Taking it to the course with a pro
By Holly Danks, Communications Director

Watch out for Karen Bolin, Danielle Tollefson and Pia Meyer on the course this year – they took their games to the next level by playing 18 at The Reserve Vineyards & Golf Club with Jean Bartholomew, an LPGA pro and instructor.

Unfair advantage? No, everyone at the recent Kickoff had the chance to bid to “Play with the Pro,” with proceeds going to The First Tee of Greater Portland. The Chapter donated a total of $600 to the local arm of the national non-profit group that instills life values in at-risk and low-income youth through the game of golf. More than $360 of the donation came from the bids.

“What I bid is what I usually pay for an HOUR of instruction,” Karen noted. “We got FIVE HOURS of instruction and played on a beautiful course instead of being on a driving range or in a studio swinging in front of a mirror!”

So while Karen was giving to charity, she conversely recognized that “five hours of instruction was a true gift that will change my golf game forever!”

Danielle called it “a win-win situation.”

“I’ve always wanted to have an instructor on the course with me, but to have an LPGA pro was a bonus,” she said. “Plus the money I bid went to The First Tee.”

Both Karen and Danielle said Jean quickly recognized what each needed to improve their golf – and kept the instruction focused, simple and straightforward. Remember what Jean said in her Kickoff speech about swing thoughts? Even two, three or four is too many – she has ZERO once she steps up to whack the ball. All the thoughts and prompts should become ingrained during work on the range.

“She was great at knowing how to coach all three of us differently, but with a consistent message to stay loose, finish with belt buckle facing the target, weight on the front foot and not falling backward in the swing,” Karen explained.

Danielle liked that Jean told them to “always aim for a target and be mindful of the environment conditions, like the wind.”

Something that surprised Danielle was that Jean “taught us to putt with a hybrid!”
Pia is new to golf and wants to get her own left-handed clubs, not her husband’s old, heavy right-handed ones. Jean was able to help Pia by getting her to focus on swinging freely with one hand and not worrying about anything else.

For her part, Jean said she enjoys taking students onto a course more than a practice tee because she gets “to teach people all different kinds of shots and how to play the game.” She said she accepted President Jodenne Scott’s invitation to be our guest speaker because she wanted to see old friends, meet knew people, “talk about the game I love and try to convey my knowledge.”

Jean was LPGA Rookie of the Year in 1996 and continues to play several tournaments on the professional tour each year, in addition to competing in LPGA Legends and Teaching Pro events. She works out of PGA National in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., the home of EWGA. Sydney Hagen, EWGA-Portland member, formerly caddied for Jean and introduced her to other local members who have benefitted from Jean’s boot camps, golf instruction and quick wit.

Karen started golfing with her husband’s old set of Ping clubs, finally got fitted for her own set and joined the Portland Chapter about 15 years ago because she enjoyed being outside and the social aspect of golf. She said putting a weekly EWGA league on her calendar and paying for it ahead of time forced her to follow through and play more.

Danielle signed up with EWGA in Orange County, Calif., right after she took her first set of lessons. “I knew I would be too nervous to golf on my own,” she acknowledged. “The EWGA provided a safe and supportive environment and mentoring of a new golfer. I don’t think I would be a golfer today if it wasn’t for this organization.”

And none of us would be the golfer we are today – or will be tomorrow (after more practice) – without the unique opportunities EWGA offers.