

PROFESSIONAL GOLF IS RETURNING TO ST. LOUIS IN 2020 WITH THE ASCENSION CHARITY CLASSIC

The tournament is scheduled from September 28 to October 4, 2020, and is the first time the PGA Tour has hosted an annual event in St. Louis since 2001.

BY AMANDA WOYTUS

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Nick Ragone, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Ascension

The St. Louis sports scene keeps getting better and better.

On Tuesday at Norwood Hills Country Club, in North County, the PGA announced that the PGA Tour Champions—a group of professional golfers age 50 and older, including 33 members of the World Golf Hall of Fame—will begin a four-year tour in partnership with the nonprofit Catholic health care system Ascension in 2020. [According to a release from the PGA](#), the new Ascension Charity Classic is the first time the PGA Tour has hosted an annual event in the St. Louis region since 2001. The tournament is scheduled September 28 to October 4, 2020. Golfer Phil Mickelson is just one of many stars set to turn 50 in the coming year.

The inaugural tournament will be 54 holes and feature World Golf Hall of Fame members; the PGA Tour Champions includes 27 tournaments in four countries and 19 states. The Ascension Charity Classic

will benefit the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis and Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis. Marygrove, a residential facility for children and teens, is also a beneficiary.



The location holds significance. In a release, Nick Ragone, the executive vice president and chief marketing officer of Ascension said: "We wanted to host the Ascension Charity Classic at Norwood Hills because we know that it can serve as a catalyst to support the revitalization of North St. Louis County, including the Ferguson, Florissant and Jennings communities that neighbor the Norwood Hills Country Club. Players may compete, but the real winners will be North County and area charities. All proceeds will go to charitable organizations in the North County area that are working to build a better community. It's a privilege to be able to be a part of the continued revitalization of our community and our region."

Norwood Hills hosted the 1948 PGA Championship.

In a release, PGA Tour Champions President Miller Brady said that "the St. Louis area is one of the great sports regions in the United States, known for its passionate, dedicated fans and history of charitable giving and community engagement. This combination of great sports fans, community engagement and charitable giving is what the PGA Tour is all about, and this will quickly become one of our premier events."



Amanda Woytus

Woytus is St. Louis Magazine's deputy editor.

Why a focus on North County was a ‘must-have’ for pro golf’s return to St. Louis

By [Nathan Rubbelke](#) – Reporter, St. Louis Business Journal

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The PGA Tour Champions and St. Louis-based Ascension, one of the nation’s largest nonprofit and Catholic health systems, said Tuesday they’ve formed a four-year partnership to host a senior professional golf tournament at Norwood Hills Country Club in North County.

The first Ascension Charity Classic, a 54-hole golf tournament, will be held from Sept. 28 to Oct. 4, 2020. The PGA Champions Tour, which previously held an annual event at Boone Valley Golf Club, includes professional golfers who are age 50 or older. Star players on the tour include [Jerry Kelly](#), [Bernhard Langer](#), [Steve Stricker](#) and [Scott McCarron](#).

Net proceeds from the Ascension Charity Classic will go to charitable organizations, with groups like Marygrove, the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis and Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis to be among the recipients of the funding. The tournament’s host organization will be nonprofit Tournaments for Charity, and Ohio-based HNS Sports Group will operate the event.



[Nick Ragone](#), executive vice president and chief marketing officer for Ascension, said the tournament does not yet have a target amount for charitable donations, but said he’s told the PGA Tour Champions he wants the St. Louis event to be “one of their lead events immediately.”

Following Tuesday’s announcement of the Ascension Charity Classic, the Business Journal spoke with Ragone about the event’s formation and what’s next for the tournament. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

How did this partnership between Ascension and the PGA Tour Champions come together? The tour’s entire business model is about charitable giving and that really attracted us. At Ascension, our business model is about community benefit. We give away \$2 billion every year in our communities. And as Ascension has become a national brand, we have been looking for some signature, national branding moments. And there’s none better than right here in St. Louis County, giving back to North County, creating charitable giving, creating excitement and also taking benefit of the amazing sports culture,

sports community and giving community in St. Louis. So, it became a really natural fit and I think after the heels of [the \(2018\) PGA Championship](#), it really became obvious that this community is ready to have another major sporting event, particularly in North County.

How important was it to have this event in North County? It was critical. It was a must-have. The one stipulation we put on the tour before we even began talking in earnest is, it has to be North County and it has to be a tournament that can really further spur economic growth in North County and more charitable giving. They agreed with it. They came out here. They saw it. They agreed 100%. They said, "We understand exactly what you're trying to do." They think that this will be in year one a premier event. We think so too.

How will charity partners be identified for the Ascension Charity Classic? There'll be a process where we'll put together a committee to vet different partners. We want to hear from all the charitable partners in the area that might benefit.

What will corporate involvement from other St. Louis companies include for this tournament? The response has already been overwhelmingly positive. We have the opportunity for other partners in the area to be presenting sponsors or founding partners where their name can be right up there with ours. So, right now we are in the process of talking to some of the other major corporate partners in the area. There's just so much excitement and so much opportunity for all the major corporate partners to come together and say, this is a special event that's going to benefit North County and we all need to be involved in it. I've just been thankful and blessed at how quickly the corporate community has identified this as a real opportunity to benefit North County and charities, and want to participate.