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Cecilia Frievalt, 4, of Gurnee, talks with children's book author Jim Aylesworth of Chicago during the Bernard P. Floriani Foundation event June 7 at Viking Park in Gurnee. The event seeks to promote literacy.

Charity works to promote literacy

By **COURTNEY CROWDER**
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GURNEE – Golf carts, beers and stogies.

At first glance, it seemed like a regular Saturday at Bittersweet Golf Course in Gurnee, but when one took a closer look at the large, canvas logo hanging over the clubhouse, it became easy to see that this particular golf outing was different.

The event – which took place June 6 – was the Links for Literacy Classic for the Bernard P. Floriani Foundation, a charity started by Lake County resident Brian Floriani.

The Bernard P. Floriani Foundation is named after

Brian Floriani's father. The foundation backs early childhood literacy and is named in honor of Floriani's dad because he loved both reading and children.

"I started the foundation after my father died," Floriani said. "It was a kind of knee-jerk reaction to my grief."

Floriani used to be a golf professional, and the charity started as something that would raise money for different organizations every year.

"The first year, we raised about \$25,000 for a scientific research organization, but I didn't feel a real tangibility to the help I was doing," Floriani said. "If we wanted to do

this right, I would have to be totally committed. So, I shelved the project."

"Then I decided to leave golf, move back to Lake County and start the foundation again," Floriani continued. "This time the foundation would have a focus on helping low-income families get their children reading ready."

Right now, in addition to being the president of the Bernard P. Floriani Foundation, Floriani teaches at a Zion school as a reading intervention specialist.

"I work in the school system, and I am glad that I helping them, but I know that they will struggle with reading for the rest of their

life," Floriani said. "That's why our organization tries to address the cause of the problem and not the symptoms."

The Floriani foundation looks to help families who are less fortunate get their children reading ready for when they enter kindergarten. It seeks to accomplish its goal by promoting literacy to those through age 6.

"The schools spend \$7 in intervention with children who have trouble reading and only \$1 in prevention," Floriani said. "We want to spend the money our foundation gets in prevention."

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Funds from event will promote literacy

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In addition to the Links for Literacy Classic golf scramble on June 6, the foundation hosted the Children's Chautauqua in the Park on June 7. In the words of Floriani himself, the park event was a kind of anti-Xbox festival with four hours of educational entertainment.

For now, the foundation is taking monetary collections and literary collections. The books that the foundation collects will be re-

Want to help?

Area residents can send books or donations to the **Bernard P. Floriani Foundation** at 985 E. Mapiewood Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045.

packaged according to age level and then given to schools that will distribute them to kids who need them.

The money that is raised this past weekend will be split, with half the money going to Read Across America and the other half

going to further the mission of the Floriani foundation.

"I would like to raise between \$5,000 and \$10,000 this weekend," Floriani said. "This year is really about introducing ourselves and introducing the community to our problem and our mission."

Right before tee-off at the Links for Literacy Classic, Floriani introduced his mother who - while a bagpiper played "Amazing Grace" - hit the honorary first ball and all those in attendance watched it fly, a beautiful metaphor for the first year of this truly Lake County charity.



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