

# Essex Golf & Country Club

Home of the 2002 AT&T Canada Senior Open

*Celebrating One Hundred Years*

## Essex Golf & Country Club: Part of the community

BY LINDA DURANCE  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Having a 130-acre golf course in the neighborhood has benefits that go way beyond improving community aesthetics and property values.

According to Essex Golf & Country Club course superintendent, Chris Andrejicka, a golf course ecosystem can be environmentally helpful to the community.

"There's a myth that golf courses are harmful to the environment," says Andrejicka. "That's just not true."

He says the 2300 trees and two ponds holding 8 million gallons of water at Essex are an advantage to birds and area wildlife. Andrejicka also points out that he and the club administration are committed to "diligently looking for ways to improve the course environment."

"We're on an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program," says Andrejicka. "There is an acceptable threshold of pest and disease the golf course can handle. We wait for that threshold before taking any action."

Waiting to reach that threshold means the course has only been spot sprayed for pests once this year, according to the superintendent.

"We do not blanket spray and we're now using more organic and feather meal based products to fertilize," he adds.

Two holding ponds at the course ensure that water is recycled and reused for watering.

General manager, Barry Morgan says they were outfitted with water consumption in mind. "All water put on the course goes into the ponds via the drainage systems," he says. "We only lose water to evaporation."

Morgan adds that club management wants to put in an irrigation system to better control water consumption and direct watering only to areas needed. "We have a continuing commitment to efficiently improving the environment of this course," says Andrejicka.

Essex Golf & Country Club is also committed to the community's economy, according to Morgan. "We are one of the largest employers in the Town of LaSalle," says Morgan. "We have 130 employees and many of them are residents in the surrounding community. Most of our purchases are local as well."

Morgan says the 1,092 members of Essex Golf & Country Club put \$5 million into the local economy last year. Purchases included everything from food products, hotel-restaurant and office suppliers to grounds keeping supplies and equipment and club vehicles.

The Essex Golf & Country Club may also be the only club left in southwestern Ontario that has a caddy program.



An aerial photo of the environmentally conscientious Essex Golf & Country Club (above). At left, a group of caddies (circa 1930) function as they have done to this day — participating in the caddy program.

"We've run this program since it's inception," says Morgan. "Through it, we encourage local youth to learn about golf and give them a chance at university scholarships. I don't think there's another golf club in Ontario that offers such a strong caddy program. It can turn into a good part-time job for a teen and teaches young people about etiquette and responsibility," he says.

The club demonstrated a commitment to local youth by setting up a scholarship at University of Windsor's School of Kinetics. The fund was established in honour of Bill Hunter, an assistant golf professional who was killed in a car accident in April of 1976, just prior to the Canadian Open held at the club.

Essex Golf & Country Club also participates in the Evans Scholarship fund. It provides a four-year, full-ride scholarship at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

The club has employed many of its staff for over 20 years and sometimes acknowledges staff with an honorary membership. One such membership was given to long time employee Fred Crawford who was employed at the club for 38 years. Crawford is in his eighties now, but still comes to the club to golf.

"Our employee relations are great," says Morgan, "and many members come to think of the staff as family. It's like living in a friendly community where everyone is committed to giving their best and working problems through."

Some of the motivation for working together may come from the fact that members privately own the golf club. Dick Carr has served in many committee and board positions and knows the benefits and difficulties of belonging to a privately funded club." He recalled the difficult times. "In the forties, golf

balls were rationed, transportation was difficult, members and staff had to car pool and revenues suffered. Carr says the club's management is now looking forward to putting in the new irrigation system as soon as it's feasible.

"I've never seen a time when we had the resources to do all the things we've wanted to do. Like everywhere else, we are always fighting for revenue. When we take a loss, the members bear that burden. There's no one to bail us out."

Morgan says supporting the local economy and being sensitive to the environment are two goals the Essex Golf & Country Club is always conscious of. The upcoming AT&T Canada Senior Open will take place at Essex Golf & Country Club July 1 - 7. The local economy should certainly benefit from that.

## Tour de force course

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"Everyone who played in that championship fell in love with Essex," said Crenshaw after playing there in the 1976 Canadian Open.

The winner of that tournament, Jerry Pate, was equally impressed with the club's greatness.

"I have been particularly fond of Donald Ross golf courses," he said in a letter after the tournament. "And as a student of architecture, I am impressed with Ross' work at Essex."

Past president of Essex Golf & Country Club, Dick Carr, is not surprised at the club's reputation among professionals. "I think pros like the Donald Ross type of course. It's a classic, beautiful course that challenges all levels of players."

"The biggest impact of an event like this is on the membership," says Morgan. "It has been a huge undertaking for our members over a year. We're really looking forward to this tournament, and we are very fortunate that many of the people helping with this event were also involved with the duMaurier Classic in 1998.

A professional golf tournament depends on the local community for a lot of support. A thousand volunteers are needed and approximately 800 have already been recruited for help in areas like security, transportation, marshalling, scoring and communications. Morgan says, "An event like this generates tremendous enthusiasm



The majestic clubhouse at Essex Golf & Country Club nestles amongst the trees.

- A.J. Britton: Special to The Star

throughout the entire community and at the club, as members come together with the volunteers to help host an important international event. And we are still accepting applications for more volunteers. Working an event such as this really is a chance in a lifetime and it's a benchmark event for the club and for the community."

For ticket information, call 1-800-310-RCGA. In the Windsor area, call the local RCGA office at 734-7083. Information regarding tickets and passes can be obtained by calling the local Royal Canadian Golf Association office at: 734-7083. Local Ticket outlets include: Tecumseh Golf, Pro Golf, Freeds, Diane Shoes, Ecco Shoes, Broken Tee Golf (Chatham), Sarnia Golf Club, Essex Golf & Country Club, and local branches of the Bank of Montreal.

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