

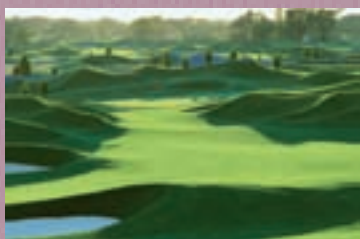
Datebook

Charleston magazine is sponsoring the following events. See you there!

MAY 8

Charleston Oxygen Ball

After a long week, take a breather at the Charleston Oxygen Ball, benefitting the American Lung Association. The evening includes an oxygen bar, a gourmet dinner station, and live and silent auctions. To keep you entertained, local celebrities pair with dance pros from Fred Astaire Dance Studios for the Lowcountry Dancing with the Stars competition. Reservations required. *Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King St. Friday, 7-11 p.m. \$125. (843) 556-8451, www.charlestonoxygenball.org*



During the ASCEND Foundation golf tournament, registered players gain access to the exclusive seaside Cassique course at Kiawah.

JUNE 1

ASCEND Foundation Golf Tournament

Even if you have to buy a mulligan, make this round count during the ASCEND Foundation's inaugural golf tournament, taking place at the private Cassique course at the Kiawah Island Club. Following an afternoon of 18 holes, putting contests, and prize giveaways, players come together for dinner and an awards ceremony. Money raised supports the nonprofit's new cancer prevention education program. *Cassique Golf Course, 100 Old Cedar Ln., Kiawah Island. Monday, 1 p.m. shotgun start. \$300 individual, \$1,200 team of four (space is limited). (843) 225-4055, www.ascendfoundation.org*

GENERATION NEXT

The Write Track

SideWalk Chalk's John Caspian sees a happy ending for Title I schools

If you ask the Mitchell Elementary fourth-graders about John Caspian, they might tell you he was born in a submarine under the Indian Ocean or that he has 17 siblings and seven friends. Those are just tales, of course, but the interview answers for the make-believe biography of this charismatic class volunteer are bound to be creative. When the kids ask him to identify his job, though, the 29-year-old SideWalk Chalk cofounder offers the truth: "hanging out with you guys." And for the former pastor, globetrotter, writer, sometime

My role is to leverage what I have for someone else, whether it's my time, my talent, or my money.

barista, and full-time philanthropist, hanging out in Charleston's Title I schools means helping disadvantaged students hang in there.

SideWalk Chalk gives underserved schools an arts boost by introducing volunteers to six classrooms for focused weekly sessions in language, music, dance, photography, and other media. At Mitchell, Caspian, cofounder Jana Hodge, and the rest of the team use interviews, narrative writing, persuasive speech, poetry, and word games to engage the kids in reading



To continue serving disadvantaged students, Caspian is now recruiting volunteers and seeking more funding.



Each school year, John Caspian and SideWalk Chalk work with students to publish a book of their creative writing.

and writing. "Learning to express oneself is the great equalizer," he stresses.

Since SideWalk Chalk entered the picture last spring, state tests have reflected a rise in the pupils' language arts achievement. Teacher Melissa Black notes that creativity has increased. And the nonprofit's reputation has led to invitations to run an art camp this summer and expand into eight schools next August. But for a dedicated wordsmith, true success lies in the stories. Take Mateo, who showed little interest in school and had been suspended 13 times. One night, he surprised his teachers and completed an assignment, crafting an imaginative story that gave life to his sneakers. "The shoes tell him they like being his, except when he ties them too tight," laughs Caspian. Mateo says that a SideWalk Chalk workshop inspired him. "He learned that he liked to write." In Caspian's eyes, there's no better life lesson.