

BUSINESS

Bi-Lo charity event open to

Annual golf tourney raises funds for local nonprofits

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The Bi-Lo Charity Classic, a one-day golf tournament that has raised more than \$44 million for hundreds of nonprofit organizations in the Carolinas, Tennessee and Georgia over 25 years, has opened playing slots to the general

public for the first time.

Participants, traditionally have been Bi-Lo's vendors and suppliers, but this year, anyone can play 18 holes of golf on one of 10 to 12 tournament courses in the area — for a sponsorship cost of \$850.

A majority of that fee will support charitable causes, said Carol Browning, executive director of Bi-Lo Charities Inc.

Her nonprofit corporation reviews and awards grants to qualifying organizations throughout Bi-Lo's four-state service area.

The annual golf tournament, to be held June 8, is its primary fundraising event. Organizers say it is the largest one-day benefit golf tournament in the nation.

Last year, more than 1,400 golfers from 35 different states participated, raising more than \$5.6 million for key initiatives, including children, education and hunger relief.

A player's tournament fee this year will include admission to social events attached to the tournament, but deserving orga-

nizations remain its focus, Browning said.

"Every nonprofit organization that I've talked to is concerned about the economy. It's kind of a double-edged sword," she said.

There is an increased need because of economic hardship, she said.

Local charities — including the Greenville office of The Bair Foundation, a nonprofit Christian foster-care agency for children, teens and families — say support from the Bi-Lo Charity Classic

public

is critical to helping them meet their needs.

"Without the funds, really, we would be struggling trying to meet those needs," said Keonte Jenkins-Davis, the director of the foundation's office here.

Bi-Lo, the Mauldin-based grocery chain, is known for its charitable commitment to the communities in which it operates. The company said its charitable work wouldn't be affected by its Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing last month.