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## Reality Check golf outing free for children

*BY GERRY LAZAROWICZ  
FOR FLORIDA TODAY*

Children will be able to play golf for free in an upcoming event in Viera.

The second annual Reality Check Golf Outing will tee off Aug. 8 at Viera East Golf Club, 2300 Clubhouse Drive.

"Kids don't get to play golf all too often, and for one day this summer we want to change that," said Lawrence Lawton of Palm Bay, founder of the Reality Check Program and Foundation.

This event matches kids ages 11 to 18 with an adult mentor to play golf and participate in other activities. It includes a golf clinic, nine holes of golf, a putting contest, a longest drive contest, a closest to the pin contest, a banquet, awards ceremony and door prizes.

Lawton said 18 teams of three kids each will be teamed up with an adult mentor to make up foursomes to play in the best-ball scramble.

"This event is like no other," he said. "This year we will have 54 kids who have little or no golf experience from all economic levels participating. The kids that have advantages can learn to appreciate what they have, while the have-nots can learn to aspire to what is possible."

The mentors are judges, prosecutors, police chiefs and other members from law enforcement and legal professions, as well as business leaders in the community.

"Through these mentors, we want to break down the attitude of us against them, and to show there are people who care," Lawton said. "Many times, the mentors keep in touch with the kids for months afterwards, playing golf or just listening and advising."

Lawton said he relates to kids because he is not their father, mother, teacher, counselor or the police. He is an ex-con and paralegal with a passion for helping teens and young adults.

Raised in the Bronx and Brooklyn, Lawton spent six years in the Coast Guard, but later made some bad choices that led him to an association with organized crime. He was convicted of racketeering in connection with some jewelry robberies and spent 11 years in some of the toughest federal prisons in the country.

After finishing his prison sentence, Lawton founded the Reality Check Program, to help youngsters from making bad choices in their lives.

"The Reality Check Program was designed to tell kids how I lost time, family, friends and my freedom because of bad choices," Lawton said. "The program is designed to make kids aware that they control their own destinies and anything they wish to achieve is within their own power."

He said the program is seeking sponsors for the golf event.

"We are asking for your help to sponsor a kid for this outing," Lawton said. "The cost for a golf sponsor is \$100, and this will ensure one kid can join the event and have a great time. All profits from the golf outing will be used by the foundation to distribute free DVDs of the Reality Check Program."

## Additional Facts

How to participate

To register a child to play in the Reality Check Golf Outing or for sponsorship information, call 327-2921.

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