Spencer F. Eccles: JA National Leadership Award Recipient

March 12, 2019, was a red-letter day for Spencer F. Eccles and Junior Achievement of Utah. On that day, Mr. Eccles participated in ringing the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange in Manhattan along with five other distinguished individuals from around the country who also received the JA Centennial Leadership Award. Mr. Eccles was nominated for the award by JA of Utah in recognition of his exceptional service and support to JA and its mission over many years. The celebration was held to mark JA’s 100th anniversary and was attended by Spencer F. Eccles, son Spencer P. Eccles, daughter Lisa Eccles, and Christy Tribe, JA of Utah President and CEO.

True to form, Mr. Eccles was the life of the party. His quick wit and graciousness made him everybody’s favorite person as he mixed with the crowd of event attendees. Mr. Eccles and his family accepted the honor with their characteristic humility, but made it clear that they were most happy to see JA of Utah receive this national recognition.

Junior Achievement of Utah is planning a special recognition of this event locally, at our Annual Governor’s Breakfast on June 5, 2019.
Christy Tribe, president and CEO of JA of Utah, was honored to present the award to Mr. Eccles and have the opportunity to thank him for his years of exceptional service. Following are excerpts from her remarks at the award ceremony at NYSE.

The definition of philanthropy in Webster’s Dictionary is the generous donation of money to good causes. We in the nonprofit world depend on these donations to accomplish the work that we do, but I think there is a deeper level of philanthropy given by very few that creates an unimaginable force for good. That definition is the love of humanity. The most powerful words for change ever spoken were, “As I have loved you, love one another.”

For many years, I’ve had the opportunity to witness Spencer F. Eccles and his family emulate that love of humanity. They don’t just give of their money, they are amazing examples of showing love to each other and to our community in everything they do. As you walk into Spencer F. Eccles Junior Achievement City, the first thing you see is a landscape photo of Salt Lake City. Looking at the city, it’s difficult to find an area in Salt Lake that has not been impacted for good by Spence and his family. This past year, the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation celebrated 60 years of giving, exceeding over $600 million in gifts. The impact they continue to have on our community is second to none. For as long as I can remember, Spence and his family have been the largest contributors to Junior Achievement of Utah. Their gifts have enabled us to reach over a million students. They are constantly encouraging us and those around us to expand our reach. I honestly don’t know where we would be without their unwavering personal and financial support, and I know I speak for so many in our community who feel the same.

As I have watched this family over the years, I have learned much. They are such beautiful examples of how to love; from the tender way they treat each other, to their generous and kind nature to all they meet, making everyone feel like the only one. Spence’s sweet wife, Cleone, passed away a few years ago and every visit I have shared with him since has included him taking a photograph of Cleone out of his breast pocket to kiss. Once again showing that beautiful example of love.

Thanks to the Eccles family, Salt Lake now enjoys world-class performances in the new George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Theater. Last month, I was able to witness the best performance I have seen to date of my favorite musical Wicked. As I was listening to my favorite song, the words, “I have been changed for good,” brought tears to my eyes as I thought about how this great man has changed my life for good. I only wish I could more eloquently express what is in my heart today; and every day I wake up knowing how truly blessed I am to be able to do the work that I love because of Spence and the Eccles family. And I believe with their continued love of humanity, together we can be unlimited.

- Christy Tribe, President and CEO, Junior Achievement of Utah