

# Pro sports event backs effort to restore St. Louis-area historic golf course

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Two golf initiatives in north St. Louis County are pairing up.

The Ascension Charity Classic, an annual PGA Tour Champions event played at Norwood Hills Country Club, said Thursday it has formed a long-term partnership with the revitalization effort at Normandie Golf Club in Bel-Nor. Through its



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partnership with Normandie, the Ascension Charity Classic said it will provide a "significant investment" to renovate the historic public golf course and also team up on investments to "make golf more diverse and inclusive."

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Norwood Hills, where the Ascension Charity Classic is held, is located less than 4 miles from Normandie. The senior golf tournament, which was first played in 2021, donates its proceeds to local charities and raised more than \$800,000 for nonprofits in 2021. Tournament organizer Nick Ragone said the Ascension Charity Classic is providing financial support to the Normandie project through its charitable proceeds. He declined to disclose the amount of support being pledged.

In addition to offering financial support, the Ascension Charity Classic says it could host some of its own events in future years at Normandie. That could include a qualifying round for the Ascension Charity Classic and the newly launched APGA Tour St. Louis – Ascension Classic presented by Daugherty Business Solutions; pro-am events; and possibly the APGA Tour event (which is being held this year at Glen Echo Country Club).

"It made perfect sense for the Ascension Charity Classic to get involved in this effort to restore and revitalize Normandie Golf Course given our long-term commitment to North St. Louis County through our PGA TOUR Champions and APGA Tour events, as well as our commitment to making golf more diverse and inclusive," said Ragone, executive vice president and chief marketing officer at Ascension, a St. Louis-based Catholic nonprofit health system. "We believe that a redesigned and revitalized Normandie Golf

Course can play a major role in both the Ascension Charity Classic and the APGA Tour's Ascension Classic once the design work has been completed."

Normandie opened in 1901 and is considered to be one of oldest public golf courses west of the Mississippi River. Construction on Normandie's renovation is anticipated to begin in fall 2022. The restoration project is being led by community development group Beyond Housing and the Metropolitan Golf Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Metropolitan Amateur Golf Association. Those two groups took over the club's lease after it was closed by its prior operator in January 2020 and have acted on an option to purchase the property from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, a press release said. Also behind the project is famed golf Jack Nicklaus, whose golf course design firm Nicklaus Design, is overseeing the renovation of the golf course.

"We couldn't be more thrilled to have the Ascension Charity Classic involved in our effort to restore Normandie and make the game of golf more diverse and inclusive," said Tom O'Toole Jr., founder of the Metropolitan Amateur Golf Association. "In a short period of time, the Ascension Charity Classic has made an immense and positive impact on North St. Louis County, as well as for the game of golf in that region and throughout our community. This financial, charitable and tournament alignment will support and accelerate our plans."

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