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## **USGA INCREASES COMMITMENT TO GROWING THE GAME THROUGH PLAY9 PROGRAM**

*Fifth Year of Program to Feature Community Events Near USGA Championships*

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (May 8, 2018) – As part of its ongoing efforts to grow the game within local golf communities, the United States Golf Association (USGA) today announced plans to celebrate the fifth year of its successful PLAY9™ program.

Since its debut in 2014, PLAY9 has focused on encouraging more people to play more golf, more often. The program aims to showcase the nine-hole round as an ideal solution for both avid golfers and newcomers alike to get out and play in a time-friendly and engaging way.

This year, in collaboration with its Allied Golf Association network, the USGA will host and invite local communities to participate in dedicated regional PLAY9 days each month, beginning on May 9. Golfers can find a golf course in their community that offers a nine-hole rate at [usga.org/play9](https://usga.org/play9). The course finder identifies nine-hole facilities as well as 18-hole golf courses that offer a nine-hole rate.

Community PLAY9 events will also be held in markets associated with the USGA's championships, including Middle Island, N.Y. (near the site of the U.S. Open); Colorado Springs, Colo. (U.S. Senior Open); Wheaton, Ill. (U.S. Senior Women's Open); Pebble Beach, Calif. (U.S. Amateur); and Charleston, S.C. (next year's U.S. Women's Open).

"The PLAY9 program offers a fun entry point into the game for newcomers while providing a way for golfers to balance their love of the game with their demanding schedules," said Mike Davis, USGA CEO. "We have seen the impact to date and the awareness it has built around enjoying nine holes with friends and family. Together with our friends in golf, we're finding new ways to welcome more golfers and support a positive future for the game."

Since the program's inception, PLAY9 has continued to positively impact golf communities and engage golfers nationwide:

- Nearly 24 percent of golfers\* reported that they participated in a PLAY9 program in 2017, a significant increase from 2015 (17 percent)
- 54 percent of single digit handicappers reported that they participated in a PLAY9 program in 2017, up from 32 percent in 2015
- 70 percent of golfers agree with the statement, "Nine-hole rounds are a great way to try golf"

“As all of our lives get busier, I’ve become a huge fan of the USGA’s PLAY9 initiative,” said Mark Button of the Texas Golf Association, which hosts a fun staff/community PLAY9 event each year. “Everyone here at the TGA feels the same. Getting out with some of our members to play nine holes on a summer afternoon is one of my favorite things to do. We had so much fun, and I look forward to doing it again soon.”

According to the National Golf Foundation, 88 percent of all public golf courses in America currently offer a nine-hole rate, averaging less than \$30 per round. Nine-hole scores made up around 8 percent of all scores posted to the USGA GHIN system over the past four years (2014-2017), an increase from an average of 6 percent from 2010-2013.

The [usga.org/play9](https://www.usga.org/play9) portal will serve as a convenient and dedicated destination for golfers, including opportunities to share stories and information on posting nine-hole scores.

The USGA will also continue to support the PLAY9 initiative and communicate its message with a [broadcast public service announcement \(PSA\)](#) that has already reached more than 180 million viewers nationwide.

*\* Random survey of 2,000 golfers in Fall 2017 (USGA Programmatic Tracker, conducted by Sports & Leisure Group)*

### **About the USGA**

The USGA celebrates, serves and advances the game of golf. Founded in 1894, we conduct many of golf’s premier professional and amateur championships, including the U.S. Open and U.S. Women’s Open. With The R&A, we govern the sport via a global set of playing, equipment and amateur status rules. Our operating jurisdiction for these governance functions is the United States, its territories and Mexico. The USGA Handicap System is utilized in more than 40 countries and our Course Rating System covers 95 percent of the world’s golf courses, enabling all golfers to play on an equitable basis. The USGA campus in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, is home to the Association’s Research and Test Center, where science and innovation are fueling a healthy and sustainable game for the future. The campus is also home to the USGA Golf Museum, where we honor the game by curating the world’s most comprehensive archive of golf artifacts. To learn more, visit [usga.org](https://www.usga.org).

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### **USGA Media Contact**

Janeen Driscoll  
USGA Communications  
908-326-1978  
[jdriscoll@usga.org](mailto:jdriscoll@usga.org)

USGA  
77 Liberty Corner Road  
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938  
United States

[mediacenter.usga.org](https://mediacenter.usga.org)