the focus of Belmont Golf Course.”

Neil Luther, director of Henrico County Recreation and Parks, added: “The First Tee of Greater Richmond’s proposal was a clear winner in terms of everything we needed and wanted. The

organization has a proven track record of operating and managing golf facilities in addition to impacting children and teens from all over Richmond through its golf programs. We're thrilled to be a part of its plans for the future of Belmont."

The First Tee of Greater Richmond will assume control of the property on Jan. 1, 2020 and embark on an innovative renovation supported by a group of donors that will necessitate the closing of the golf course until the spring of 2021. The organization has enlisted Love Golf Design, led by Davis Love III, his brother Mark Love and Scot Sherman, to reconfigure Belmont into a golfing facility that not only will be attractive for The First Tee participants, but also golfers of all skill levels and ages.

"We often are asked to help upgrade golf facilities to secure their future viability, but it's not often that we're asked to undertake upgrades that will improve the future of an entire community," said Davis Love III, a 21-time PGA Tour champion, two-time Ryder Cup captain and World Golf Hall of Fame member. "Today, more than ever, golfers are accepting of almost any kind of golf as long as it is well designed and maintained. We're honored to be a part of this effort and give back to the game we love."

Belmont Golf Course, designed by Tillinghast and modified by Donald Ross, was the original Hermitage Country Club from 1918-77 and served as the host of the 1949 PGA Championship, won by Virginian Sam Snead. Other Tillinghast courses include Winged Foot, Baltusrol and Bethpage Black, which joins Belmont as the only two public courses in the country designed by Tillinghast to host a major championship. Henrico County took over the course – which has lost money each year since 2000 – in 1977 and began debating what to do with the property two years ago. Earlier this year, the county sought RFPs to maintain Belmont as a golf facility.

The First Tee of Greater Richmond, which opened The Tattersall Youth Development Center at The First Tee Chesterfield Golf Course in Chesterfield County in 2000 and The Elson Redmond Memorial Driving Range in downtown Richmond in 2003 (which underwent a \$1.2 million renovation in 2017 and is the practice home for the VCU men's golf team), emerged as the favorite among proposals from national golf operators.

"We've excelled at delivering impactful youth development programs by leveraging the game of golf, and we've also proven we're adept at operating innovative, inclusive and high-quality golf facilities in the Richmond area," Schneider said. "Our goal is for Belmont to become a place where the history of American golf meets the future of American golf."

As part of the more than \$4 million in improvements, The First Tee of Greater Richmond plans the following property renovations:

- Conversion of the 18-hole course to a 12-hole championship course that preserves key Tillinghast/Ross features, improves bunkers, turf and greens and introduces innovative and forward-thinking design from Love Golf Design
- Addition of a driving range
- Addition of a short-game practice area

- Addition of a six-hole short course, with holes ranging from 60 to 170 yards
- Addition of a putting course
- Improved pro shop and clubhouse experience

“More and more golf courses around the country are looking for ways to be more than just a golf course,” Schneider said. “We believe the innovations we will be implementing will attract a wider range of players, whether they live in the Richmond area or may be traveling through town to play at places like Pinehurst. Our expectation is that Belmont will be among the finest public courses in Central Virginia.”

When it reopens in the spring of 2021, Belmont Golf Course will offer affordable golfing options for golfers of all levels. It also will cater to The First Tee programming, which impacts more than 80,000 youth from all over Central Virginia each year. The First Tee anticipates serving as a host to some of Henrico County Public School’s golf teams, affiliating with the Henrico County Police Athletic League golf programs and welcoming men’s, women’s and senior golf leagues.

“For more than 20 years, The First Tee of Greater Richmond has transformed the lives of youth in the Richmond area through the game of golf,” Schneider said. “The addition of Belmont Golf Course enables us to impact even more young people while offering golfers of all ages and skill levels an affordable and unique experience they can’t get anywhere else in Richmond.”

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### **About The First Tee of Greater Richmond**

*The First Tee of Greater Richmond is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit youth development organization whose mission is to impact the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character, instill life-enhancing values and promote healthy choices through the game of golf. Through three major programming areas, The First Tee Life Skills Experience, The First Tee National School Program, and collaborative community partnerships, The First Tee of Greater Richmond reached more than 80,000 youth in 2018.*

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