

Ed Mauro

Few people have done as much for golf in Rhode Island as Ed Mauro. An outstanding player, he won the State Amateur in 1965. He was among the top contenders in that event, and others, for many years. He also was a finalist in the Amateur in 1958, losing to Hall of Famer Bobby Allen.

Mauro began giving back to the game even as he played, serving the Association in a number of ways, including as president. He was among the prime movers in a renovation at Point Judith that culminated with the course hosting the 1998 State Amateur.

Still, Mauro's most long-lasting legacy not just to the RIGA but to all of golf will be the Button Hole Short Course and Teaching Center. A decade ago, when the United States Golf Association was launching its "For the Good of the Game" Initiative, David Fay, the USGA's Executive Director, invited Mauro to New Jersey. The plan was to have Mauro observe work the USGA was doing in developing short courses, specifically facilities designed for children.

Mauro not only picked up the ball. He began running with it and still is. He organized the Golf Foundation of Rhode Island, a non-profit group, and began a search. A number of communities offered land, but Mauro waited until he found property in one of the most challenged areas in Rhode Island. More than 25,000 disadvantaged children live within three miles of the site, a former gravel pit on the Providence-Johnston line, which is now leased from the state for \$1 per year.

Mauro and his board worked tirelessly in raising funds and the course opened six years ago with a simple mission: To enrich the lives of young people by providing facilities and programs that develop strong character, teach life values and champion success through the game of golf. Youngsters who become "Button Hole Kids" use the facility for \$1.

PGA Tour stars Brad Faxon and Billy Andrade became active supporters. RIGA moved its office to the site, which includes not only a nine-hole course but a driving range and practice area.

Since 2001, Button Hole has involved more than 1,000 youngsters annually, giving many who never would have had the opportunity exposure to the game and its values.