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Clergy golf socials strengthen fraternity, help those in need

Father Bernard Pfau

Nearly 25 years ago, Father Alfred Allmaras sent a note to priests of the Fargo Diocese who were interested in golfing, asking them to gather at the golf course in Wahpeton/Breckenridge for some outdoor recreation and a meal of brats and burgers.

Father Al was serving as pastor of St. John's Parish in Wahpeton at the time and was an avid student of the game of golf. He remained a fierce competitor of the sport until his death July 9, 2006, in Fairbanks, Alaska.

What began as a spur-of-the-moment invitation for priests to gather and have a little fun and social time together has evolved into regular summer gatherings of priests, about every two weeks, developing their skills at golf and enjoying each other's company, from June into September.

Over the years, priests have taken advantage of these golf socials in different parts of the Fargo Diocese, whether it be on a 9 hole course or an 18-hole course. One of the considerations in choosing a course to play was that it would be listed on the Golf For Guardianship brochure, sponsored by Catholic Charities North Dakota. Golf For Guardianship supported the guardianship program in North Dakota and provided a discount to those holding a golfing pass.

Beginning in 2012, this program will be called Chip In For Charity, with the same benefits to those who purchase a card, but now the funds raised will support all of the programs of Catholic Charities including Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Services, Adults Adopting Special Kids, Counseling Services and, as always, Guardianship Services.

There have been about 100 golf courses and clubs in North Dakota and Minnesota that have donated discounted golf to help raise funds for Guardianship Services in the past, and will hopefully continue supporting Chip In For Charity in the future.

Father Thaines Arulandu, pastor of the parishes of Transfiguration in Edgeley and Holy Spirit in Nortonville, has coordinated these clergy socials the past few years. He believes the acronym "GOLF" can also mean "God Our Loving Father." Yes, this game can keep us humble, and at the same time, allow us to enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

With the new name of Chip In For Charity, I hope you will consider purchasing a card for 2012, and having fun at the same time you are helping people in need. The Diocese of Fargo also sponsors a golfing event, Putt For A Purpose, each summer to help raise funds for seminarians and youth education programs.

You can contact the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Fargo for more information on either of these services. Who says you can't "have fun" and, at the same time, help someone in need? Watch for the Chip In For Charity cards on sale in the beginning of 2012 at www.catholiccharitiesnd.org or call (701) 235-4457 for more information.

Father Pfau is pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in New Rockford and serves on the board of directors of Catholic Charities North Dakota.