



# 2024 Annual Review



## **Our Purpose**

We enable kids to build the strength of character that empowers them through a lifetime of new challenges.

## **Our Mission**

To positively impact the lives of young people in Santa Barbara, Northern Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties by providing educational programs that build character and instill life enhancing values through the game of golf.

## **Our Impact on Young People**

Young people in our programs are more confident in school, are supported by coaches who they view as caring mentors, are active community members and are ALWAYS welcome regardless of financial circumstances.



## From our executive director...

Dear Friends of First Tee — Central Coast,

As we look back on 2024, we're filled with gratitude for all we've accomplished together. With the support of our amazing coaches, volunteers, staff, and partners, we reached nearly 30,000 kids and teens—helping them grow both on and off the golf course.

This year, our programs expanded across 14 golf courses, 57 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and several local youth organizations. Together, we've helped young people build confidence, resilience, and life skills that last far beyond the game.

One proud moment was receiving Golf Digest's Barbara A. Douglas & Dr. William J. Powell Diversity Award, recognizing our No Fee Programs and commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Pictured below is our team receiving the award at the First Tee National Network meeting in Phoenix in November.

Every step of the way, our participants continue to embody what it means to be Game Changers—setting goals, growing through challenges, and supporting one another.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your belief in our mission keeps us moving forward, and we can't wait to see what's ahead.

With heartfelt appreciation,

*Jessani*

Jessani Johnson  
Executive Director



# Our 2024 Impact



**28,412**  
kids and teens



**3**  
Counties (Ventura, SB & SLO)



**54%**  
ethnically diverse



**14**  
on course program  
locations reaching  
1,455 participants



**42%**  
female



**16**  
No Fee community  
partnership locations  
reaching 576 participants



**\$113,079**  
Financial Aid provided  
for 1,130 kids



**60**  
Elementary & Middle Schools  
reaching 27,409 students in their  
PE classes



**48**  
Trained & caring  
Coaches

# About Us

Our programs happen daily at golf facilities, schools, and through community partnerships throughout Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties. Participants ages 4 – 18 progress through the program over time, deepening their understanding of life skills and golf development. The integrated approach helps kids and teens build confidence and resilience for when they are on the course, at home and in school. Every participant has the opportunity to:

- **Focus on interpersonal and self-management skills on and off the golf course**
- **Set goals and put strategies in place to make them a reality**
- **Learn conflict resolution, resilience and how to plan for the future**
- **Make healthy choices and use good judgement**
- **Get out on a golf course to learn the game of golf and how it relates to life**



## **2024 No Fee Program Partnerships:**

***First Tee curriculum delivered by FTCC Coaches at no cost to these partner youth organizations***

### **People's Self Help Housing:**

4 six class sessions reaching 44 participants

### **YMCAs in Santa Ynez Valley:**

4 six week sessions reaching 216 participants

### **Girls Inc in Carpinteria:**

Summer Program reaching 82 participants

### **Bulldogs Special Olympians:**

1 six week session reaching 9 participants

### **Vandenberg Space Force Base:**

4 six week sessions reaching 169 military base participants

### **A-OK Afterschool Program In Santa Barbara:**

1 six week session at Monroe School reaching 21 participants

### **Police Activities League in Oxnard:**

1 six week session reaching 24 participants

### **Paulding & La Cumbre Middle Schools:**

6 sessions at each school reaching 705 teens



# In their own words

“When my world turned upside down, First Tee of the Central Coast became a saving grace for me and my two boys. I had just made the life-altering decision to move across the world to Santa Barbara as a newly single mom, trying to find a fresh start while keeping some sense of normalcy for my children. We landed here in a bit of a whirlwind—I’d missed all the sign-up windows for local sports programs, and I was trying to navigate a completely new chapter of life, unsure of what was next.

A friend of mine mentioned First Tee in passing, and I remember thinking, “That sounds like something my boys would love.” But at the time, finances were tight. Everything was tight. The thought of being able to sign up for a program like that felt out of reach. But when I inquired and learned that we could attend through a scholarship, I honestly teared up. It felt like a gift—an open door at a time when most doors felt closed.

Golf had always held a special place in my heart. I learned how to play in college, and it was something my boys’ dad and I did together. When we were young, before kids, we’d hit the driving range or sneak in a quick nine holes during college—some of my favorite memories. I always hoped that one day our boys would learn to play too, not just for the game itself, but for everything it teaches: patience, focus, manners, and resilience. First Tee gave us exactly that—and so much more.

From the moment my boys stepped onto the course with Coach Whitt and Coach Paige, I could see the spark in their eyes. These weren’t just golf lessons. These were life lessons disguised as fun. I watched my sons learn how to introduce themselves with confidence, show respect to others, be patient, and of course, how to swing a club. The coaches had this magical way of making the game fun while still instilling important values. Every week, I saw my boys grow—not just as little golfers, but as people.



Cont'd

Nine months after our move, our family suffered an unthinkable loss: their dad was killed in a car accident. It shook us to the core. In those early weeks of grief, we didn't know what to do or how to cope. But we kept going to the course. Golf became our quiet place, our place to grieve, to talk, and sometimes just to swing away the pain. We started going out every weekend—not necessarily to "play" but to be together, to remember, and to heal.

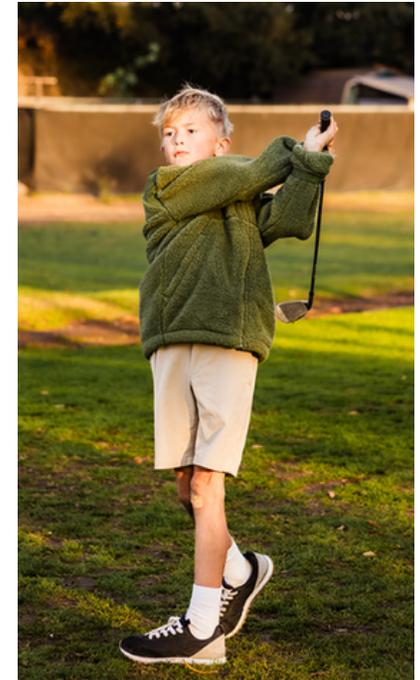
Today, golf is one of the ways we honor their dad. When we tee off, we talk about him. We laugh about the time he shanked a drive, or how he'd always try to show off his short game. My boys now have the skills and the confidence to get out on the course and enjoy the game—and that means everything to us. It connects us to the person we lost, and gives us a way to keep his memory alive.

To the donors and supporters of First Tee, I just want to say: thank you. You're not just helping kids learn a sport. You're creating access to an experience that builds character, confidence, and connection. You're giving families like mine something to look forward to, something to bond over, and something to hold onto during the hardest of times. I know it might not always seem like a big deal—a scholarship here, a few clubs there—but it is. It truly is.

As my life begins to stabilize and my work continues to grow, I look forward to the day I can pay it forward. First Tee gave my boys more than just a sport. It gave us memories, healing, and hope. For that, I will be forever grateful.

With heartfelt thanks,

Meredith (First Tee Central Coast Parent)



*Thank you for the beautiful photos courtesy of Mindy Rainy @mindyrainy on instagram*



*Our son Giovanni, 8, had an exceptional experience. Coach Whitt and Coach Paige made every lesson something he looked forward to—full of encouragement, high-fives, and some impressive swing improvements! We're so grateful for the way they made golf meaningful and something he looked forward to. (FTCC mom)*



*Dear Coach Terri, I am so thankful and love that you help me with my golfing skills. It is a sport I never thought I would be able to do. You have helped me learn the rules, how to hit better, where to place my feet and never get upset when I do it wrong. You are so kind to all kids and happy to see us when we come. " - FTCC Participant*



*Dear Coach Darren! Thank you for bringing my dreams to life and teaching me how to be a great golfer and person since I was 11. - Maya*



*"Coach Kyle and the First Tee program has been such a pleasant and wonderful way to introduce my three kids to golf. Sometimes being the new kid to a sport can be intimidating, but my kids felt at home from the first lesson. Golf is now one of their favorite sports!" - Rachel (FTCC mom)*



*My son and I have loved this program and especially Coach Darren for the last few years now. Coach Darren has really helped my son fall in love with the sport as well as develop some meaningful friendships. The lessons that Coach Darren incorporates in each class makes this so much more than just golf lessons, they are life lessons. Justin leaves the course every Friday happy and excited for the next one. We sincerely appreciate everything Coach Darren and everyone at First Tee does. -Julia and Justin*

*The First Tee has been absolutely incredible for my daughter! The time and energy she has been given by her coach and support personnel makes it seem like this program was custom written for her! I can't say enough positive things about this program! - FTCC Parent*

*Thank you so much for helping me develop my swing, learn to keep my tempo, and so much more, Coach Billy. You helped make golf a fun sport for me and I still hear your famous (at least to me) quote during my swing, "Tick, tock." You were always so encouraging as well. Thanks for everything. - Thea*

# The Heartbeat of our Impact

Coaches are key to the success of our First Tee Chapter, serving as mentors and role models.

They teach more than golf, fostering values like perseverance, integrity, and respect that helps kids grow on and off the golf course.

Our trained coaches create safe, supportive and empowering environments to help the kids & teens in our programs prepare for life ahead, including friendships, school, college and even their careers.



**14**  
Lead coaches



**34**  
Assistant coaches



**3**  
staff



**Darren Avrit**  
**FTCC 2024 Coach of the Year**



*I am incredibly honored and deeply humbled to be named the 2024 Coach of the Year for First Tee Central Coast. It is truly a privilege to work with so many remarkable young people and to witness their growth both on and off the golf course. Watching our participants develop their skills, confidence, and character through this program brings me tremendous joy. This past year was especially meaningful, as three of our long-time participants, Sofia Rodriguez-Pierson, Maya London, and Sophia Waddell were selected to represent our chapter at the Pure Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach. Having coached them for over eight years, seeing them reach this pinnacle of First Tee opportunities and shine on a national stage was a moment of immense pride. Their journey is a testament to what's possible when passion, perseverance, and opportunity come together. Reflecting on the past two decades, since we began programming in the northern part of our chapter in 2005, I'm filled with gratitude. My own three sons went through the program, and I've seen firsthand how transformative it can be. First Tee has not only shaped the lives of countless participants, but it has also shaped mine. I want to sincerely thank Master Coach and Program Director Billy Gibbs, former Executive Director Butch Breeden, and current Executive Director Jessani Johnson. Their guidance, passion, and leadership have been instrumental in my journey and in the success of our chapter. Golf has brought deep meaning to my life, and through First Tee, I've had the privilege to share that meaning with thousands of young people. I truly believe there is no better youth development program out there. Thank you, First Tee Central Coast, for this incredible honor and for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of something so impactful. I am proud, grateful, and truly blessed to serve as your Coach of the Year.*

# Commitment to Being a Game Changer

I can change the game and change the world by simply being the best version of myself.

**I am a game changer!**



## Pursuing Goals

Excited to grow and learn, not afraid to fail, and learning from both achievements and setbacks



## Growing through Challenge

By discovering inner strength, developing resilience and digging deep when things get tough.



## Collaborating with Others

Respecting other perspectives, showing kindness, consideration, and care for others, and knowing that our attitude and how we treat others have an impact.

**82%**

felt more confident with social skills

**73%**

reported higher confidence in academic ability



## Building Positive Self-Identity

Finding self-confidence, discovering what we are capable of, and feeling safe to be ourselves.



## Using Good Judgment

Respecting rules in golf and in life, being honest with ourselves and others, and having the courage to do what's right, even when it's hard.

Experiences are our greatest teacher. First Tee believes in developing the ones that are just as fun as they are meaningful, where kids feel excited to grow, safe to fail, and better equipped for whatever comes their way next. Participants in the First Tee Program engage with trained, caring adult coaches and mentors, and interact with a curriculum that is both developmentally and age-appropriate to meet participants where they are and address their ever-changing needs — including their emotional and social needs as they are surrounded by and working with peers their same age.



# 5 Key Commitments



**85%**

**of alumni credit the First Tee for helping them be a better student**

**91%**

**of alumni were engaged in community service while in First Tee**

# National Opportunities

## Teen Impact!

### We are so proud of our FTCC teens who were selected for 2024 leadership & golf opportunities

- **Jeffrey Forster** was selected and attended the FT National Championship at Clemson University, he finished in 7<sup>th</sup> place!
- **Sophia Waddell, Sofia Rodriguez-Pierson** and **Maya London** were selected and attended the Game Changers Academy in Minneapolis.
- **Sophia Waddell, Sofia Rodriguez-Pierson** and **Maya London** were selected for the PURE Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach in Sept.

First Tee offers national events to inspire and encourage high school students on a deeper level. From being mentored by PGA TOUR Champions players at Pebble Beach to a 5 day learning and empowerment academy, FT national events are about expanding horizons, meeting new people, opening doors and guiding teens to be more confident in themselves.



### First Tee — Central Coast Teens Selected for PGA TOUR Champions' PURE Insurance Championship Impacting First Tee at Pebble Beach

[Click HERE](#) to read more



Jeffrey Forster



Sophia Waddell



Maya London



Sofia Rodriguez Pierson



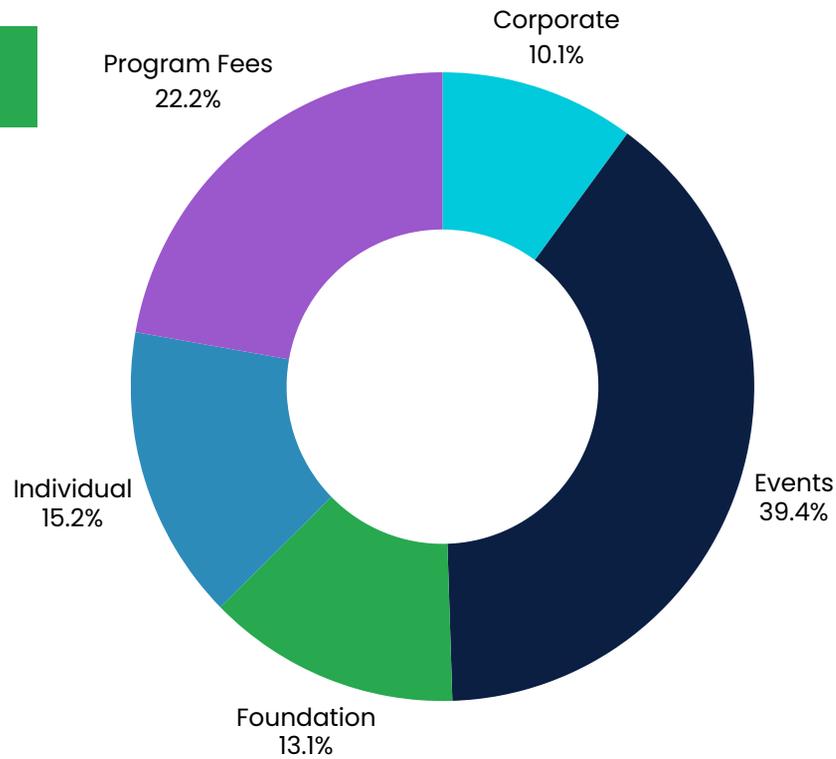
“The First Tee has taught me more than just how to hit a golf ball, it has taught me the importance of really helping other people wherever you can. Getting more involved now as a junior coach has helped me feel more confident in my leadership skills and I love being able to help other kids learn the game.”  
- Sophia

# Financial Stability

Thank you to the individuals, grant funders, corporate partners, organizations and donors who continue to support First Tee — Central Coast's mission of empowering youth.

We frame all decisions, strategies, personnel, programs, and community outreach with the single focus on what is best for our participants. Each chapter within the First Tee network is funded locally, 100% of all monetary contributions goes towards funding First Tee — Central Coast programs. Every dollar helps ensure that the lives of the kids and teens are positively affected within our community.

## Revenue



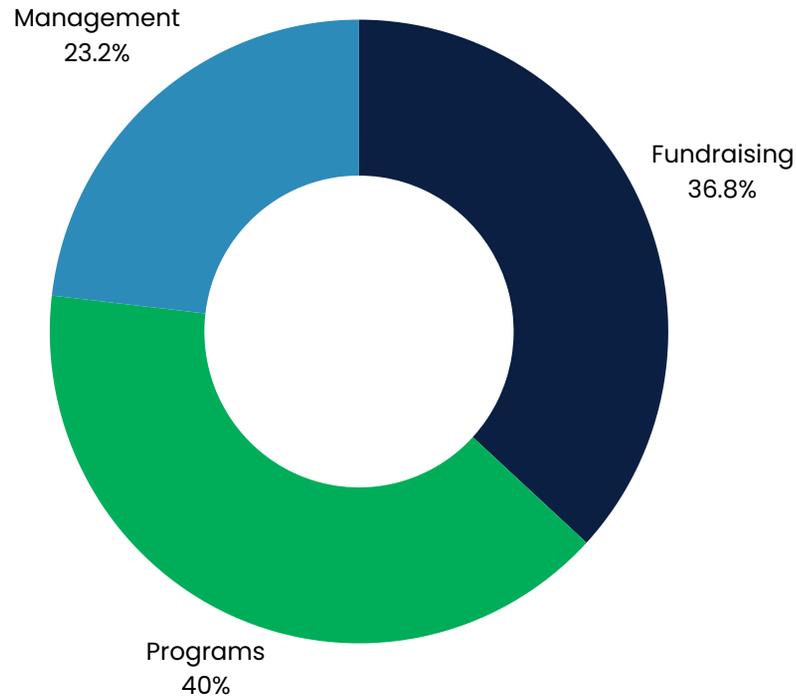
**2024  
Revenue  
\$649K**

**2023  
Revenue  
\$551K**

**2022  
Revenue  
\$501K**

**2021  
Revenue  
\$482K**

## Expenses



Headed In the right direction ↑

# First Tee – Central Coast 2024 Executive Board

Dr. Rob Moss  
Chair

Matt Porter  
Vice Chair

Ryan Maxwell  
**Treasurer**

Eric Bell  
Secretary

## Directors

Manny Arceo  
Melissa McDonald  
Randy Shannon, PGA  
Rick Cohen  
Sheila Davidson  
Whitt Hollis  
Ron Vyse  
Thayer White  
Dr. Jim Peterson  
David Posnick  
Aaron Crocker  
Ben Crawford  
Bill Widner

## Staff

Jessani Johnson  
Executive Director

Billy Gibbs, PGA  
Program Director  
& First Tee Master Coach

Mia Cameron  
Development Director & Coach

## Lead Coaches

Terri Benson, PGA

Darren Avrit

Julia Bognuda, PGA

Kyle Marme, PGA

Connor Chartier

Page O'Brien, PGA

Jim DeLaby, PGA

Alicia Allison, LPGA

Mike Brabenec, PGA

Andrew Sherman

Whitt Hollis

Jacob Cameron

Mia Cameron

Billy Gibbs, PGA



Our FTCC Team at the FT Network Meeting In Phoenix



# Thank you to our Top 2024 Donors & Partners. We couldn't do it without you!

## ACE Level Sponsor



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## Tournament Sponsors



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 Central Coast Funds for Children - Rotary Club SLO Daybreak - Nipomo Lions - Nancy & Dick Spelke - Dr Rob Moss  
 Peter Davies - David Gil - Sherry Trade - Oceano/5 Cities Elks Club - Anthony & Susan Cossa  
 Roxanne Brophy - The Center Foundation - Masons of San Luis Obispo - Melissa McDonald - Patrick Ontko  
 The SAGE Trust - Laura Kalman - Dr Jim Peterson - The Visser Family - The Posnick Family - The Davidson Family  
 Jack Gresser - The Widner Family - The Hollis Family - Anatman Foundation - Del Rio Advisors

## Supporting Golf Courses

Santa Barbara GC - Glen Annie - La Purisima - The Mission Club - Santa Maria CC - Monarch Dunes  
 Blacklake Golf Resort - Morro Bay GC - Sea Pines - Laguna Lake - Dairy Creek - Hunter Ranch - River Oaks



 **first tee**®

**central coast**

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