

Homecoming queen

Sept. 19 marked the fifth year of an increasingly successful fundraising event: the Lorie Kane Ronald McDonald Children's Charities (RMCC) Golf Classic at Charlottetown's Belvedere Golf Club. Beginning in 1998, the tournament raised \$35,000 in its first year, \$50,000 in the second, \$70,000 in the third, and \$95,000 in the fourth. "That's phenomenal for a province this size," says Mary Lynn Jenkins, Kane's sister and a tournament co-chair. "More money has been raised in this event than in any other golfing event for RMCC, and that's cross country, so we're pretty proud of that."

Kane has played 12 LPGA tournaments; her 2002 earnings, as of early August, were close to \$286,000, and in 2001 she crossed the \$3 million mark in career earnings. Although she isn't obligated to raise money for charities, she chooses to do so. Her involvement in this event comes from a lifelong friendship with David McKenna, who owns and runs the McDonald's in Charlottetown. "David was very instrumental in helping me get my career started," says Kane, "and I knew that there would be a way that I could become involved with something that could benefit Atlantic Canadian children." The tournament, she says, "gave us a way to generate some much-needed funds that can either stay here and directly affect the people in Prince Edward Island or help with the Ronald McDonald House charities."

According to Kent Hudson, the tournament's third co-chair, a little less than half of the 36 to 38 teams are from such major sponsors as MasterCard, Molson Inc., McCain Foods Ltd., ATV/CTV News, and Atlantic Lottery Corp. that pay \$5,000 to play. The others, roughly 20 teams, pay \$2,000. "All of the original major sponsors who came onboard initially have stayed on



every year, without even being asked," says McKenna. "We just call them up and give them the date."

The teams meet Kane on the ninth hole to have their picture taken with her. "I hit a tee shot for them," she says. "We have time to chat, and then they finish their game and we have a great lobster and steak dinner," as well as a silent auction. Last year Kane raised \$10,000 by auctioning off a round of golf and dinner with her at her sister's

restaurant, Ottis McAssey's Fine Food and Beverages at Founders' Hall in Charlottetown. Tim Banks, the president of APM Properties and P.E.I.'s Liberal party, came up with the cash. "It's just fun with a capital 'F'," says Kane.

The evening before the tournament, a junior clinic is held for children between the ages of two and 18. "The

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first year we had it, I remember they were waiting from one end of the range to the other," says Kane. "What was supposed to be about an hour took two, and I said, 'That's just the way it's going to be.' I wanted them to experience golf up front, to get their hands on a club, and really know what it's all about."

Tournament proceeds have been donated to a pediatric ward at the new Prince County Hospital in Summerside, P.E.I., and to the creation of a Snoezelen Room—an isolated peaceful space designed to stimulate the visual, acoustic, taste, and smell senses of mentally handicapped adults. In this case, emotionally challenged children and adults can go there to help build relationships with their caregivers. Funds have also gone to purchase ski chairs for handicapped children and adults to use at P.E.I.'s Brookvale Provincial Ski Park, and to Ronald McDonald House and a room at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, where families can live while they learn how to care for their sick child.

Kane is also involved in the Kid Sport Foundation, which helps families with limited financial resources pay for sports expenses for their children. "Sport has always been such a tremendous part of my life—not just golf, but basketball and field hockey too—and my involvement has made me the person I am today," she says. "I didn't excel in academics but I was good on the playing field, and I just think that sport can help young people all over the world create a positive image of themselves."

The Ronald McDonald Children's Charities has granted more than \$22 million to Ronald McDonald Houses and other local children's charities in Canada. "Ronald McDonald's never ceases to amaze me," Kane says. "I'm pretty proud of my [McDonald's] arches on the side of my hat," she says with a laugh. "I love a Big Mac, and they still make the best French fries."

— Carol Johnstone

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