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Franny Stewart trying to save Moore County Women's Amateur golf tournament

By: Eddie Southards

Franny Stewart is passionate about trying to save the Moore County Women's Amateur Championship.

Just ask her a question about it and you get a 20-minute answer.

The event was in danger of being canceled after less than 30 women played in last year's tournament.

But Stewart and two of her friends have taken it upon themselves to try and keep it going.

They are making some changes and reaching out to more young golfers to play.

"It would be a shame to just let it go," Stewart said. "There was a feeling the event was tired and we needed something new. We hope it is going to spark some interest."

The tournament has dropped its requirement that players live in Moore County to participate. It also has aligned itself with a charity, "Friend To Friend," that assists abused women.

Stewart and her friends, Bette Rycroft and Rita Roberts, have already found sponsors for all 18 holes. The tournament will be played July 15-16 at Little River Golf and Resort.

"Little River is a nice venue," Stewart said. "They were very open to the whole thing and welcomed us. They're going to get the course in pristine condition."

Stewart hopes to draw players from Fayetteville, Greensboro and the Raleigh-Durham area by dropping the residency requirement.

"There are a lot of competitive golfers around here on college and high school teams," she said. "Pinehurst is a great place and we have beautiful courses here."

Stewart also is trying to sell women on the social aspect of the tournament.

"It is a chance to play competitive golf and make new friends," she said. "It's a chance to play a course you normally wouldn't play."

Women's amateur tournaments have been a tough sell in the Cape Fear region. Most female players do not compete in individual stroke tournaments - only in team events like captain's choice. The Cumberland County Women's Amateur ended a couple of years ago due to low participation.

"When I moved here six years ago, I was shocked," Stewart said. "I didn't know golf was a team sport. It's nice to have individual tournaments."

The \$118 entry fee includes an awards luncheon after the final round. Go to lorisgolfshoppe2.com for an application.

Stewart hopes to get at least 50 players this year.

"We're excited about it," she said. "Getting 50 to 60 would be wonderful. We're very hopeful it will work out."