



Charles Nibley Excellence in Golf Promotion Special Recognition Honor

The Charles Nibley Excellence in Golf Promotion Special Recognition Honor is for individuals who have made a significant contribution to the development, improvement, growth, or related promotion of golf facilities, programs, events, or organizations.

2024 - Gordie Harmston

2023 - Gladys & Stan Wilson

2023 - Gary Esplin

2022 - Charles Nibley

2024



Gordie Harmston

Gordie Harmston lost his first election bid for the Roosevelt City Council, possibly because he advocated for a golf course that was not widely embraced.

Harmston subsequently won two other elections. His political experience summarizes the way Roosevelt GC came to be viewed in the Eastern Utah town that his great-grandfather founded in 1906.

The course now is part of Roosevelt's fabric, 50 years after its opening and 30 years after the addition of nine holes. The course celebrated a half-century anniversary in May with a tournament that raised \$60,000 for future projects. That's an example of charitable events that support Uinta Basin citizens and bring further value to the vision that created the course.

The Harmston family's contributions are being recognized with the Charles Nibley Excellence in Golf Promotion award. Named for the founder of the century-old Nibley Park Golf Course, the award commends "significant contribution to the development, growth or related promotion of golf facilities, programs, events or organizations." Gordie Harmston's father, Gordon Sr., was a state senator and the longtime director of the Utah State Dept. of Natural Resources. He played a role in the opening of Wasatch Mountain Golf Course in 1967.

2023



Gladys & Stan
Wilson

In 2023 the UGA awarded posthumously Gladys and Stanley Wilson of Payson Utah for the development of Gladstan Golf Course. Gladys and Stanley both grew up in Payson and were active members in their community.

Stanley retired from teaching in 1964 after serving nine years as the Principal of Payson Junior High. He served on the city council as city recreation director and was instrumental in youth athletics in Payson. Gladys was equally involved in the Payson community serving in the Payson Cultus Club, the American Legion Auxiliary and Payson Senior Citizens. She worked as a beautician in her home for over 40 years.

On June 19, 1965, Gladys and Stanley opened the original 9-hole Gladstan Golf Course located in Payson Utah. Until then the closest golf course for those in Payson was a private course located in Provo, 20 miles away. Green fees were 75 cents during the week and \$1.00 on weekends and holidays. In the words of Gladys "My husband Stanley and I loved Payson and wanted to give something of lasting value to the people of this town. During the depression we were able to buy some property on west Utah Avenue and farm it; but Stan had always been an athlete and coach, so our dream was to give the city a golf course. In spite of arthritis and other health problems, we worked long and hard on the course. I remember carrying buckets of water to save young trees when we were both so tired that we were ready to collapse." Due to their health, they deeded the course to the city when it opened and were paid \$215 a month in rent. In 1977 they donated the property to the city of Payson along with the accrued rent they had received, making this a true gift to the community. The original 9-hole course located just outside of the center of town was moved and a par 72, 18 hole course designed by William Neff, was created and opened in 1988. Due to their dedication to the community and love of sport, Gladstan Golf Course is still known today for challenging play for golfers of every skill level with celebrated views.

2023



Gary Esplin

For over 40-years Esplin served the St. George community as its City Manager, included in his efforts to enhance the city was his impact on the growth of the game of golf within St. George and the surrounding area. Under his leadership, St. George City became known worldwide as one of the most popular golf destinations in the United States leading to national-best residential growth and economic expansion. As a major draw for global tourism, St. George City became recognized as the golfing Mecca of Utah during his tenure.

During Esplin's time as City Manager, the golf industry in Washington County grew from just two golf courses to 12 golf courses, with Dixie Red Hills (9-holes), St. George, Sunbrook (27-holes) and Southgate golf courses owned and operated by St. George City. Esplin retired in 2017. It was Esplin who positioned St. George City at the forefront of publicly owned golf course management in Utah.

Gary Esplin, perhaps more than any other person, played the most prominent role in St. George City's development into a nationally recognized year-round golf destination community and played a major consulting role in the area's other courses, including the private country club and resort facilities in Washington County.

The UGA presented Esplin with the "Charles Nibley Excellence in Golf Promotion" recognition honor at the St. George City Council meeting in March of 2023.

In September of 2022, the UGA presented its inaugural "Excellence in Golf Promotion" honor posthumously to Charles Nibley. This honor was in recognition of Nibley's property donation to Salt Lake City resulting in the creation of Utah's first public golf course, over one hundred years ago, in 1922. Nibley Park Golf Course paved the way for Utah to become a national leader in the availability of quality, affordable publicly owned golf courses. It was announced that the special recognition honor's official title for future honorees will be known as the "Charles Nibley Excellence in Golf Promotion". Esplin is just the second person to be recognized with this honor.

2022



Charles Nibley

The UGA will present its inaugural “Excellence in Golf Promotion” honor posthumously to Charles Nibley. This honor is in recognition of Nibley’s property donation to Salt Lake City resulting in the creation of Utah’s first public golf course, one hundred years ago, in 1922. Nibley Park Golf Course paved the way for Utah to become a national leader in the availability of quality, affordable publicly owned golf courses.

Nibley was a prominent businessman and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints general authority. He was born in Hunterfield, Scotland, to James and Jean Wilson Nibley on 5 February 1849, the sixth of eight children. In 1855 the family emigrated to America, and after a five-year stay in the East came to Utah and settled in Wellsville.

Nibley was a well-known philanthropist. Much of his philanthropy was accomplished quietly; however, one of his public contributions was the donation of Wandamere Park, now Nibley Park Golf Course, to Salt Lake City as a Christmas present in 1921. The Park was officially designated as the Nibley Park Golf Course in May of 1922.

In a formal ceremony in May 1922, Nibley said: *“When I think that this generation and the generations of men and women yet to come shall find healthful enjoyment and rare pleasure here in playing that splendid outdoor Scotch game known as golf, that thought gives me the highest satisfaction and most genuine pleasure.”*

He refused to allow a memorial to be erected in his honor, saying that the money could be better spent to “improve one of the greens.” The City Commission, however, had already passed a resolution recognizing the gift, guaranteeing to maintain the park, and naming it in honor of the donor. Nibley Park thus became the first public golf course in the state.

Charles Nibley died in Salt Lake City on 11 December 1931 at the age of eighty-two.