

Golfers aid families of fallen warriors

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

This Labor Day Weekend, Aspen Lakes is inviting golfers in Central Oregon to hit the links to celebrate Patriot Golf Day.

The event is the largest grassroots golf fundraiser benefitting Folds of Honor, a nonprofit organization that provides educational scholarships to children and spouses of fallen and disabled veterans. On Patriot Golf Day, golfers across the country will be encouraged to add an extra donation to their greens fee to fund Folds of Honor scholarships. Donation opportunities will be made available throughout the weekend at Aspen Lakes.

This is an event that hits very close to home for Aspen Lakes PGA Professional Howie Pruitt, who is spearheading the effort. Pruitt was a decorated combat helicopter pilot in Vietnam, where he did a tour of duty in 1971-72. U.S. involvement in the war was winding down overall, but not for Pruitt's Air Cavalry unit, which was at the tip of the spear in the strategic I Corps A Shau Valley. Pruitt was flying three combat missions a day during that year.

"When I came back from Vietnam, my first assignment was with the Fort Dix Casualty Branch," he told *The Nugget*.

Part of his job was to inform family members that their loved ones had been killed in Vietnam.

"I rang doorbells," he said. "It was a little tough."

Given his background, the mission of Folds of Honor touches Pruitt deeply.

Folds of Honor was founded by Major Dan Rooney, an F-16 pilot with the Oklahoma Air National Guard, after he witnessed the twin brother of Corporal Brock Bucklin escorting his brother's remains to his family after Corporal Bucklin was killed in action in Iraq in 2006. A memorial coin with Corporal Bucklin's name will be provided to donors at Aspen Lakes.

For more information on Folds of Honor, visit <https://www.foldsofhonor.org>.

Non-golfers can also participate by donating to the mission at www.support.foldsofhonor.org/goto/AspenLakesGolfClub.

Pruitt reported last week that Aspen Lakes has already received more than \$500 in straight donations. He hopes to raise \$5,000 through Labor Day Weekend.

Pruitt's journey to a career



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Howie Pruitt is spearheading Aspen Lakes Golf Course's Patriot Golf Day fundraiser for Folds of Honor.

as a golf professional was a circuitous one.

He took up the game in his teens, living in Columbus, Ohio, the hometown of the great Jack Nicklaus.

"Nobody in my family played golf," he said.

He played through his career in the U.S. Army, including time on the links with the U.S. Army champ. Pruitt ended his service in the Army in Germany, then stayed in Europe in a civilian capacity for a decade. He and his wife then moved to Silicon Valley, where Pruitt built a career in human resources for the high-tech industry.

When the couple moved to Bend, Pruitt worked in the mortgage and financial arena

for a number of years before deciding to pursue a lifelong dream — to become a golf professional.

Pruitt became a PGA member and has served as an officer. He is currently section secretary for the Pacific Northwest Section. On September 1, he will become vice president.

Pruitt has served as Aspen Lakes' PGA Head Professional and Director of Player Development for the past six years, and he loves it there.

"This is a great golf course," he said. "Great family — the (Cyrus) family is great to work for."

For more information, contact Howie Pruitt, PGA, at 541-549-4653.

Obituary

Leanne McConville

December 19, 1928 – August 13, 2019

Leanne was born in Centerville, Iowa in 1928 to Nelson and Nina Mitchell, and was youngest of two children.

Leanne grew up in Centerville, and after graduating from Centerville High School she moved to New York and worked as a seamstress for the Rockettes at Rockefeller Center. After working for the Rockettes for more than 40 years, she retired as the costume director.

In 2000 she reconnected with her high school sweetheart, Bill McConville, who



was a long-time resident of Sisters. They married, and Leanne moved from the "Big Apple" to her new home in Sisters.

Leanne is preceded in death by both parents (Nina and Nelson); her older brother Nelson II; and her husband, Bill McConville.

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