

29th Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day
19 athletes and sports leaders to be recognized
Wednesday, February 4 – 12 p.m. at the Minnesota History Center

Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day is organized 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 4, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 29th-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 2015 ceremony will be honoring 18 individuals and one team who will receive awards in seven 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 – Carol Enke, Augsburg College. Physical educators make a strong impact on the lives of students every day, but their work wouldn't be possible without people like Carol Enke. Since 1986, Enke has been an educator of future physical teachers at Augsburg College. She teaches with a practical approach and has challenged the next generation of physical education teachers to be the best they can be, while emphasizing the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Enke began her career teaching at the elementary school level and worked with adapted physical education programs in the Minneapolis Public Schools before transitioning to Augsburg. Enke also spent 21 seasons as head softball coach at Augsburg where she collected over 300 career wins before becoming full-time faculty in 2006. In 2013, Enke was honored with the Lou Keller award from the Minnesota Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AHPERD) for her significant contributions to the field. More notably, Enke is proud to have had the opportunity to work creatively with future educators to find ways to involve females in physical activity.



The Girl's and Women in Sports in the Media Award – Kwame McDonald. During his lifetime, Kwame McDonald did just about everything imaginable to make a lasting impact on this world. Born James Cornell McDonald of Wisconsin, he took a pivotal pilgrimage to Africa in 1968 that changed both his name and how he lived his life. McDonald was a true activist in the Minneapolis and St. Paul communities through his various jobs as an educator, administrator, mentor, coach, sportswriter and broadcaster. Known to many as the 'Godfather' of Twin Cities sports, McDonald had major influence on the progress of minorities in local athletics. He served as the director of the St. Paul Inner City Youth League and was a pioneer in covering girls' sports and bringing press to some of the best female athletes in the metro area during his time at several local newspapers and broadcast stations. McDonald was also instrumental in launching the first Inner City All-Star Classic for girls' basketball in 2001 to ensure they had the same opportunity for recognition as boys. McDonald passed away in 2011, but not before making a lasting impact on the landscape of Minnesota sports.



The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Ronda Jo Donatucci, Former WNBA player, Metro Deaf School. For Ronda Jo Donatucci, being deaf has only been a small obstacle along her way to excellence as she has proven that hard work can overcome almost any challenge. A native of Minnesota, Donatucci attended the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf and then took her talents to Gallaudet University where she became a three-time All-American basketball player and three-time conference player of the year in both basketball and volleyball. Donatucci led Division III women's basketball in scoring in 1998-99 averaging 26.3 points per game. She led the Bison to two NCAA tournament appearances and still holds the Division III record for career rebounds. Donatucci went on to become the first deaf woman to play in the WNBA leading to her induction into the Gallaudet Hall of Fame in 2008 and her jersey retirement in 2014. Following her playing career, Donatucci has given back to the deaf community through coaching and teaching of physical education. Currently, she serves as Interim Co-Director and Director of Student Life at the Metro Deaf School.



Special Merit Award – Myron Glass, Rochester Lourdes Girls' Basketball Coach. Myron Glass is a Minnesota coaching legend and is responsible for putting sports at Rochester Lourdes High School on the map. When he began teaching in 1968, Glass started a girls' track and field team and decided to host a meet with other private schools in the area and girls' sports were officially born at Lourdes. Glass went on to coach multiple sports at Lourdes winning 16 state titles – eight of which most notably came with girls basketball. Glass retired in 2013-14 as one of only nine coaches in the state to reach 500 or more wins in basketball with his teams averaging a 25-3 win-loss record each season beginning in 1983. His team also held a streak of 124-consecutive conference wins. Glass has been inducted into the Minnesota State High School League and Minnesota Coaches Association Hall of Fames. His proudest achievement doesn't come in the form of wins or awards, though, but in serving as a leader to create equal access for girls to compete in sports opportunities.



Special Merit Award – Jean Havlish, Professional Baseball Player and Bowler. Jean Havlish can't remember a time she wasn't playing baseball. In the pre-Title IX era, Havlish spent her St. Paul childhood playing baseball with the neighborhood kids during a time when girls weren't playing sports. Havlish began playing with the Fort Wayne Daisies of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in 1953 at age 17. 'Grasshopper' – as she was known to the fans – played in over 200 games making roughly \$185 a month. Though she played professionally just two years, Havlish wouldn't have traded that experience for anything. Following her return to Minnesota, Havlish made a name for herself for over three decades in the bowling world. For over 25 years, Havlish maintained a 185 average or higher and was a member of the Professional Bowling Association. She is now a member of the Minnesota Sports Hall of Fame. Named one of the 50 greatest Minnesota athletes of the 20th century by *Sports Illustrated*, Havlish is a true Minnesota legend.



Special Merit Award – Nicole M. LaVoi, Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport. After winning a national championship and twice earning All-American honors in tennis at Gustavus Adolphus College, it is no surprise that Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi has gone on to make a continued impact on girls and women's sports. LaVoi spent time coaching collegiate women's tennis before earning her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota where she serves as a senior lecturer in the School of Kinesiology. Since 2005, LaVoi has served as the Associate Director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport. In this role, she has conducted ground-breaking research on a variety of topics and produced an Emmy-nominated documentary on concussions in female athletes that has aired over 43 times. LaVoi is engaged in the first-ever project examining the decline of female coaches since Title IX in collaboration with the Alliance of Women Coaches and is a faculty member for the NCAA Women's Coaches Academy. She also serves as an advisory board member for espnW and helped develop educational material to accompany the 'Nine for IX' documentary series.



Minnesota Legacy Award – Joan Parent, MSHSL Board of Directors President. Joan Parent lived her life on the right side of history leaving a true legacy in Minnesota. Following her passing in 2013, her daughter Joellen Johnson said Parent “was not afraid to stand up and say what she thought.” That mentality helped Parent make an immediate impact after moving from Canada where she grew up competing in several sports. Parent was the first female veterinarian in Minnesota and served for 30 years on the Foley school board. She was also a member of both the Minnesota and National School Board Associations. Parent left the greatest impact on the state, though, during her time on the Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors. Believed to be the first woman to head a scholastic athletic association, as president, Parent helped move Title IX forward fighting for equal opportunity in sport when the amendment was still facing resistance. She helped add eight girls’ state tournaments and advocated for girls basketball to be a winter sport just like the boys.



Minnesota Milestone Award – Edina High School Girls’ Tennis. When Steve Paulsen took over as head coach of the Edina High School Girls’ Tennis program in 1992, the team had won a record 15 state championships. Since then, he has continued to emphasize hard work in setting what has become a national girls’ tennis record. The Hornets won their 18th-consecutive Minnesota Class AA title in 2014 and since their streak began in 1997, the team has lost just three total matches. Their most recent win in October didn’t come as a result of one standout player, but from the collective drive and determination of the entire team lineup that has grown up with the dream of contributing to one of the most elite clubs in the tennis world. Throughout the streak, many Hornets have gone on to play and coach collegiate tennis. As the only coach during the elusive streak, Paulsen doesn’t emphasize the importance of winning, but instead fuels success by encouraging players to be their best.

Breaking Barriers Award – Pat Arens, Princeton High School. Ten years ago, youth soccer programs didn’t exist in Princeton. Thanks to the vision and hard work of Pat Arens in starting soccer through community education, the sport has flourished in the area with over 200 kids playing in grades K-12. This fall, Arens efforts were vividly apparent as Princeton High School began its fifth year with varsity and junior varsity soccer programs. Arens also took the reigns as head coach of the girls’ varsity program in 2014 led the Tigers to conference and section championships and state tournament appearance.

Breaking Barriers Award – Connie Boyum-Erzar, Deer River High School. Connie Boyum-Erzar has been a trailblazer at Deer River High School serving as a physical education teacher and head volleyball coach for 33 years. Though Boyum-Erzar has collected 580 wins, her true imprint on the community comes through her work in developing successful youth and Junior Olympic programs. Also having served as the girls’ basketball coach, Boyum-Erzar has been a driving force for girls’ athletics and physical fitness through her unique incorporation of life-long activities into her teaching curriculum.

Breaking Barriers Award – Raquel DeBeltz-Bushman, Hutchinson Parks & Recreation. Raquel DeBeltz-Bushman has always been a fighter. DeBeltz-Bushman used sports as an escape from a tough childhood and wanted to provide that same opportunity for others. She is a true role model, having served countless hours as league director as she grew the Crow River Fastpitch Softball Association to reach 22 communities and 1,200 athletes. Also a Division I and High School League umpire, DeBeltz-Bushman often volunteers as a youth official and purchases sporting equipment for less-fortunate youth. Most recently, she has been an advocate of equality through her fundraising to build softball fences for the Hutchinson Parks and Recreation softball leagues.

Breaking Barriers Award – Ron Gunderson, New Prague High School. New Prague High School girls’ basketball has become a model program in Minnesota thanks to Ron Gunderson – though he would be the first to attribute the team’s success over the last 39 years to the dedication of his players. During his time as head coach, Gunderson has collected over 630 wins, 12 conference championships, eight section championships and a state title in 2000. Beyond wins, Gunderson is admired most in New Prague for his hard work, preparation and development of tenacious players who take pride in the program.

Breaking Barriers Award – Bill Halbrehder, Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association. Bill Halbrehder has spent over 45 years actively promoting opportunities and coaching in the Minnesota hockey community. After retiring from teaching and athletic administration at North St. Paul High School, Halbrehder volunteered his time with the Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association and eventually served as president. Halbrehder has served on numerous committees that provide development opportunities for female youth hockey players. Additionally, Halbrehder spent many years coaching girls’ high school hockey and was an assistant with the women’s program at Augsburg College.

Breaking Barriers Award – Betty Haukebo, Park Rapids Area High School. Betty Haukebo began making an impact on girls’ sports in Minnesota before Title IX. Haukebo’s work began in Glencoe where she lobbied for seventh and eighth grade girls to be able to compete with high school students. At Park Rapids High School, Haukebo coached numerous girls to state championship appearances, was named State Coach of the Year and was inducted into the Gymnastics Hall of Fame. Haukebo spent 41 years judging gymnastics and has developed community education gymnastics programs for grade school girls.

Breaking Barriers Award – Deb Johansen, ARISE. Deb Johansen is a visionary who started ARISE – A Recreational Inclusion Support Endeavor – to fill a need for children with disabilities to access community recreation and leisure activities with their peers in the St. Cloud area. In 1989, Johansen successfully secured grant funding allowing disabled youth to participate. Since its creation, ARISE now regularly helps over 90 children of all ages pursue sports in a safe environment with their non-disabled peers. In 1998, Johansen received the Creative Leadership in Human and Civil Rights Award for her ARISE work.

Breaking Barriers Award – Jessica Just, Lakeville South High School. In the 10 years since the opening of Lakeville South High School, Jessica Just has built an exceptional cross country program that has placed in the top-10 in the state almost every year, including runner-up and third-place finishes. Each year, Just carries record numbers of athletes on her team with over 100 high school runners. She also brings up middle school students to train with the varsity team as she works to build the program further. More than a coach, Just has been a positive mentor for countless young girls in Lakeville.

Breaking Barriers Award – Mary Lager, St. Peter High School. Since St. Peter High School began its girls swimming and diving program in 1993, there has been only one woman who has led the program to 22 successful years – and her name is Mary Lager. In addition to coaching some of the state’s top performers, Lager has made a lasting impact through her mentorship and leadership as a positive role model. Lager’s nominator said the girls who have come through the program have gone on to become successful women and life-long members of a close-knit family.

Breaking Barriers Award – Mike Silk, Randolph High School. At dawn of Title IX, Mike Silk was an active advocate of opportunity and successfully worked with the local school board to start the Randolph girls’ varsity softball program. From 1979 until his retirement in 2014, Silk successfully led Randolph to 419 wins – the 12th most in Minnesota history – and numerous conference championships. Despite working with a small enrollment, Silk’s program fielded three grade-level teams in addition to both varsity and junior varsity. Many of his players have competed and coached at the collegiate level.

Breaking Barriers Award – Erica Upton-Wurst, Houston High School. In the last 10 years, Erica Upton-Wurst has proven she is ready to face any challenge. She was charged with starting the Houston dance program and has worked tirelessly to battle the stigma that dance is “not a sport.” Throughout her years leading the dance team, she has emphasized the importance of commitment and accountability with her athletes. The tenacity and dedication of Upton-Wurst has yielded growth and success in recent years. Last year, Houston became one of the top Minnesota dance programs earning its first trip to the state meet.