

ILLINOIS WOMEN'S GOLF ASSOCIATION

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1933 the Chicago District Women's Golf Association determined that there should be a separate organization in charge of a state amateur championship for women. Out of this decision the Illinois Women's Golf Association was born. With Mary Wheeler as founder, a small group of women conducted the first tournament at Evanston Golf Course in 1934 and without looking back the future of the competition was established. Today, the organization strives to provide the State Amateur event in the tradition of that first generation of leaders.

During World War II, the IWGA began the Victory Tournament to show support for our men in uniform. The first tournament was held in 1941 to raise money for veterans hospitals. Still in existence today, the philanthropic efforts raise over \$18,000 each year to contribute to the veterans, golf scholarships, women's golf grants, junior golf awards, medical research, and local charities. Held at individual clubs which provide their own tournament format, the women golfers throughout the state join together to raise money that when combined is enough to make a difference. Of all the state women's golf organizations, Illinois is the only one with this type of charitable giving.

Although off to a rocky start, the Seniors Championship began in 1970. Scheduled to play at Pekin Country Club, the tournament had to be cancelled due to rain. Not to be deterred the "over 50" group of women have been faithful contestants throughout the years to the extent that this tournament always has a waiting list.

Although the youngest both in years held and the ages of the contestants, the Junior State Championship began in 1980. This tournament has always been held at the University of Illinois Golf Course at Savoy. It continues to grow and provide a venue for the younger player to compete in a setting that prepares her for collegiate and national competition...or even beyond that to the professional level where many of the younger players have now advanced.

The IWGA Board of Directors is composed of up to 25 active members in addition to the honorary and emeritus categories. Coming from all areas of the state, these volunteers give their time and pay their own expenses so that the opportunity to play in statewide competition is available to all women who enjoy the game.