

# 2025

# Annual REVIEW



 **first tee**  
south dakota



## Our Mission

To improve the lives of young people by providing educational programs and learning environments that **build character, instill life-enhancing values,** and **promote healthy choices** through the game of golf.

## Our Purpose

Enable kids to build strength of character that empowers them through a lifetime of new challenges.

## Our Values

**First Tee – South Dakota builds experiences that build character.** Experiences are our greatest teacher.

First Tee – South Dakota believes in developing experiences that are just as fun as they are meaningful. We've spent nearly 25 years building experiences that build character to empower kids through a lifetime of new challenges and personal growth.

Who We Are...



## A Message From Julie

At First Tee – South Dakota, 2025 was a year defined by momentum, change, and purpose. We witnessed the power of our program to open doors – not just to the game, but to confidence, character, and opportunity for young people across our state.

What makes First Tee – South Dakota special isn't simply where we teach, but what kids take with them when they leave. Through intentional programming and caring coaches, participants build skills that shape who they become – learning how to set goals, manage challenges, work with others, and believe in themselves. These lessons ripple outward into classrooms, families, and communities.

This year also marked a transformational chapter in our organization's story. The opening of the First Tee Learning Center located at Elmwood Golf Course – this facility will create opportunities for us to move our mission forward. Designed for year-round impact, the Learning Center allows us to reach more kids, remove barriers to access, and deepen relationships with community partners serving youth who need it most. This space will change what's possible – expanding our programs and strengthening our ability to serve with intention and care.

Progress like this never happens alone. Our growth is the result of generous donors, committed volunteers, passionate coaches, engaged board members, dedicated staff, and partners who believe in the potential of every child. Your support fuels meaningful experiences and lasting impact for thousands of young people each year.

As we look ahead, we are energized by what's next. Thank you for being part of our journey and for helping us shape a brighter future for South Dakota's youth – one swing at a time.

CEO  
SDGA Jr Golf Foundation & First Tee – South Dakota  
Julie Jansa



## First Tee | Age-Based Programming

### Building Game Changers

Through our age-based programming, our curriculum has evolved to better meet the needs of our youth. Our participants are becoming Game Changers through our Five Key Commitments and the exposure to Core Values and valuable Life Skills.



Pursuing Goals



Growing Through Challenge



Collaborating With Others



Building Positive Self-Identity



Using Good Judgement

## Building Game Changers

As we looked ahead to 2025, we knew it promised to be a good year—and wow, did First Tee—South Dakota hit it out of the ballpark.

This year, our programs expanded across the state, allowing us to reach more young people than ever before. We strengthened our outreach to those who need us most—at-risk and underserved youth—while continuing to deliver high-quality mainstream programming. Simply put, we are just hitting our stride.

While I will remain involved for one more year as Past President, I step down as Board Chair with mixed emotions. It has been an honor to serve an organization that is so committed to creating meaningful opportunities for kids. I am confident that First Tee—South Dakota will continue to grow—expanding into new locations, strengthening partnerships with other youth-serving organizations, and reaching even more young people with even greater impact.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission. We could not change so many lives without you!

**Chris Thornton | Board Chair, 2025, First Tee – South Dakota**

This past year has been nothing short of transformational for First Tee – South Dakota. As we look back with gratitude and ahead with optimism, one moment stands above the rest: the creation of the First Tee – South Dakota | Denny Sanford Learning Center.

This facility is far more than bricks and mortar. It represents growth, opportunity, stability, and a true safe-haven for the kids we serve. Out of 150 First Tee chapters nationwide, fewer than 30 have a dedicated learning center. For years, our team knew that to live our mission fully, we needed a home where the learning didn't stop off the course or when the weather shifted. And, incredibly, we were able to achieve this milestone 100% debt-free, a testament to the trust our community has in us and the credibility First Tee – South Dakota has built.

Our organization is dedicated to building Game Changers through the game of golf. But as everyone connected to First Tee knows, we are teaching so much more than swings and putts. Through golf, we teach kids to set goals, embrace challenges, work with others, build positive self-identity, and make good decisions. These are life skills that have a lasting impact long after they leave the course.

I am humbled and excited to step into the role as Board Chair for 2026. Chris has done a tremendous job laying the foundation and I look forward to continuing on this journey. As a team of board of directors, staff, coaches and volunteers, I know we step into the next chapter, with passion, purpose, and a sense of pride. Our momentum is unmistakable—and it's positive.

**Kristy Griffin | Incoming 2026 Board Chair, First Tee – South Dakota**

## 2025 First Tee – South Dakota Board of Directors and Executive Committee

### President

Chris Thornton, Sioux Falls

### Vice President

Kristy Griffin, Sioux Falls  
– 2026 Incoming Board Chair

### Secretary

Jordan Anderson, Sioux Falls

### Treasurer

Jay Huizenga, Sioux Falls

### Directors

Jack Hieb, Aberdeen  
Christie Aberson, Sioux Falls

Greg Heiberger, Brookings  
Bruce Ashland, Rapid City  
Tommy Johnson, Sioux Falls  
Kate Patrick, Sioux Falls | Brandon  
Glen Herrick, Sioux Falls  
Kelly Farrar, Rapid City  
Karla Cotton, Sioux Falls  
Dave Austad, Sioux Falls  
**\*Past President**

Tom Jansa, ex Officio, Sioux Falls

**SDGA Executive Director  
CEO**

**SDGA Jr Foundation &  
First Tee – South Dakota**  
Julie Jansa

### Operations Director

Kelli Sinksen

**Program Coordinator, Sioux Falls  
& Dell Rapids**  
Chantel Brende

### Chapter Outreach Coordinator

Jody Driscoll

### Regional Coordinators

Mitch Miller & Jordan Hilbert –  
Brookings  
Corey Gaulrapp – Aberdeen  
Cody Miles – Mitchell  
John Long – Pine Ridge

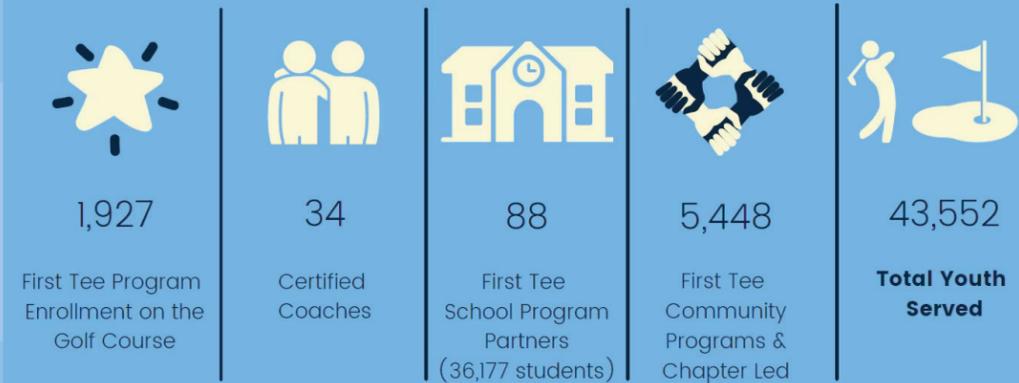


Founded in 2008 with 227 participants

## 2025 Scorecard

First Tee – South Dakota impacts the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character and instill life-enhancing values through the game of golf.

The following scorecard is a snapshot of our results in 2025.



Where We Are Now

# Our Programs

## First Tee – South Dakota Program

Participants ages 5-18 progress through the program over time, deepening their understanding of life skills and golf development.

The integrated approach helps kids and teens build confidence & resilience for when they are on the course, at home and in school.

### Every participant has the opportunity to:

- Learn the game of golf and how it relates to life.
- Focus on interpersonal and self-management skills on and off the course.
- Set goals and put strategies in place to make them a reality.
- Learn conflict resolution, resilience and how to plan for the future

## First Tee – South Dakota School Program

88 elementary schools in South Dakota participate in our School program, which includes the curriculum and equipment, to bring the game of golf and the life skills we teach to indoor gym classes.

## First Tee – South Dakota Community Programs

First Tee – South Dakota Community Programs designed to bring the game of golf to the community and recreation centers. We currently work throughout South Dakota in Boys & Girls Club, and Salvation Army.

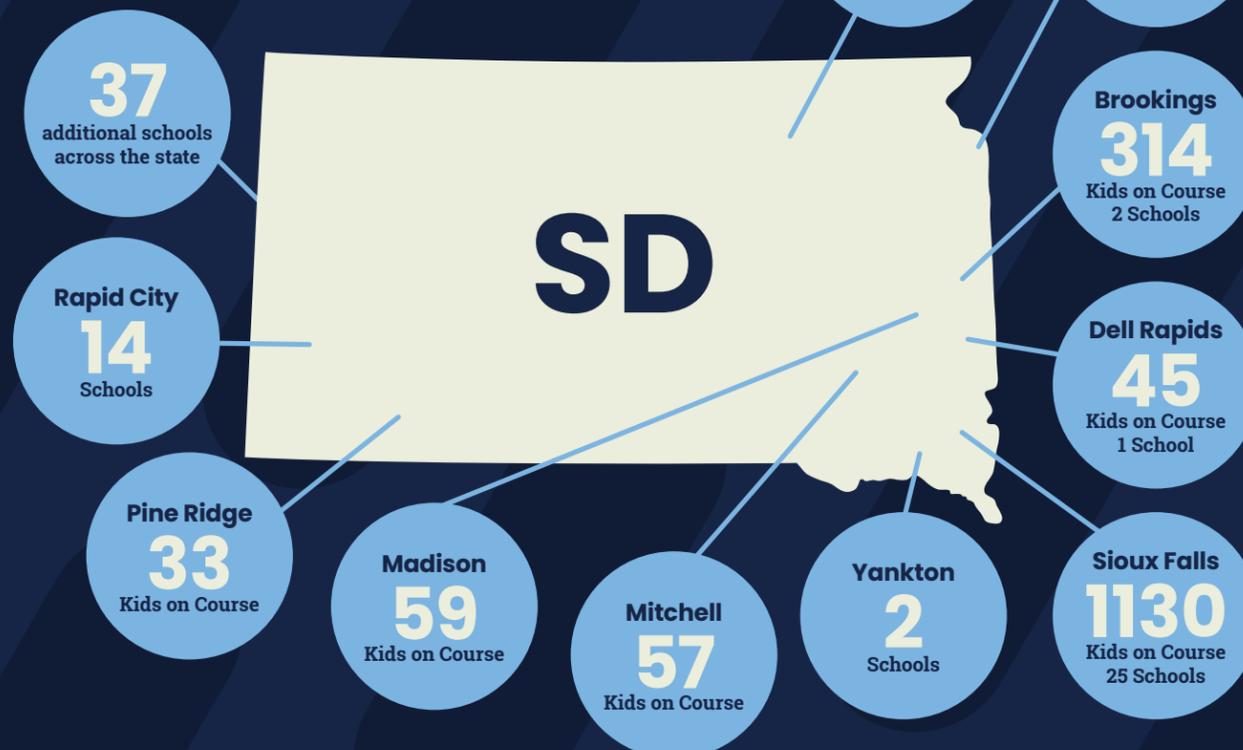
## First Tee – South Dakota Chapter Led

Events designed to expose, engage, and recruit non-First Tee – South Dakota participants to First Tee – South Dakota programming. This outreach is done outside of our official partner and location bases i.e. youth serving events, community nights, and kids fairs.



# State Review

First Tee – South Dakota is in 8 communities throughout the state for summer programs: Sioux Falls, Dell Rapids, Brookings, Madison, Aberdeen, Milbank, Mitchell, and Pine Ridge.  
New in 2026 - Sisseton



## - Program Locations -

### Aberdeen

Moccasin Creek Country Club & Lee Park Golf Course  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program, Chapter Led  
Lead - Isaac Morgan

### Dell Rapids

Rocky Run Golf Course  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program  
Lead - Chantel Brende

### Brookings

Edgebook GC | Brookings CC  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program  
Lead - Jordan Hilbert / Mitch Miller

### Madison

Madison Country Club  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program

### Milbank

Whetstone Creek Golf Course  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course  
Lead - Julie Landmark

### Mitchell

Lakeview Golf Course  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program  
Lead - Cody Miles

### Pine Ridge

First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course  
Lead - John Long

### Sioux Falls

Elmwood Golf Course | Kuehn Park  
First Tee - South Dakota Program on the Golf Course, School Program, Community Program, Chapter Led  
Lead - Chantel Brende

# What the Parents Say...

My oldest daughter, Hanalei, joined First Tee when she was 8. The next year I had two golfers when her brother, Hosea, enrolled. My youngest, Selah, was excited when she was finally old enough last summer to join her older siblings as a Little Duffer.

Golf is something my kids do together. They love participating in Purposeful Practice and Pop Up Play Days. Their coaches have become mentors to them and they look forward to spending time together on the course.

As my kids have become older more opportunities arise with First Tee. The highlight for Hanalei was getting to share her experience with First Tee at a fundraiser this summer. She got to speak to over 200 attendees at the Professional Women's Golf Outing. What a neat way to put those First Tee Commitments into action.

Hosea got to do his first tournament with League Day on the East 9 at Elmwood.

And, Selah loved getting to join her siblings hitting range balls.

First Tee has brought my kids together and I hope that golfing together is something that they enjoy lifelong.

**Mateja Barrett**  
First Tee – South Dakota Parent



# Homework and Hitting

**90 Minutes**  
of after-school care at our partner facilities, where the kids are.

First Tee – South Dakota, in partnership with the **Salvation Army, Brookings Boys and Girls Club, and Aberdeen Boys and Girls Club**, is bringing programming to their community, to their youth centers.

Youth involved in our programs are more likely to be **engaged in school** and feel more **comfortable around peers**.



## 90 Minute Breakdown

**35**  
Minutes

The first 35 minutes will be focused on providing caring coaches and mentors who engage the kids in reading and math exercises

**35**  
Minutes

The second 35 minutes will enhance their golf and life skills through coaching on simulators and through virtual reality

**20**  
Minutes

The remaining time will be used to address food insecurities by ensuring that the kids go home with a full stomach and healthy snacks

## Building Game Changers



"I liked how nice the kids and instructors were, and how I was able to practice golf without worrying about messing up because I knew it was okay."

— Participant, 14

### Better Citizens

- 91% of alumni are still engaged with First Tee
- 72% of alumni are still engaged in community service (compared to 22% among their peers aged 16-24)

### Better Students

- 85% of alumni and 84% of teens credit First Tee with helping them to be better students

### Lifelong Golfers

- 90% of alumni and 83% of teens consider themselves lifelong golfers
- 90% of alumni and 96% of teens credit First Tee with making them better golfers

### Prepared for Life

- Both alumni and teens reported that they applied more life skills the longer they stayed in the program

## Power of Mentors



# The Curriculum

The First Tee Program curriculum is organized around four age groups:

- **Age 7-9:** Coaches deliver lessons that **introduce and engage** participants with both golf and life skills. Kids get active and play golf with their peers.
- **Age 10-11:** Coaches deliver lessons that support the **exploration** of both character and golf skills in active and collaborative ways.
- **Age 12-13:** Coaches deliver lessons that **empower participants** to explore both golf skills and character commitments through opportunities for mastery and growth.
- **Age 14+:** Coaches deliver lessons that help participants **elaborate** on their understanding and place a greater emphasis on their personal development.

Ultimately, we are **Building Game Changers** by empowering kids and teens to be the best version of themselves.

### A typical Life Skills Lesson for a 10-11 year old participant:

1. **Be Patient:** When you are patient, you are staying calm and giving yourself a chance to succeed by trying again and again.
2. **Be Positive:** When you are being positive, you are choosing to enjoy what you are doing regardless of the outcome.
3. **Ask For Help:** Asking for help from your coaches or other players is always encouraged at First Tee, because that is how we learn. You can learn from others when you ask them to give you a hand.

**First Tee celebrates growing through challenges. It helps you discover your inner strength, develop resilience, and dig deep when things get tough. But while we are learning and growing, we want to remember to have fun along the way.**

# National Opportunities

Thanks to First Tee – South Dakota, HQ, national corporate sponsors and generous donors, First Tee – South Dakota is able to offer a variety of educational and leadership opportunities for our participants each year. These events often become life-changing experiences for our participants as they further develop awareness of the possibilities that surround them.



**Maya Moore**

WNBA Hall of Fame



**Rhys Heiberger**

Game Changers Academy

## GAME CHANGERS ACADEMY

In July, First Tee – Minnesota hosted the Joe Louis Barrow First Tee Game Changers Academy. Sponsored by Amazon Web Services, Mayo Clinic, and TopGolf Callaway, the five-day experience brought over 70 high school students from across the country to Minnesota, including one of our star participants, and coaches, Rhys Heiberger from Brookings. WNBA Hall of Fame and Olympic Golf medalist Maya Moore was among the speakers who address the students on character, leadership and perseverance.



**“ The students will build an important foundation for success in higher education and career planning.”**



“He made some impressive improvements this summer”

“High skilled people engaging the children and the interactions seemed to be very positive the entire time”

“I could noticeably tell the difference in my daughters swing improvement”

“The staff at Moccasin Creek CC seemed great and my daughter loved it”

“My son enjoys everything about the First Tee program”

“ Great for learning and respecting the game of golf”

“First Tee has helped build confidence in my kids’ loves. They were able to learn the game of golf, and have since found joy in playing”

“The Girls Program on Wednesdays are so much fun”

“Our kids had a lot of fun and progressed a lot, worth the experience”



# Why A Learning Center

**The Learning Center** is a 3,600 sq ft, multi-use space. It includes, a classroom, golf simulator, putting green, outdoor classroom, office space, and kitchen



In 2025, our organization invested in a Learning Center located on Elmwood Golf Course in Sioux Falls as part of the city's plan to rebuild the facilities. The Learning Center will allow our organization to have significant growth and deeper impact by having the ability to impact kids year-round, in a fun, new learning environment.



## Learning Center — Amenities —

- 1,200 sq. ft. dual purpose classroom + putting green
- Indoor simulator
- Outdoor classroom
- Storage and staff offices

A special **Thank You** to Austad's Golf, SHOWPLACE Cabinetry, BOSCO, Bert and Cindy Olson and Family

# NOW OPEN!!!!

# 2025 Donors

### ACE: \$30,000+

Austad's Golf  
Denny Sanford Foundation  
First Premier Bank  
Sanford Health  
Sanford International  
SHOWPLACE Cabinetry  
Don & Ann Platt

### Eagle: \$15,000+

Bert and Cindy Olson  
BOSC - Boys of Summer Cup  
Jim and Jane Harrenga  
PGA Tour First Tee Foundation

### Birdie: \$5,000+

Andy, Tracy, Meredith, and Grant Miller Family Foundation  
Brass Family Foundation  
Chris and Stacie Kray  
Duane and Barbara Harms  
First Dakota National Bank  
Glen and Amy Herrick  
Helen Boen  
Jay and Jane Huizenga  
Jeff and Amy Brecht  
Jeff Malone  
Kate Patrick Real Estate LLC  
Plains Commerce Bank  
Professional Women's Golf Outing  
Rob Schulte  
Robert and Karla O'Connor Family Charitable Fund  
Scheels  
Scott and Ronna Sletten  
Service First Federal Credit Union  
Steve Basler  
USGA

### Par: \$1,000+

Aaron Clayton  
Al Shoeman  
Alazn Sazama  
American Bank and Trust  
Avera Foundation  
Barbara Kolb  
Ben and Sara Arndt  
Bill Cushing  
Brad and Anna Jankord  
Bruce Ashland  
Bruce Siegling  
Carl Carlson  
Christie & Josh Aberson  
Craig McTighe  
Dacotah Bank  
Dan Kirby  
Dan Sovo  
Dana Dykhous  
Darrell Herman

Dave and Becky Jansa  
Drew Reaves  
Erica Stahl  
First Dakota Title  
First International Bank & Trust  
First Interstate Bank  
First National Bank in Sioux Falls

Gary Moen  
Graham Sinclair  
Great Shots  
Gridline Field Tile  
Jerome Stiegelmeier  
Joe Carmody  
Jordan and Sarah Anderson  
Jordon Leighton  
Julie & Paul Schnaible  
Karla and Eric Cotton  
Kevin Zimmer  
Kristy & Curtis Griffin  
Larry Braun and Family  
LPGA Foundation  
Lynne Zimmer  
Maguire Tank, INC  
Mark and Fran Jansa  
Mavis Amundson  
Micah Mauney  
Mitch Brunick  
Pathward  
Paul and Jil Sova  
Quality Roofing  
Randy Derheim  
RF Buche  
Rich Wells  
Sanford Legends for Kids  
Sioux Empire United Way  
Steve and Pam Jansa  
Stuart Stein  
Sue and Dave Simons  
Terry and Debra Brunken  
Tom Walsh  
Tom Reaves  
Tommy and Luann Reynolds  
Tommy Johnson  
Tony and Deanne Trussell  
Travis Thie  
Upper Midwest Garage Door Co.

### \$500 + Donors

BankWest  
Boyd Hopkins  
Brad Schoenfelder  
Chad and Lori Dubisar  
Chris Thornton  
Dakota Vision Center  
Douglas Herron  
Gary Moen

Jess Baseley  
Karla Byrum  
Ken and Camille Wolff  
Kurt Eeg  
Mark Jobman  
Melissa Garry  
Natalie Braun  
Pat & Jana Sweetman  
Paul Chlebeck  
Terry and Diane Johnson  
Tom Foerster  
Tracy Smith  
William Baune

### \$200 + Donors

Abbie & Kevin O'Connor  
Allison Hall  
Anita Drummond  
Anne Mathiesen  
Bill and Sheri Allen  
Bill Sanford  
Bob and April Endahl  
Brad and Lanett Buche  
Bryn Stock  
Cassidy Kirchberg  
Catherine Egge  
Charles Engeman  
Cody Miles  
Curt Byrum  
David Kalil  
Dean Sorenson  
Dylan Brende  
Gerald Eick  
Greg Heiberger  
Greg Learning  
Gregory Helms  
Heather Solberg  
Heidi Linngren  
Hobart Richardson and Jewell Richards  
Jean Pezl  
Jennifer Hegg  
Jim Lather  
Judith Payne  
Kennedy Boyden  
Kurt Eeg  
Matthew Dice  
Megan DeBoer  
Melanie Raap-Eitrem  
Michael Weister  
Mike & Shannon Ness  
Nick & Jody Driscoll  
Nick Crank  
Paul Slemomsma  
Rainey Reynolds  
Ron Wulfkuhle  
Rosalie Riswold-Brende  
Ryan & Heather Trasamar  
Ryan and Julie Jansa

Sadie Dardis-Knudtson  
Teresa Stuart  
Todd DeBeer  
Tom and Jean Nicholson  
Trisha & Paul Sampson  
Vanessa Weischedel

### IN MEMORY

In Memory of Mary Ann Egan

### IN-KIND

Austad's Golf  
Sutton Bay  
Great Shots  
Landscapes Unlimited  
SHOWPLACE Cabinetry  
Sioux Falls Golf  
Elmwood Golf Course  
Kuehn Park GC  
Madison CC  
Edgebrook Golf Course  
Brookings CC  
Lee Park GC  
Moccasin Creek CC  
Whetstone GC  
Lakeview GC

**DONATE TODAY!**



Scan-to-Donate

# Scholarship Opportunities

The South Dakota Golf Association Junior Golf Foundation offers scholarships to high school seniors who will be attending a post high school educational facility (two-or four-year institutions).



## Harrison Seeman

Sioux Falls, SD | attending University of Sioux Falls | majoring in Accounting

## Hayden Scott

Sioux Falls, SD | attending South Dakota State University | majoring in Business Economics



## Kinley Freese

Sioux Falls, SD | attending Texas Tech University | majoring in Business and Political Science



*GOLF IS A PATHWAY TO PERSONAL GROWTH, SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY.*



## Lauren Knapp

Rapid City, SD | attending Chadron State College | majoring in Chemistry/Organic Chemistry



## Quinn Lewison

Custer, SD | attending South Dakota School of Mines and Technology | majoring in Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences



## Luke Olson

Pierre, SD | attending Augustana | majoring in Business

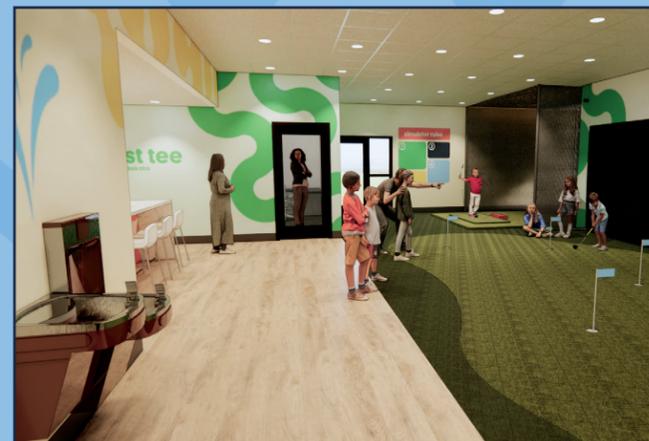
## Ty Lenards

Watertown, SD | attending University of Sioux Falls | majoring in Business Administration



*SUCCESS IN THIS GAME DEPENDS LESS ON STRENGTH OF BODY THAN STRENGTH OF MIND AND CHARACTER.*

# Thank You KIDS & COACHES





# first tee

south dakota

2600 W. Russell St.

Sioux Falls, SD 57104

605.310.2931

[info@firstteesouthdakota.org](mailto:info@firstteesouthdakota.org)

[www.firstteesouthdakota.org](http://www.firstteesouthdakota.org)

## Support + Follow Us!



[FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA.ORG](http://FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA.ORG)



[@FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA](https://www.instagram.com/FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA)



[@FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA](https://www.facebook.com/FIRSTTEESOUTHDAKOTA)



[@FIRSTTEESODAK](https://www.twitter.com/FIRSTTEESODAK)