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Giving is a Nelson Family Tradition

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Giving is a Nelson Family Tradition

The Rotary Corporation Continues the Journey with Georgia Southern Athletics.

Story Links

STATESBORO, Ga. - The Rotary Corporation continues the journey with Georgia Southern Athletics.

Founder of the Rotary Corporation, Bill W. Nelson, was a longtime supporter of education and built a strong relationship with the University. Bill Nelson passed away in 1999, and as previously mentioned by Georgia Southern University, 'his philanthropic contributions and deep sense of community continue to be felt by people in Southeast Georgia. When Coach Erk Russell landed in Statesboro in 1981, Nelson was one of the first to step forward with a commitment to the Eagle program. On more than one occasion, Erk was known to say, "We need more people like Bill Nelson."

With Bill's family now at the helm of the Rotary Corporation, they continue to share another common passion — supporting Eagle Nation. It's a Nelson family tradition to support Georgia Southern University.

Fast forward to 2014, the iconic "Rotary Field of Dreams" was unveiled to football fans at the first home game of the season. It's located just steps away from the Ted Smith Family Football Center where the "Bill W. Nelson Hall of Fame" resides. The Hall of Fame was also made possible by the Rotary Corporation and was dedicated in Bill's honor by his children, Traci (Nelson) Heilman, Don and Tara (Nelson) Martin, and Ed and Jeannie Nelson.

Continuing the philanthropic footsteps of their father, the Nelson Family and Rotary Corporation have made a significant contribution to the Georgia Southern University Athletic Foundation to 'Continue the Journey' alongside Athletics. This time the impact of their generosity can be seen and felt by the Georgia Southern University basketball, volleyball and baseball programs as the donation supported the facility improvements at Hanner Fieldhouse and J.I. Clements Stadium.

Nearing its 50th birthday, Hanner Fieldhouse was able to receive upgrades such as remodeled ticket windows, new LED lighting over the main court, three more entrances to the building, a new floor in the lobby, a refurbished fascia, additional ADA seating and new displays highlighting the basketball and volleyball programs.

The outfield wall at Jack Stallings Field was pushed back and replaced with a beautiful blue wall featuring a 30-foot "Blue Monster" in right field. Inside the Monster is one of the few manual scoreboards in college baseball that pays homage to America's greatest pastimes. Other enhancements include a new video board, sound system, turf in foul territory, refurbished dugouts, a renovated team room inside the Wiggins Building and branding throughout the stadium.

Over the years, the Rotary Corporation has supported both academics and athletics at Georgia Southern University. The Nelson Family has supported academic scholarships across campus as well as annual campaigns within the College of Business Administration and the College of Engineering and Technology. In addition, the Nelson Family are members of Athletics' Transition 20 - an initiative that supported student-athlete academic scholarships across all sports. When asked, Bill's son and Rotary CEO, Ed Nelson, said his "most memorable moment at Georgia Southern is when his father was inducted posthumously into the College of Business Administration's Hall of Fame in 1999."

The Rotary Corporation employs nearly 40 Georgia Southern University Alumni and that is one of the many reasons why the Nelson Family invests in the University. Ed Nelson went on to say, "Georgia Southern University does so much for our region, such as introducing highly educated, skilled employees into the workforce. Our employees who are also Georgia Southern alumni work as if the company was their own. They are hardworking, loyal individuals with great work ethic. It only makes sense to give back to something that has given us so much as well."

Ed's sisters and brother-in-law are also alumni of Georgia Southern University. Tara (Nelson) Martin earned her degree in Marketing. Her husband Don Martin, who is also Rotary's CFO and Traci (Nelson) Heilman hold Business degrees from the College of Business and Administration.

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Located in Glennville, Ga., the [Rotary Corporation](#), with over 50 years of experience, is the world's largest supplier of outdoor power equipment parts. The company employs over 400 individuals and provides parts to customers in all 50 states and over 63 countries throughout Europe, Asia, South America, Canada, Australia and Africa.

Rings, Diplomas & Leaders

The Georgia Southern University Athletic Foundation's primary goal is to provide our student-athletes with the opportunity to compete for a championship ring and earn a college education while developing them as future leaders in their respective communities.

The mission of the Georgia Southern University Athletic Foundation, Inc. is to provide private financial support for athletic scholarships, facilities and staff enhancement for the Athletic Department of Georgia Southern University. All of the activities of the Athletic Foundation are conducted with the highest regard for academic and athletic excellence and within the guidelines established by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, conference affiliations and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

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Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics and Instagram.com/GSAthletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

In order to expedite entry and provide a safe environment for all patrons and participants, Georgia Southern Athletics has implemented a Clear Bag Policy for all ticketed sporting events, effective Aug. 1, 2017. Fans can find the complete policy as well as an FAQ section at GSEagles.com/ClearBag.