

# A Remarkable Passion for GOLF and HELPING KIDS

By Dick Volker, 2013-2014 Illinois District Governor



The Illinois District held its qualifier rounds at Taylorville for three years. Due to the popularity of the event and the well-organized structure put in place by Terry, the tournament moved to the Piper Glen Golf Course in Springfield, Illinois. Six years ago, the qualifier rounds were moved to Red Tail Run Golf Course in Decatur, Illinois, where the latest event was held. During the tournament, boys and girls ages 10 through 18 compete in their age brackets.



Over the years, Terry has built the Illinois qualifier into a respected tournament, giving young people throughout the state an opportunity to compete and meet other golfers with similar interests. Terry sends flyers to all Illinois high school golf coaches and Illinois Junior Golf Associations inviting their players to compete at Red Tail Run.

I attended this year's event and offered to help in any way I could. I was assigned the position of a "spotter," since I did not know much about golf. It was interesting watching parents walking the course with their children as they played.

The production of an event this size requires a substantial amount of funding. Terry solicits Illinois Optimist Clubs requesting donations to sponsor a hole. He has built relationships with local area businesses, as well as some nationally known corporations, which donate funds or supplies to be used during the three-day program.

The kitchen crew was led by Noma Wright, Terry's wife who has worked on this project with him for all twenty years. Several Optimists from the Taylorville Club and others volunteer every year to lend a helping hand.

I asked Terry what was his greatest satisfaction in conducting this tournament. He said, "Getting to know the families of these young golfers, many of whom come back every year and building relationships with them. If you have several children interested in golf, you may see the parents over and over again. We had one young golfer who participated for nine years. This tournament gives Noma and I much satisfaction to see the golfing families and the turnout of help we get to operate this event."

While the qualifier has been recognized in Illinois as a premier golf outing, it has also received recognition at the International level. Ron Huxley, 2013-2014 Optimist International President, awarded Terry a citation honoring him for his years of service to children and the community. In appreciation of their work, the Illinois District and the Past Governors Association gifted Terry and Noma with a trip to the 2014 Optimist International Junior Golf Championships.

Optimist Terry Wright has spent quite a bit of time playing golf, so it was a natural fit when he decided to combine his love of the game with his efforts to bring out the best in kids. In 1995, Terry took on the responsibility of chairing the Optimist Club of Taylorville's tournament for junior golfers. This was the first year of Optimist qualifying tournaments in which winners could advance to the Optimist International Junior Golf Championships.