

# Teeing one up for the Valley

By the time most of you read this today, we'll be a few holes into Day 2 of a three-day, all-Valley "Greatest Golfer of the Valley" tournament.

It's an event for *The Vindicator* and several business sponsors and golf courses.

But more importantly, it's an event for golfers in the five counties that make up *The Vindicator's* readership area.

And today at Trumbull Country Club, 100 of the top golfers in the Valley will continue their quest to be called "Greatest Golfer of the Valley." (You're invited to come watch. It's free.)

Next Saturday at the final round at The Lake Club, we'll be thrilled to crown six players "Greatest" in six divisions.

But today, we're just thrilled that the event even took place.

Creating an event from scratch is not easy, not always fun and certainly not guaranteed. Add in this economy, and it's easier to



*Todd Franko*

say no to such a gamble.

To better learn the impact of pulling it off, I reached out to several friends who've taken on similar challenges in various ways.

Eric Ryan, executive director of the Covelli Centre, scans the Internet each day tracking events and ticket sales. He's seen and been part of his share of highs and lows:

"The event needs to be someone's passion. One person or a group of people have to sell their event to sponsors, the public, the special-interest groups and, most of all, they have to sell themselves.

"Several times a week, we speak with folks that want to start a 'new' event. We always ask them: 'Who is the driving force and will they be happy with 50 percent to 70 percent of your goal?'"

He pointed to the recent success of the first-year Panerathon — with 3,000 participants and \$120,000 raised for breast-cancer research. It was a passion for Covelli Enterprises, and it was a success.

**George Farris is a fun guy to exchange e-mails with. He's been part of many events (and has secured me a great seat judging food at the Canfield Fair.)**

**He wrapped up starting a new event around these basic bits: 1) Who's going to be there; 2) Is it something different? 3) Is it fun that can be counted as work, too?**

**"Use one of these keys, and you have a good shot at success. Use two, and the success rate is 99 percent. Use all three, and they'll sign up for next year before they leave this year."**

**That was pretty cool.**

Pete Gabriel is the chili guru for the Boardman Optimist Club.

That October tradition measures up to some Ryan and Farris standards: Pete

and crew have the passion, it's fun with work, and there are some cool people there.

But when I asked Pete about creating events, he shared a dud that lingers with him today.

Optimists tried a bike-safety rodeo. They lined up great sponsors, free bikes to use, some giveaways and even a bike competition.

And only 10 kids and parents showed up.

"The disappointment still lingers today," he wrote.

Some good lessons from some good guys.

With "Greatest," we were blessed with some good partners in Farmers National Bank, The Lake Club, Mill Creek Golf Course, Trumbull Country Club, Jaguar of Warren, Mark Thomas Ford, Superior Beverage and Cole Valley.

We also were blessed that a Valley community wanted to be part of this idea.