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## Pro Golfer-Cristie Kerr Gives Back to the Youth!



By Hector Gonzalez

Rewind the clock back to 1996 ; thats' how far back LPGA golfer **Cristie Kerr** has been playing golf professionally. Now fast-forward 14-years later, Kerr -- leaning on her golf club, sporting a white polo with black slacks-- is going back to her roots.

Kerr spoke in front of 70 young amateur golfers at the Melreese Country Club, for the free golf clinic sponsored by the Fondation Rene Lacoste & First Tee of Miami girl golf clinic Saturday afternoon.

" This is where I got my start -- without the First Tee of Miami & Dade Amatuer Golf Association-- I wouldn't be where I am today," Kerr said, " I want to inspire the next generation of golfers, and I am happy to finally make it down here where I grew up [Miami], and give back to the community."

At the age of 8-years-old Kerr became infatuated with the game, she was a three-time Florida State Junior State girls champion from (1993-1995), the Doral Publix Junior Classic winner, and Junior Orange Bowl classic winner (1994).

She took her time answering questions about her career, golf tips and swing techniques from the young golfers in attendance, at one point being placed on the spot when asked by one of them about her earnings.

Kerr wowed the crowd when she gave her response, " I've made over \$13 ½ million dollars on tour" a mark that has made her one of the top American money winners in the LPGA.



Her father, **Michael Kerr**, a retired teacher of 28-years - in the Miami Dade Public system-- said he and Kerr's mother Linda Kerr always tried to get young Cristie involved in sports, whether it was from bowling, gymnastics, or tennis.

In the end Kerr chose golf.



"Cristie, would love to ride around with me in the golf cart, and throw balls at the fish in the water, and when she learned how to play the game, there it was no turning back," Michael Kerr said. " As a father, I take a tremendous amount of pride to see her succeed."



**Leia Schwartz**, 15, whose part of the First-Tee program said she found it interesting when Kerr spoke on the topic of over-coming obstacles because of her health -severe lung illness- issue something that has given her hope.

“The doctors told me golf was the only sport I could play because it wasn’t as physical,” Schwartz said, “It was amazing to see her speak, and learn from a professional.”

The Melreese Country Club is also home to a pair of step-sisters in attendance, **Charli Fernandez-9**, and **Emily Uribarri-9**, both of whom had fun learning the different set-up stances in the game from Kerr.

“Golf is fun game because you get to travel around when you hit a birdie.” Fernandez said. “ It was very

the world, hit the ball and have people cheer for you exciting seeing her.”

The Miami native, Kerr, boasted a 4.5 GPA coming out-of high school, but opted not to attend college, but instead turn pro, she has a “ Birdie for Breast Cancer” program to fight the disease after her mother was diagnosed with it on July 2003.

She called First-Tee of Miami’s Executive Director **Charlie DeLucca III** the “ God Father of Golf” and credits him for providing young amateur golfers a place of development, along with the partnership with the Lacoste family.

**Alix Hamilton**, 15, daughter of Beryl Hamilton - granddaughter of Lacoste clothing founder Rene Lacoste - said it was nice for Kerr to come out, and give them tips.

“ I really liked it, “ **Alix Hamilton** said.



**Tania Eathakotti**, 11, the 2011 Doral Publix Junior Classic champion in the age group (10-11) said she wants to be a heart surgeon, but if that fails then she’ll try a career in golf.

“It was pretty big today learned some new stuff,” Eathakotti referring to Kerr “ I want to follow in her foot-steps, and achieve the things she has.”

Eric Ikpe contributed to this article