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Fund-raiser entices with Masters prize

LAWRENCE SUSSMAN Staff Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

What may be the ultimate in raffle prizes for golf fans — two badges to see the Masters Tournament in person — is being offered by a fund-raising group to benefit the Mequon-Thiensville School District. The badges can be used on one of the last three days of the tournament this year, April 11, 12 or 13.

The prize also includes valet parking at the world-famous course in Augusta, Ga., a full breakfast, gourmet lunch, afternoon hors d'oeuvres and a sushi bar.

The badges are among the most sought-after tickets in sports.

Fred **Pramenko**, a district parent who owns VIP Sports Marketing Inc. of Chicago, donated the Masters badges, which he valued at \$1,750 apiece.

Masters tickets "have been labeled as the toughest tickets in sports to get," he said. Other ticket brokers agreed.

"The Masters is the Super Bowl of golf, and the tickets go for a very high amount every year," said Mike Holzberger, owner of Connections Ticket Service in Glendale. "If I was a golf fan for a \$20 bill, the chance (to win) would be a tremendous value."

Last April, Masters badges for the first day of the tournament each were selling for as much as \$2,500, he said.

Augusta National Golf Club sells four-day passes to the Masters to its club members and selected patrons for \$175 each, said a club spokesman. Several years ago, the club ended its waiting list for Masters tickets.

As part of the ticket sales agreement, the club says the badges cannot be used for raffles or sold, the spokesman said, but he conceded that the club did not actively search for ticket violators.

He did say, though, that: "We do police it, and people lose their badges each year because they try to sell them to ticket brokers. And when they lose their badges, it's for good."

The Mequon raffle tickets are \$20 each, and there is no cap on the number of tickets that will be sold, said Wendy Francour, one of three chairs of the Many Hands Project.

The raffle will be held at the Tartan Ball on Feb. 2. This year, the ball will be at The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee and is sponsored by the Mequon-Thiensville Education Foundation.

The annual Tartan Ball is a black tie optional dinner-dance, which normally attracts about 600 people and raises about \$150,000 each year for the school district, Francour said.

"It's been called the largest block party in Mequon," she said.

Pramenko donated four Masters badges for the fund-raising effort, Francour said. The two other badges will be auctioned at the Tartan Ball.

Pramenko said he donated the badges partly because he has two children in the school district, and he had read that the district, with a shrinking student enrollment, needs help in balancing its budget.

Raffle tickets can be bought at school offices in the Mequon-Thiensville district or at www.mtef.org. The raffle is open only to Wisconsin residents, according to the organization's Web site.

The Education Foundation and the Many Hands Project are working to reduce what school district officials have said could initially be a \$1 million deficit in the school budget for next year. Proceeds from the raffle will be used to provide funds for the Mequon-Thiensville School District.

That is unusual because many school fund-raising groups in Wisconsin say their efforts are for specific school activities, such as athletics.

But Francour said, "We're reaching out to the entire community to give an unrestricted gift to the School Board."

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