

Wesley Baker Memorial Golf Tournament set for June 18

By Wes Mayberry | Posted: Friday, May 29, 2015 8:13 am

Registration is currently underway for the Arc of Jackson County's annual Wesley Baker Memorial Golf Tournament. The tournament, which is the Arc's biggest fundraiser, is scheduled for June 18 at Goose Pond Colony's Plantation Course, located on Plantation Pointe Road in Scottsboro.

According to Arc board president Larry Bailey, participation is limited to the first 144 registrants. Those interested in participating can pick up a registration form at the Plantation Course or the Arc or have one emailed or faxed to them. Forms can also be submitted by calling the Arc at 256-259-1603 and supplying the necessary information. Bailey said the Arc would love for people to register as early as possible since space is limited.

The event begins with a barbecue lunch at 11:30 a.m., and the competition gets underway with a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. A \$400 cash prize will be awarded to the golfers with the top gross and net scores, while the golfers with the second- and third-place net scores will receive \$300 and \$200, respectively. Cash prizes will also be awarded in other categories, including closest to the pin. In addition to food and competitive golf, the tournament will also feature homemade ice cream and plenty of door prizes, Bailey said.

While the tournament promises to be a fun time for participants, Bailey said the importance of the event's role as a fundraiser could not be understated in light of potential funding cuts. Last week, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a general fund budget that would slash \$200 million from state agencies, including a five-percent cut to the Department of Mental Health, according to the Associated Press.

"I know people have seen and heard about how steep the cuts could be, and from what I've seen recently, there are definitely cuts coming. This is a fundraiser that means everything to us," Bailey said, and Arc Director Sara Haynes agreed.

"This is our biggest fundraiser, and it is extremely important that we have a good turnout this year in light of the potential funding cuts we are facing," Haynes said.

Bailey said all the proceeds from this event, which come from registration fees and sponsorships, go back to helping the Arc in its mission of empowering individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in Jackson County to live, work, worship and recreate within their own communities. The Arc provides transportation via six bus-type vehicles that travel morning and afternoon routes throughout the county, and the organization also assists clients with developing life skills and finding employment. Bailey said the Arc hopes to raise enough money from this year's golf tournament to help cover the cost of a recent order for three new buses.

Named in honor of former Arc client Wesley Baker, who loved attending this event each year prior to his death in 2010, the tournament has developed into a fun way for golfers, businesses, volunteers and other members of the local community to get together and benefit a worthy cause.

“It is a great community event,” Haynes said. “From Troy Ferguson cooking the barbecue to Ann Gant overseeing the food and making the homemade ice cream to the Arc staff, board and clients helping out, everyone pitches in to make it successful.”

With potential budget cuts on the horizon, fundraising has become ever more important for the Arc. And Bailey said he hopes to see a large crowd at the Plantation Course on June 18.

“We want to encourage all the golfers in the area to come and play with us,” he said. “We would love for everybody to be here and participate and come have lunch with us, and we appreciate all the sponsorships and door prizes that folks are willing to donate. The bottom line is we encourage everyone to come out and have fun while benefitting a good cause.”