

Dr. Sheldon B. Johnson

Born in Tropic, Utah in 1926, Dr. Sheldon B. Johnson moved to St. George, Utah at the age of fourteen. He has been a force for good in the public life of the St. George area. As he has touched individual lives he has always made a difference for the better.

He served on the Washington County School Board for over forty two years, has lived his life in the educational field with the premise of integrity and caring about all children. He has been a major factor in the introduction and implementation of new and innovative ideas and programs that have benefitted Washington County and people from the state of Utah and the nation.

Because of his efforts, Washington County Schools had the first classroom in a public school for children with mental handicaps in the state of Utah. This first class, so difficult to get support for in the beginning, proved to be so successful that districts throughout the state and nation copied and implemented the idea to the benefit to untold numbers of children and their families.

Dr. Johnson was also the instigator and force behind the idea of an Alternate High School for students who struggle with the social forces of the regular high school. Washington County was one of the first school districts in the nation to try such a concept. It became a huge success, with hundreds of children of high school age creating successful and productive lives--where before there seemed to be little hope. Other districts have followed with great success and now the idea is accepted by all.

For many years Dr. Johnson has guided the School Building Program of the Washington County School District to a new level of quality and economy. These new schools are of the highest quality but their cost per square foot is between a third to one half as much as other schools in the state of Utah. This is done by innovative ways of building and development of unusual cooperation between architects, builders and with great communication going both ways between them and the proud, skilled craftsmen on the line. This enhancement of quality and economy in schools and other public buildings continues to spread outward throughout the state.

In other endeavors of his life, Dr. Johnson practiced Optometry in St. George for forty years and made thousands of dedicated patients and friends. He says he will ever be thankful to the wonderful people in the area for that experience. During those same busy years of work, farm, and family he served as a trusted leader in Kiwanis, Dixie College Alumni, Board of Directors: Dixie Regional Medical Center, the Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Red Cross, and served in church leadership positions.

Of late Dr. Johnson has become somewhat famous for discovering amazing casts of dinosaur feet, or negative footprints, on his farm right here in the middle of St. George. Worldwide television broadcasts and newspaper articles have made these artifacts world famous and now are visited by thousands, as recently witnessed by Ripley's "Believe It or Not." Sheldon and his wife LaVerna have made these tracks available to people from all over the world to come and revel in their mystery. Their ongoing efforts to gain public support and financing to build a world class three wing museum near the dinosaur site is consuming much of their time and energy.