

Women of Color Golf

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MEDIA INVITE & PUBLICATION OP-ED REQUEST

Change agents ignite a historic program in our community

Tee Time: February 11th @ 5:30pm to 7:30pm

The Centre Club, 123 S West Shore Blvd 8th Floor, Tampa, FL 33609

Summary: The media and the public are cordially invited to attend the unveiling and launch of a one-of-its-kind girls golf program (The James Jaguar Girls Golf Club). History is making more history right here in Tampa. Please attend this once-in-a-lifetime historic unveiling. Mayor Jane Castor will be among the City's leadership in attendance. Register early on Eventbrite, as the space is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions at The Centre Club.

Tampa, FL—Clemmie Perry sometimes forgets she is walking on a trail that has been blazed by thunderous Black women excellence in Hillsborough County. But the trail still has so much more blazing to do.

Standing at the intersection of Prosperity Rd and PGA Blvd in Palm Beach Gardens, Perry's younger brother, Ross Perry, finds a discarded golf club set. Recently laid off and surviving on a severance, Perry wasn't sure taking risks was on the table. With the help of her oldest brother, Kenneth Perry, she was afforded an opportunity to seek golf lessons. This was only six years ago and since then, the Women of Color Golf & Girls on Green Tee vision was born! Golf is a sport that still has limited access to women and most especially women and girls of color.

FUNDRAISER FOR
James Elementary Golf Program
JAGUARS GIRLS GOLF

DATE:
February 11th, 2021

TIME:
5:30pm - 7:00pm

LOCATION:
The Centre Club | 123 S West Shore Blvd | 8th Floor | Tampa, FL 33609

Women of Color Golf and Community United are partnering with Hillsborough County P Schools to bring the first ever after school golf and mentoring program to James Elementary with an opportunity to not only learn this highly respected game, 1st-8th grade have been chosen to learn alongside professional women and golfers. This event raise funds to ensure each student has the proper equipment to succeed at this s

HOSTED BY: Clemmie Perry, Ross White

SPONSORS: [Logos for various sponsors]

Please RSVP with your ticket and/or sponsorship at:
<https://wocggol.eventbrite.com>

Flyer to February 11 event includes link for your RSVP: <https://wocggol.eventbrite.com>



Women of Color Golf is the proud recipient of the PGA Tour Charity of the Year 2020

According to the World Golf Foundation's 2015 diversity in golf report, 24.7 million individuals participate in golf but only 5.7 million are of a marginalized race. At that, only 1.4 million players are Black. In total, only 5.7 million of all golfers are women, accounting for just 23% of the sport. Less than 1% are women of color. This stark disparity is reminiscent of a Jim Crow past where golf was a sport for white men at the country club and not one for Black women. Perry sets her sights on changing this paradigm. "It's more than about the game of golf," says Perry. "It's about giving girls of

color a sense of purpose, a sense of pride and connection,” Perry says that with her team of volunteers, golf professionals, and Women of Color Golf Member. They all are committed to growing the game of golf and making it accessible and diverse for anyone, regardless of gender or race.



Historic image of Mrs. James', who's the namesake of James Elementary.

Inequities towards women and especially Black women aren't a new dilemma and it isn't limited to golf. Perry's grandmother knew this best: a trailblazing activist and educator, Perry's grandmother dedicated her life to fighting for pay equity for Black teachers in Hillsborough County.

“Sometimes, I think about giving up,” says Perry with a sense of honesty and vulnerability. “But then I look at that card she signed and I say to myself, I have no right to give up.”

Perry is referencing the card signed by the trailblazer whose name she carries, Mrs. Clemmie Ross James. Mrs. James had her sights set on teaching Black children in Hillsborough County, but at the time, in order to teach Black children, you had to sign a



Mrs. Clemmie Ross James,
Educator & Civil Rights Activist



Mrs. James' had to sign a waiver to forfeit her retirement in order to educate Black children in Hillsborough County. She signed it and never looked back.

waiver to eliminate your eligibility for a retirement fund through the Florida Teachers Association. In 1939, Mrs. James did just that, making a sacrifice to her own retirement to

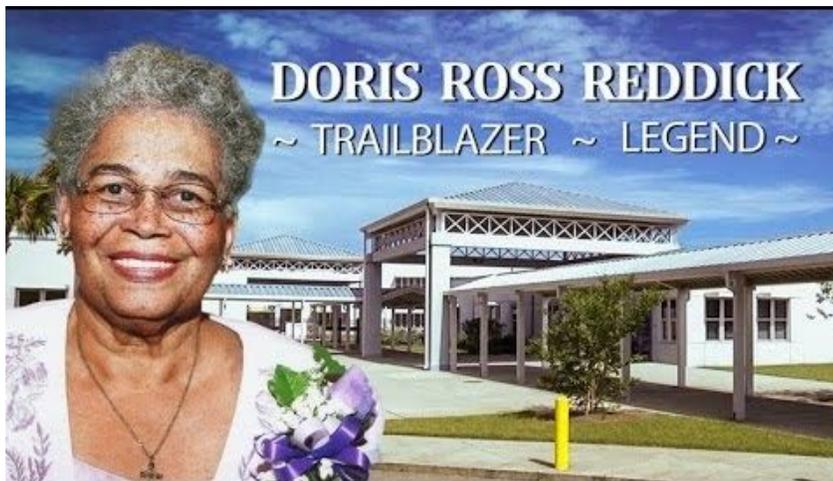
live out her mission. Perry thinks about that often and when the going gets tough, Mrs. James' voice echoes in her ears.

When former political candidate, community activist, magazine editor-in-chief, and nurse Sky U. White crossed paths with Perry, an idea sparked a new passion.

"Why haven't you brought this idea to James Elementary? It's got your name on it!" Perry recalls White telling her.

Perry can still remember the image of her grandmother staring her down as she walked into the hallways of James Elementary, named after a blazer of trails. "About time you got here," Mrs. James's voice echoes in Perry's ears as she embraces the legacy her name and her bloodline holds.

See, Perry did not read about Black history in school, Perry heard Black history at the dinner table. Her trailblazing grandmother reared her trailblazing mother, the Tampa legend Doris Ross Reddick, the first Black woman to become elected to the Hillsborough County School Board, who also has a school named after her in Hillsborough County. Ms. Reddick has her own historic ties: she studied under Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the namesake of Bethune-Cookman University, who personally signed her diploma. She also started the Office of Supplier Diversity for Hillsborough County Public Schools, to ensure fair bidding practices of contracts, for minority suppliers and vendors.



There was no way Perry couldn't act with all of the trails blazed in her lineage. But the trouble is, according to the Ms. Foundation's landmark study titled *Pocket Change: How Women of Color Do More with Less*, found that organizations that serve Black girls and women, like Women of Color Golf, tend to operate with less than \$50,000 in annual capital and an average earning of only \$15,000 in grant awards. Perry felt this disparity, spending six years with almost no capital and the possibility that support was never going to come her way. But then she looked at her grandmother's signature on the retirement waiver and kept on marching and praying.

On February 11, White and Perry will be present and hosting to unveil a new program, the James Jaguars Girls Golf Club, for James Elementary. A fundraiser will be held at The Centre Club, 123 S West Shore Blvd 8th Floor, Tampa, FL 33609 from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm, with limited physical capacity due to Coronavirus. Mayor Jane Castor will attend this event and speak before the attendees to unveil this historic moment. All media are invited to attend to bear witness to this historic event.

"This truly is an opportunity for the City, and really the world to see that District 5 is more than just an at-risk school district full of problems. I'd like parents, the community, our wonderful educators, and most importantly our young students attending James Elementary to see this school for its potential, not for its problems," says White, who is passionate about education. "I believe switching the paradigm can only happen when we try something innovative, and golf, usually associated with wealthy white men, is one innovation we can enact right here in our local community, as we empower our young girls to show off their skills, talent, and ability while having a blast!"

According to Women of Color Golf, golf stands for the following goals: Gain respect and confidence for others, Obtain self-esteem and patience, Learn communication and basic etiquette skills, and Fitness and healthy lifestyles.

Women of Color Golf would not be able to implement this new program were it not for Copperhead Charities, the Valspar Championship, and the PGA TOUR. After six years of a grassroots effort, Perry was surprised to learn that Women of Color Golf's Girls on the Green Tee initiative had won the PGA Tour Charity of the Year in 2020, with a \$30,000.00 grant award. "This grant will allow us funding at least for about three years to allow [girls] to have mentors of professional women in the community, so they can see themselves in future careers."

This fundraiser is one of many as the flyer states: "Women of Color Golf and Community United are partnering with Hillsborough County Public Schools to bring the first-ever after-school golf mentoring program to James Elementary. With an opportunity to not only learn this highly respected game, six to ten fifth grade girls will be selected to learn alongside professional women and golfers. This event will raise funds to ensure each student has the proper equipment to succeed at this sport."

Mentored her entire life by trailblazing family members, Perry has also had the distinct pleasure of receiving mentorship of golf's own legend Dr. Renee Powell, a Black woman professional golfer, who in 1967 became only the second Black member of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), which resulted in receiving death threats due to people's hatred of the idea of a Black woman playing golf. She was elected as a member of the PGA of America in 1996.



Clemmie C. Perry
WOCG & GOTGT Executive Director

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WOCG WOMEN OF COLOR GOLF **GOTGT** GIRLS ON THE GREEN TEE

**U.S. White House
Champion of Change**

Women of Color Golf & Girls on the Green Tee have made phenomenal moves already, including being a U.S. White House Champion of Change.

In 2003, she was awarded the First Lady of Golf Award from the PGA. Powell was invited to become one of the first women members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, Scotland. In 2018, a student residence hall was named after Powell on the campus of the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Her father, William Powell, built the first Black-owned and operated golf course in the United States, Clearview Golf Course, East Canton, Ohio. This year, Clearview Golf Course will celebrate their 75th Anniversary.

Perry was also mentored by Dr. Michael Cooper, who today serves as the Chairman of the We Are Diversity Task Force under the World Golf Foundation organization. Cooper is proud of the progress Women of Color Golf has made in this important equality effort. “There are a number of Ms. Perry’s out there,” declares Dr. Cooper. “We have to reach out to them, the community isn’t going to come to us.”

Dr. Cooper knows the disparities not only in the game of golf but what those disparities represent. Golf, a game typically associated with wealthy white men, serves as a tool of networking, learning new skills, building self-esteem, and building community. The opportunities available in golf have long been locked away from women, Black and brown people, and most certainly Black and brown women. Dr. Cooper has dedicated his life to bringing opportunity to the Black community when it comes to golf.

Dr. Cooper can remember a not-so-distant past in his Chicago upbringing where he found himself an odd one out: the Black community didn’t relate to him because golf wasn’t for them, they thought, and the white community didn’t relate to him because they had been so used to their hegemony. While things have changed to some extent, Dr. Cooper bemoans the flatline in the statistics with only less than 1% of golfers being women of color. This is why Dr. Cooper is so excited and so passionate about, Girls on the Green Tee.

It is not a white sport, Dr. Cooper reminds all of us because there is no such thing as a white sport. Basketball, football, and baseball were all perceived as white sports until those paradigms shifted. It's up to all of us, Dr. Cooper recounts, to make this happen. Whereas the football field and the baseball field tore down the signs, Jim Crow still serves as a spectator at most golf fields across the globe. The Perry's of the world, as far as Dr. Cooper is concerned, serve an important role in tearing down those signs off of every golf course in the globe.

It is far beyond a game

Many of us were not around to watch Mrs. Reddick and Mrs. James blaze the trails they blazed but we have an opportunity to bear witness to the innovation happening right before our eyes with the Girls on Green Tee initiative in its budding days. This is an opportunity you must not miss!

Please watch this video to see how the PGA Tour Charity of the Year award was announced:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZH6UVHzrko&feature=youtu.be>