

28th Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day
19 athletes and sports leaders to be recognized
Wednesday, February 5 – 12 p.m. at the Minnesota State Capitol

Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day is sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership

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Some of Minnesota's most inspiring and influential student-athletes, coaches and athletic leaders will be recognized at an award ceremony on Wednesday, February 5, at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 28th annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day, a nation-wide celebration recognizing the accomplishments of individuals in the promotion and advancement of girls' and women's sports. The 2014 ceremony will be honoring 17 individuals and two teams who will be receiving awards in six separate categories. Award recipients are nominated by schools, community organizations, recreation centers, and amateur and professional sports organizations. All are invited to attend this special event. Details about award winners are below.



The Marie Berg Award for Excellence in Education – Mary Eigner, Rosemount High School. Eigner dedicated her career to creating new opportunities for girls in sports and instilling life lessons through teaching and coaching. She began at Rosemount High School in 1976 as a physical education teacher. For 37 years, Eigner worked to develop athletes as individuals through her role as a teacher and track and field coach. Eigner started the girls' cross country team, which she coached until she became the school's Athletic Director. Throughout her time at Rosemount, Eigner was most proud of the opportunities she had to help young women believe in themselves and gain the confidence to compete. Eigner recalls a favorite story about girls' athletics where the girls asked for new uniforms since the current ones had been used by three different teams because the "boys had different uniforms for each of their sports." She stopped them and said "I will never fight for you on those grounds, but I will fight for you on the ground that we deserve new uniforms because we are legitimate, deserving, talented female athletes."



The Girl's and Women in Sports in the Media Award – John Sherman, Sun Newspapers. Sherman has been covering girls' sports in Minnesota for Sun Newspapers since Title IX was passed. In the fall of 1972, Sherman covered one of the first big interscholastic girls swim meets of the Title IX era between Golden Valley and Hopkins-Lindbergh high schools. That winter, he covered the first girls gymnastics meet between Edina East and Edina West High Schools and the response to the news coverage was overwhelming. When he was named the Executive Sports Editor in 1973, he made the conscious decision to provide equal coverage of boys and girls sports – an unpopular decision that caused several of his colleagues to leave the paper. In addition to Sherman's reporting responsibilities, he has a true passion for coaching youth sports which he has done for 46 years. However, Sherman is most proud that he has created a culture at Sun Newspapers that has cultivated an expectation for equal coverage for girls' and boys' sports from the readership.



The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Rose Hollermann, U.S. Paralympian, Wheelchair Basketball. Hollermann has proven through her involvement in sport that there really isn't any obstacle she can't overcome. As a multiple-sport athlete, Hollermann has found success at the international level as the youngest member of the U.S. Paralympic Women's Wheelchair Basketball team that competed at the 2012 London Olympics. She also won a gold medal in 2011 as a member of the U.S. Under 25 team at the World Championships in Canada. In Minnesota, Hollermann has helped create new opportunities for athletes with disabilities. She worked to allow athletes in wheelchairs to compete in local, section and state level high school track and field meets and to have their points count toward the team score. Though Hollermann has earned countless individual and team honors and championships, she is most proud that she was able to help wheelchair athletes earn opportunities to compete alongside able-bodied athletes when only one athlete is competing in the wheelchair division event at the state meet.



Special Merit Award – Cathy Peterson, Minneapolis South High School. Peterson has dedicated her career to advocating for opportunities for all types of athletes in the state of Minnesota. Peterson began teaching health and physical education in the Minneapolis school district before Title IX and immediately realized she had a passion working in special education. Peterson began coaching adapted sports and wrote grants to take her athletes on unique outdoor adventures. In 1989, Peterson became the Athletic Director at Minneapolis South High School where she became involved with the Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors. Peterson co-authored an amendment that provided state tournament opportunities for athletes with physical and mental disabilities. At the time, Minnesota was the first state to offer such opportunities in high school sports. Peterson says passing that legislation has proven to be more successful than she could have ever dreamed. Peterson was inducted into the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame in 1999



Special Merit Award – Valerie Rogosheske, Boston Marathon runner and teacher. Rogosheske has been a long-time advocate of equal opportunities for women in sports. Though she has dedicated her life to teaching at both the secondary and collegiate levels, perhaps her greatest work has been done in her advocacy in the running world. Rogosheske ran in the Boston Marathon in 1972 – the first year women were permitted to compete. She felt the pressure to finish because so many people felt women should not participate alongside the men. When asked about what she's most proud of, Rogosheske said: "Just showing up! And joyfully encouraging other women to do the same." Since running in the Boston Marathon, Rogosheske has worked for equal opportunities in road races. Several years ago, Rogosheske's daughters were going to compete in their first marathon but had lingering injuries. As any mother would, she told her daughters not to be stubborn, to which they responded, "Mom, that's what you ran for – to give us the freedom to drop out if we have to."



Special Merit Award – Carol Visness, Kittson Central High School. Visness grew up playing sports in North Dakota at a time when there were limited opportunities for girls to compete. After a successful basketball career at North Dakota State University, Visness truly made an impact on girls' sports when she helped develop the programs at Kittson High School into some of the best in the state. She helped the girls' basketball team win two state championships and was the first female basketball coach in Minnesota to reach 300 wins. Her 555 wins is third-most all time in the state which earned her a place in the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame in 2009. Not only did Visness have a successful basketball coaching career, she also reached 400 wins as the head volleyball coach, won two district titles with the track and field team and taught physical education for 37 years. But more important to Visness than wins are the memories she made with her athletes and the life skills she was able to teach young women through their experience in sport.



Minnesota Milestone Award – Concordia University, St. Paul Golden Bears Volleyball. On December 14, 2013, one of Minnesota's most successful teams made history. The Concordia Volleyball team won its seventh-consecutive NCAA Division II national championship – the longest streak at any level in the sport of volleyball. With the seventh championship win, the Golden Bears have extended their NCAA tournament win streak to 42 matches. Under Coach Brady Starkey's leadership, the Golden Bears have had 39 American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) All-Americans, 10 AVCA Academic All-Americans and 10-straight AVCA Academic Team Awards. During the last seven years, the Golden Bears have captured the attention of the local sports media while inspiring young girls to reach for their dreams. The impact of this program's achievements will continue to have a bearing on the landscape of Minnesota women's sports for years to come.



Minnesota Milestone Award – University of Minnesota Golden Gophers Women's Hockey. The University of Minnesota Women's Hockey team proved in 2013 that people do care about women's sports. The Gophers completed a perfect 41-0 season by winning their second-straight NCAA Division I national championship in front of a hometown crowd on March 24, 2013. The Gophers season was the first undefeated season in Division I women's hockey history and helped the team extend its win streak to 49-straight. But the Gophers continued to excite fans when the winning streak extended into the 2013-14 season. The Gophers suffered a 3-2 loss to the University of North Dakota on Nov. 17 to end a NCAA-record 62-game undefeated streak. What this group of young women accomplished under the leadership of Coach Brad Frost will surely continue to inspire the State of Hockey and young female and male hockey players for many years to come.

Breaking Barriers Award – Carol Alstrom, Tower-Soudan School. In the 1970s, Alstrom started multiple girls' sports at the Tower-Soudan School. She was also actively involved in many coaching associations and district committees. Alstrom taught at Tower-Soudan in the physical education department for 33 years where she used innovative teaching methods by introducing unique sports and activities such as riding unicycles, roller blading and curling. As a student-athlete, Carol helped pave the way for girls to participate in sport as a three-sport collegiate athlete at Bemidji State University.

Breaking Barriers Award – Paula Devine, East Grand Forks Schools. Devine has proven to be a role model for young women during her 27 years as a teacher and coach in the East Grand Forks school district. As a coach of multiple sports, she has led numerous teams and individuals to conference and section championships. During her 13-year tenure as the director of the physical education department, Devine introduced a wellness fitness club for female students with curriculum including workshops with self-defense experts.

Breaking Barriers Award – Jo Batty-George, Fred Wells Tennis Center. Batty-George has spent many years mentoring young girls and helping them develop confidence through sport as a volunteer tennis coach with several Minneapolis schools and programs. She has led the Girls program at the Fred Wells Tennis and Education Center where she teaches tennis to low income girls. She has perfected the art of patience in coaching to help players not only develop sport skills, but she also finds new ways to help girls gain the confidence necessary to become strong athletes and leaders.

Breaking Barriers Award – Cassandra Meyering, Minneapolis Public Schools. Meyering developed girls' gymnastics programs in North and northeast Minneapolis, even when the odds have been stacked against her. As coach of the Edison-Henry-North High School team, Meyering worked with parents and the school board to secure space for the gymnastics team to practice at Edison when she was told there wasn't any. The team now has a permanent home at Northstar School. Meyering teaches ten gymnastics classes a week through the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Breaking Barriers Award – Julie Murphy, St. Cloud Cathedral High School. Murphy has been actively involved fostering athletic opportunities for young girls in the St. Cloud area since her time as a college student when she began working at St. Cloud Cathedral. Through her role as Assistant Activities Director and Coordinator, Murphy mentors coaches on how to be positive role models for young girls and helps instill self-confidence in new coaches. Murphy has been the softball coach at St. Cloud Cathedral for the last seven years.

Breaking Barriers Award – Vikki Pence, Alden Conger School. When Pence started the girls' athletic program at Alden-Conger School before the passage of Title IX, she knew she had an uphill battle as she was given rubber basketballs and pinnies for uniforms to start the girls' basketball team. Since then, Pence has helped many Alden-Conger teams to countless wins and regional and state appearances during her 37-year coaching career. Pence also dedicated 39 years as a teacher in the health and physical education department and spent time working with adaptive sports.

Breaking Barriers Award – Carol Peterson, Iron Range Volleyball Officials. Peterson was on the ground floor of organizing, coaching and officiating girls' volleyball on Minnesota's Iron Range. She coached the Virginia High School team to the first state tournament in 1974. She organized the first volleyball officials' group on the Iron Range and served as one of the state's top officials in high school and community volleyball for over 20 years. Peterson also coached numerous other sports and remains active in organizing golf and curling tournaments in the area.

Breaking Barriers Award – Diane Pettis, Sebeka High School. After an impressive collegiate career as a basketball, volleyball and track and field student-athlete at Bemidji State University at a time when girls had to fight for every opportunity to play sports, Pettis dedicated her life to teaching and coaching girls at Sebeka High School. Pettis has been the head coach of both the volleyball and softball teams at Sebeka since 1976. She has coached eight conference championship teams and multiple section championship squads.

Breaking Barriers Award – Rick Ringeisen, Lakeville South High School. In his 34 years as head coach of the swimming program at Lakeville South High School, Ringeisen has led the team to seven conference championships and 13 section championships which earned him Coach of the Year honors twice. Ringeisen has also served as the head track and field coach for 33 years. During that time, the Lakeville South track program has won four state championships and has had 13 individual event champions. He is also actively involved in countless swimming committees.

Breaking Barriers Award – Valerie Swanson, Ridgewater College. At Ridgewater College, Swanson amassed over 700 wins with the volleyball team and was named the Minnesota Community College Coach of the Year in 2003. She was also Region Coach of the Year six times and earned the Southwest Minnesota State University Distinguished Alumni Award for her success at Ridgewater. In addition to her coaching career, Swanson served on the North Country Region Volleyball Board of Directors.

Breaking Barriers Award – Don Timm, Coon Rapids High School. In his 37 years as head coach of the Coon Rapids High School Girls' Cross Country team, Timm not only helped his program excel on the course, but also in the classroom as the cross country team has been one of the most successful teams at Coon Rapids academically. Timm has supported his runners in more than just their athletic pursuits, but consistently encourages his student-athletes to excel in all aspects of their lives including extracurricular activities.