

Salute

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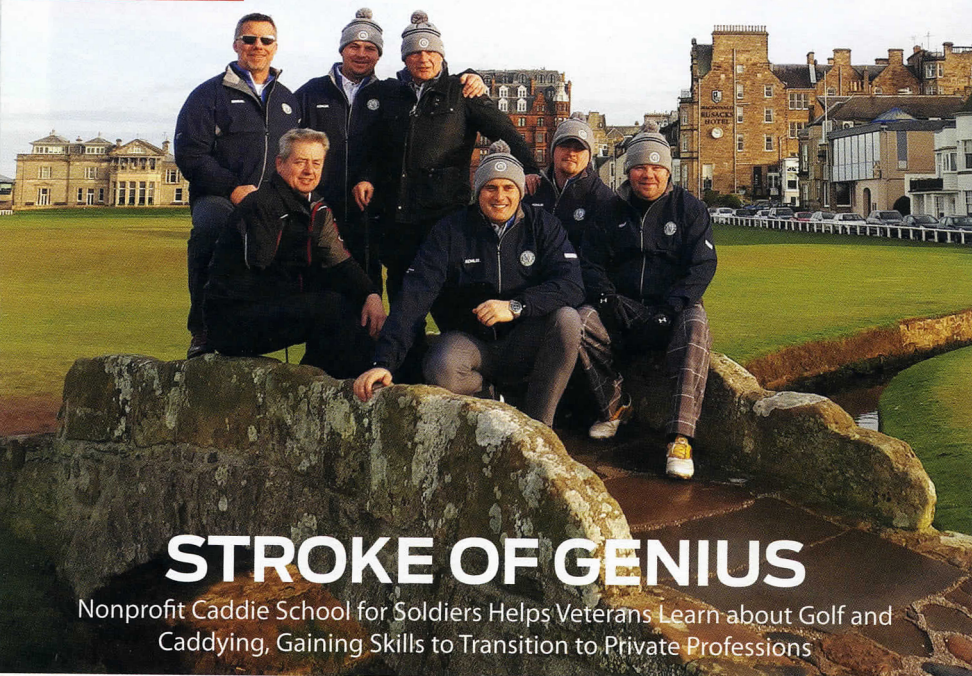


STROKE OF GENIUS

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Learn About Golf And Caddying, Gaining Skills
To Transition To Private Professions

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By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

Transitioning from the structured life of the military to a professional position in the private sector requires a combination of focus, strategy, flexibility, ingenuity, skill, and luck... much like the game of golf. A unique partnership between the nonprofit Caddie School for Soldiers (CSS) and leading international bath and kitchen fixture manufacturer Kohler Co. is helping veterans gain the confidence and skills they need to succeed in new professions.

"Because soldiers are dedicated to the ideal of self-sacrifice, when they return to a world that is defined by the opposite—personal gain—they don't really know how to fit in and they become strangers to themselves," explains Don J. Snyder, CSS founder and chief executive officer. "And

when you're a stranger to yourself, you don't really believe in yourself anymore. The Caddie School for Soldiers program was created to help veterans earn back their belief in themselves, so that they can carry on in life with the measure of dignity they are entitled to."

"Our mission is to provide a healing experience for soldiers who are suffering and are haunted and sometimes crippled by their memories and wounds of war—an experience they will look back on as one of the great experiences of their lives," Snyder continues. "It is the kind of healing that comes when they get to live together for a month in a beautiful and peaceful place, in a new band of brothers that become their family. The kind of healing that comes when they learn new skills that enable

A photograph of two men on a golf course. In the foreground, a man in a blue and white jacket and black pants is raking a sand bunker with a long-handled rake. In the background, another man in a dark jacket and pants is standing near the edge of the bunker, holding a golf club. The background is filled with bare trees under a cloudy sky.

them to earn a living for the people they have pledged themselves to. The kind of healing that comes when they begin to recover some belief in themselves that they have lost."

CSS invites small groups of veterans to live together for a month, learn about golf and caddying, and gain skills that will help them create new lives in a new profession—whether in golf or any other. Previous schools have been held near where golf originated, St. Andrews, Scotland, while the 2021 school was held at Whistling Straits, host of the 43rd Ryder Cup, in Kohler, Wisconsin.

Founded in the winter of 2019, CSS so far has

welcomed 26 soldiers from the U.S., Canada, and United Kingdom to the program. Several of the participants are now working as professional caddies at The Old Course in St. Andrews; Dumbarnie Links in Scotland; Royal Liverpool in England; Coral Creek in Florida; and Old Head in Ireland.

"All of the soldiers who have been through our school have new hope for their futures," Snyder notes. "Our sponsoring partner, the Kohler family and company, have been instrumental in helping these deserving veterans through their generous support from the very beginning. They've provided not just vital funding, but also the use of their wonderful golf facilities, initially in St. Andrews and this year at Whistling Straits. The CSS is extremely grateful for their support."

Kohler communications manager Christine Perkins points out that Kohler Co. has a long history of military support, extending to associations around the world and connecting to the company's global businesses. "Kohler is proud to honor our veterans today and every day," she comments. "Kohler's work with the CSS is one of many ways the company has shown its support of individuals who serve in the armed forces. With a focus on fostering a veteran-friendly workplace, Kohler's associate-led veterans Business Resource Group, called the Kohler Alliance of Veterans & Supporters (KAVS), is making a meaningful difference inside Kohler and within our communities."


Kohler's support includes helping disabled veterans. "In 2012, Kohler Co. partnered with an organization called Homes for Our Troops to begin a multi-year donation program to fully outfit the homes of soldiers returning from battle in a wheelchair or without a limb," Perkins states. "The donations include universally designed toilets, shower enclosures, baths, bathroom and kitchen sinks, shower heads, hand showers, faucets, and generators to families in need."

The company also actively recruits veterans for its workforce. "Military veterans bring unique skills, valuable perspective, and strong leadership that enhances Kohler's workplace and strengthens our team," she says. "Kohler Co. is proud to partner

with leading organizations, such as Reboot and the Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce, in support of building a veteran-ready workplace."

Snyder says CSS has made a measurable difference in the lives of participating veterans. "One of our soldiers was at the bottom of his life when he came to the school in 2019; he had given up on himself," he recalls. "Now he has become a beloved caddie at The Old Course in Scotland. Another soldier grew up in Cambodia and escaped the Killing Fields when he was six years old. He made his way to America where he worked as a police officer. When he saw the planes fly into the towers on 9/11, he enlisted in the army in order to help protect the country that had given him a new life. Another one of our soldiers, a Canadian soldier, served on 14 deployments. He is now a mentor at the school for the incoming class of soldiers."

CSS also receives support from numerous donors, contributors, and partners—including presenting sponsor, Peak Scientific; Folds of Honor, which contributes scholarships to the children of the school's attendees; and many organizations who refer veterans to the program, including the Wounded Warrior Project®, the On Course Foundation, Royal British Legion, B.L.E.S.M.A. (formerly the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association), and others.

"The organization's goal isn't necessarily to help veterans become caddies—though many graduates have gone on to rewarding careers as professional caddies—but rather to help veterans discover that a meaningful and positive future is possible after military service in whatever new field they may choose to pursue," Snyder points out. "Witnessing this healing and providing these soldiers with a new skill that equips them to earn a living doing meaningful work, has been a great privilege for everyone involved with the school." 

For more information: A feature-length documentary film that profiles the work of the nonprofit Caddie School for Soldiers (CSS) is available for viewing on the CSS website (<http://www.caddieschoolforsoldiers.com/>) or on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=O68y9ZZhA08.)