



Celebrating 25 Years of Building Game Changers



Dear Friend,

As this year draws to a close, we pause with gratitude for all we've accomplished together—and we look ahead to an extraordinary milestone. In 2026, First Tee – Pittsburgh will celebrate 25 years of Building Game Changers across Western Pennsylvania.

For a quarter century, we've used golf as a gateway to something far greater: character, confidence, and connection. Our mission is rooted in the belief that every child deserves the chance to grow through challenge, discover their strengths, and realize they can change the game and change the world.

The Five Key Commitments that define a Game Changer—Pursuing Goals, Growing Through Challenges, Collaborating with Others, Building Positive Self-Identity, and Using Good Judgment—have guided our work from the very beginning.



Pursuing Goals

Every swing begins with intention. At First Tee – Pittsburgh, we teach young people that success isn't about perfection—it's about persistence.

Take Peyton, who joined us determined to break 100, then 90, then 80. Like every golfer, she hit the wall of frustration. But she regrouped, adjusted her plan, and kept at it. By the end of the season, she captured a gold medal at a U.S. Kids tournament in Cleveland—and, more importantly, rediscovered her confidence. As Peyton said, "I messed up, I fixed it, I succeeded—little steps at a time."

Growing Through Challenges

Challenges reveal character. Carter came to First Tee struggling to focus and fit in. Living with anxiety made traditional sports overwhelming, but here he discovered a safe space to build confidence through small victories—one swing, one breath, one encouraging word at a time.

According to his mom, "First Tee is the first place Carter has ever been excited to go every week." Each breakthrough like Carter's is a testament to the coaches, mentors, and donors who ensure every child feels seen, supported, and capable.



Using Good Judgment

This year, Tre had the life-changing opportunity to attend the First Tee Game Changers Academy—a national leadership summit focused on character, inclusion, and integrity.

As his mom shared, "Tre took part in leadership workshops, golf outings, and conversations with inspiring figures like Maya Moore and members of the Minnesota Vikings. But what stood out most were the friendships he built with participants from across the country—bonding quickly through shared values, mutual respect, and a love of the game."



Collaborating with Others



Collaboration is the foundation of growth. Ben, one of our participants, demonstrated this perfectly during a fall PGA Junior League session when he was paired with much younger players. Instead of frustration, Ben chose leadership—helping teammates find golf balls, encouraging them, and modeling sportsmanship. Coach Aaron shared, “He mentored the kids, smiled the whole round, and showed great perseverance.”

Partnerships off the course matter, too. Through collaborations with organizations such as The Neighborhood Academy and Allegheny Youth Development, we bring our life-skills curriculum to youth who might never have imagined golf as a game for them. Together, we’re making the game—and its lessons—truly accessible.



Building Positive Self-Identity

Confidence begins with belonging—and sometimes, the most powerful transformation is seen through a parent’s eyes.

“First Tee – Pittsburgh has truly given our son, Blase, a newfound confidence. At 9 years old, he’s become more self-aware and, with that, sometimes second-guesses himself in sports instead of trusting his instincts and natural ability. After participating in two group clinics, we noticed a remarkable change—not just on the golf course, but on the baseball field as well. His confidence and performance have both reached a new level.

The program also gave him the courage to step outside his comfort zone and participate in the Summer and Fall Invitationals, where he not only competed but placed well in both matches.”

25 Years of Changing the Game

As we enter our 25th year, we’re committed to growing our reach—especially into communities and among kids who may not typically have access to golf. Every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and make new friendships regardless of their financial situation. Clinic fees make up only 10% of First Tee – Pittsburgh’s revenue, with the remainder subsidized through generous community support.

The kids in our community need our support—and we need yours—to help them thrive. Your year-end gift will expand access, train more coaches, and create even more transformative experiences for youth across Western Pennsylvania.

Together, we can continue building confidence, character, and a brighter future—one swing at a time.

Sincerely,

Eric Amato - President and CEO

