

Chi Chi Rodriguez

Youth Foundation



Chi Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation, Inc. *Play with Purpose*

Mission: to educate students in a public-private partnership and improve their academic performance, self-esteem, and character using the golf course as a living classroom.

The Chi Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation is the principal operator of two educational programs: the Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy and First Tee – Clearwater, as well as two public businesses: the Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club and Chi Chi Rodriguez Driving Range.

The target group for Academy's activities is children ranging in ages from 5 to 17. We currently serve more than 3,600 children in our programs. Up to ninety (90) of those are students that attend the Chi Chi Academy, a privately supported public school in partnership with the Pinellas County School Board for students who have been identified as at risk of dropping out of school.

Underperforming student candidates are typically identified and referred to the Academy by Pinellas County School District guidance counselors. Students mostly live north of Ulmerton Road in Largo to Tarpon Springs.

To be accepted into the program, a child must meet two or more of the following requirements: (1) have poor grades; (2) perform below state expectations on standardized testing; (3) be socially withdrawn; (4) have poor school attendance; (5) from a single parent home; (6) on some form of government assistance.

The Foundation uses a holistic approach in its programs. Emphasis is placed on homework assistance, tutoring, social skills, core values, personal grooming, business skills, retail, art, landscaping, and golf. Golf was chosen as a key ingredient for the program because it does not require extraordinary size, speed, or strength to achieve success. The sport does, however, require consistent personal discipline, concentration, honesty, motivation and tenacity. These teachable traits plus exposure to role models of successful adult golfers made golf a natural choice.

Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy



Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy – Public Partnership School *Preparing Students for Success in the Game of Life*

The Public Private Partnership School known as Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy is a voluntary school for fourth through eighth grade students not achieving at their grade level, have low self-esteem or have difficulty adjusting to a larger academic environment. Students learn through interactive experiences in the fields of management, marketing, retail sales, landscaping, agronomy and various other real-world business environments.

Through the school's "Shadow Program", students, on a rotating basis, get to work with an adult in every department of the Youth Foundation, including the Golf Club and Driving Range businesses. While learning about various jobs, students see how basic educational skills like math and reading are used on an everyday basis in jobs. The teachers verify that students are much more enthusiastic when they see how skills they learn in the classroom are used outside the classroom, in the real world. The Shadow Program also reinforces social skills, which are an integral part of our educational setting.

The Pinellas County School system provides the teachers, the teacher assistants, support staff, student services and technology and the Foundation provides the campus facility, golf education and equipment, as well as classroom enrichment materials. The golf club delivers the real-life learning experience.

"We maximize the resources that the students would receive at traditional schools and provide them with additional support. The students have a much greater opportunity to succeed because of that support," according to our Chairman of the Board, Tom James.

The small school atmosphere, individualized attention, counseling, availability of student services and specialized instructional components taught by the Pinellas County certified teachers foster a desire in Chi Chi's Kids to succeed in school and life.

*** Academy Alumni graduation rate is 79%. This includes 8 classes of 8th graders completing Chi Chi's and attending Pinellas County High Schools and all were deemed at-risk for dropping out.**

*** 2019 Middle School Midterm Exam Scores - Science Class Average:**

- 6th grade: 4% higher than the District - 7th grade: 7% higher than the District - 8th grade: 3% higher than the District

*** 2019 Middle School Midterm Exam Scores - Math Class Average:**

- 6th grade: 1% higher than the District - 7th grade: Same as District (.4% higher) - 8th grade: 2% higher than the District



First Tee - Clearwater – Junior Golf Program *Building Game Changers*

First Tee - Clearwater is one of three Tampa Bay area chapters and serves over 3,600 participants. Life Skills Experience programs are offered in seven local elementary schools, as well as at the Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club and Chi Chi Rodriguez Driving Range.

First Tee builds experiences that build character. As a youth development organization, we believe experiences are our greatest teacher and that they should be both fun and meaningful, where kids feel excited to grow, safe to fail and better equipped for whatever comes their way.

By seamlessly integrating the game of golf with a life skills curriculum, we create active learning experiences that build inner strength, self-confidence and resilience that kids carry to everything they do.

Participants (ages 5-18) progress through the program over time, deepening their understanding of life skills and golf development. The integrated approach helps them build confidence and resilience.

- Learn the game of golf and how it relates to life
- Focus on interpersonal self-management skills on and off the course
- Emphasis on setting goals and making them a reality
- Learn conflict resolution, resilience and how to plan for the future
- Put it all together and hone in on setting goals, career education and giving back to the community

*** In a past independent research study of First Tee nationally, 73% of young people at participating chapters reported high confidence in their ability to do well academically and 82% felt more confident with social skills.**

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Foundation Highlights:

- 2020 Safety Harbor Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit of the Year
- 2019 Upper Tampa Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce Upper Tampa Bay Cup Award
- 2017 National Golf Course Owners Association Course of the Year Finalist
- 2017 Upper Tampa Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce Medium Business of the Year
- 2016 Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce Medium Non-Profit of the Year
- 2016 & 2015 Tampa Bay Business Journal Education Non-Profit of the Year Finalist

What Makes Chi Chi's Programs Unique?

The most unique feature about the Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy and its programs is the land they live on. The 170 acre campus, comprised of a public golf course and driving range, serves as a living classroom for the students to increase their knowledge of the world.

Golf: Students learn core values and life lessons seamlessly through golf with First Tee - Clearwater curriculum.



Native Bird Boxes: In October 2014, students along with volunteers and Native Bird Boxes owner Brian Beckner, built 22 bird boxes to place on the golf club's 170 acres. The different birds the boxes were built for include blue birds, flying squirrels, screech owls and woodpeckers. Throughout the year, students go on the course to help monitor the boxes as a part of their science curriculum.

Horticulture: Students maintain gardens on campus with a volunteer who works with each class on growing vegetables that the students can later pick and eat.



Shadow Program: Students get to spend time with adults in every department of the Golf Club and Foundation. While learning about the various jobs, the children see how basic educational skills like math and reading are used on an everyday basis.

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Success Stories

Jeremy Robinson, Alumni (1989-1993)

Vice President Operations, Ace Hospitality & Management
Academy Executive Committee Member
B.S. Psychology, Florida State University;
Minor: Business

"I am the proud father of two beautiful, smart and funny children as well as the General Manager of three hotels in Tampa Bay. I will be forever grateful to the Chi Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation for helping my Mom and family through hard times during my childhood. Chi Chi's not only taught me the game of golf but also infused me with respect, patience, perseverance, honesty and the fact that hard work pays off! I am a better person thanks to Chi Chi's and all of its supporters. Thank you from me and my family!"



Shannon Falcone, Alumni (1981)

Project Manager at World of Beer Franchising, Inc.
M.A. Clinical Social Work, University of South Florida
B.A. Elementary Education, University of South Florida

"I held several different jobs at Glen Oaks (Chi Chi's first golf 29 acre golf course campus) and without that experience it never would have occurred to me that college was a possibility. No one in my family ever attended before..."

Brian McGibbon, Alumni (1984-1990)

General Manager, Chili's

"Chi Chi also taught me about life and how I could create the family and life I always wanted. All I had to do was to use the tools I was given at that Foundation. Today, I'm proud to say I graduated from Crosby High School in Waterbury, Connecticut, married the love of my life, Gina, and together we have two beautiful children, Kole and Brina. As a manager of a local Chili's, I work hard to support my family and keep them smiling. Without Chi Chi and his Foundation, I wouldn't be the man I am today."

