

**31st Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day**  
**20 athletes and sports leaders to be recognized**  
**Wednesday, February 1, 2017 – 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*

For more information about the event and day of media assistance, contact Sara Eisenhauer – [smeisenhauer@umacathletics.com](mailto:smeisenhauer@umacathletics.com) or 651-286-7488  
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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 1, 2017, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 31st-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 2017 ceremony will honor 20 individuals, groups or programs who will receive awards in five 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 – Allys Swanson, St. Catherine University.** As a teacher, coach and administrator for more than 50 years, Swanson has impacted the lives of thousands of young people both in the classroom and on their respective playing surfaces. After graduating from the University of Iowa, Swanson began her professional career teaching, coaching and serving as department chair in the Iowa public school system. She went on to be an instructor at the University of Iowa before relocating to St. Paul for an incredible 46-year career at St. Catherine University. While at St. Kate's Swanson served as an Assistant Professor, Department Chairperson, Coach and Athletic Director and developed the first post Title IX intercollegiate programs at the institution. Allys has developed and participated in an extensive variety of seminars, research, writing and professional contributions on behalf her institution, state, national and international organizations. Swanson also took sabbatical to begin compiling over 50 oral histories of women in physical education and sport to be published in a book. Some of her most notable manuscripts include those of St. Kate's alumnae such as Wimbeldon champion Jeanne Arth. Swanson has received numerous honors, grants and awards for her scholarship and leadership including most recently being awarded status of Professor Emerita of Exercise and Sport Sciences at St. Catherine University.



**The Kwame McDonald Media Award – Greg Kleven, Sun Newspapers** According to a 2016 article featured in the Sun Current, it was the suggestion of Kleven's high school journalism teacher that convinced him to apply for the sports editor position on the school's newspaper and yearbook staffs. Little did Kleven know that five decades later he would still be writing and editing sports stories. In the article, Kleven stated that fascinating world of sports journalism didn't make him rich financially, but writing about sports enriched his life greatly. Kleven stated he was fortunate to have developed many great relationships with athletes, coaches and administrators in various youth and adult sports organizations. Kleven, who joined Sun Newspapers in January of 1973, witnessed the birth of girls high school sports and, "got a first-hand look at how quickly female athletes improved their skills in various sports." Kleven stated that it has been an honor covering the many championship teams and coaches in Minnesota. Greg retired from the Sun Newspapers after a 43-year career covering the sports beats in Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Richfield, St. Louis Park and Hopkins.



**The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Mallory Weggeman, US Paralympic Swimming** Mallory Weggemann has been swimming competitively since the age of seven. On January 21, 2008, she went to the hospital to receive her third and final epidural injection that she was receiving to help treat back pain caused by postherpetic neuralgia. The epidural injections that were supposed to help with the debilitating pain instead left Mallory a paraplegic with complete loss of movement from her abdomen down. Just three months after her injury at the age of 18, Weggemann chose to return to the pool. In April 2008, her older sister found an article in the local newspaper discussing the Paralympic Swimming Trials at the University of Minnesota. Through the encouragement of her family, Mallory attended the meet as a spectator with her sister and met several of the US National Team coaches, as well as her former coach, Jim Andersen. Still coping with her new disability, Weggemann found one thing unchanged, her love for swimming. Less than sixteen months later, Mallory broke her first set of world records at the 2009 Can Am Speedo Para Swim Meet. Now, she holds 34 American Records, 15 World Records, and two Paralympic Medals – one gold, the other bronze. Weggemann's Gold Medal race has been deemed one of the most memorable moments of the 2012 London Games, inspiring audiences around the world. Mallory most recently competed in the 2016 Rio Paralympic games, where she swam in seven individual events, making finals appearances in four of the seven events.



**Special Merit Award – Ken Miller, North Country Region Volleyball.** Ken Miller currently serves as the Associate Executive Director and Junior Coordinator for North Country Region USA Volleyball. Miller has also served as an Assistant Coach at Central Lakes Community College for the women's volleyball program and as the Head Coach for the Central Lake Junior 18's. Miller has impacted hundreds of young people through work with the sport of volleyball. Ken says his goal is to, "Help to teach young women about self-confidence, teamwork, sportsmanship, to have fun, and guide them with their life choices." Miller has received honors and accolades throughout his coaching career including having coached six different teams at USAV Junior Nationals; having coached at the NJCAA Division III National Tournament 10 times in the last 14 years, including winning the NJCAA National Championship in 2007. Miller was awarded the Eagle Scout Junior Olympic Outstanding Clinician Award from USA volleyball in 2009 and received the Meritorious Service Award from North Country Region Volleyball.



**Special Merit Award – Diane Scovill, Minneapolis Community and Technical College** Diane Scovill has been a proud faculty member at Minneapolis Community and Technical College for the past 37 years. Scovill was hired in 1980 as the head women's basketball coach and shortly after achieved her "dream job" of being a full-time Physical Education and Health instructor. Diane guided her teams through some challenging years and in 1987 secured the school's first conference championship and berth in the NJCAA State Tournament. During her playing days, Scovill was able to stand witness to the "before and after" story of Title IX, one of the most pieces of Legislation in Civil Rights history. She states, "It was an honor to be able to be a part of this seismic shift in the status of girls and women, not only in sport, but in our day to day lives." Scovill played field hockey, basketball and softball at the University of Minnesota where she was honored to play with some of the best female athletes of her time. She is very proud to be a lifetime member of the M-Club, the association of the University of Minnesota student-athlete alumni. Scovill says, "I am the person that I am today, to a great extent, due to the coaches, staff and players back then and now. This path has afforded me a life I did not know existed. I have always wanted to honor that and return the favor."



**Special Merit Award – Carrie Tollefson, USA Olympic Track and Field** Carrie Tollefson is an elite middle distance runner who was born and raised in Dawson, Minnesota, where she was a 13-time State Champion. Her five cross country titles established a national record for most consecutive titles, which still stands to this day. Tollefson attended Villanova University, where she was a five-time NCAA Champion and the 1998 NCAA Indoor Track Athlete of the year. She was also the first person in NCAA history to win both the 3,000- and 5,000-meter titles. In her post collegiate career, she was a three-time national champion and after winning the 1,500-meter trials in 2004, she represented the US in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. Carrie is an ESPN2 analyst and does media coverage for the New York Road Runners. She is also a commentator/announcer for several national events, including the Twin Cities Marathon and Foot Locker Nationals. Tollefson is also the spokesperson for Minnesota Grown. Carrie continues to impact, inspire and motivate people to GET AFTER IT in life through her public speaking and training camps where she encourages runners to live a healthy, balanced life.



**Special Merit Award – Deb Weinreis, Minnesota Recreation and Park Association** Deb Weinreis is currently the Program Manager at the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association where she is responsible for planning, coordinating and administering a comprehensive program of recreational and sporting activities and events, a position she has held for nearly 17 years. In addition to the many lives Deb has impacted through her work at the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association, she is also a member of numerous sports organizations around the Twin Cities charged to support and promote opportunities for girls and women in sport. Additionally, Weinreis has been a long standing volleyball and basketball official with the Minnesota State High School League, the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference and the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference in addition to serving as the Regional Coordinator and State Chair for the Hershey's Track and Field program for more than 14 years. Weinreis was also an outstanding athlete and coach, playing and coaching basketball professionally in Norway and Switzerland for more than 10 years. Weinreis is a member of the Hopkins High School Hall of Fame. She has also dedicated countless hours as the logistics chair for the Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership which plans and organizes the annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day event.



**Minnesota Legacy Award – Patty Berg, Professional Golfer.** Patty Berg, who was one of the greatest athletes of her time, passed away in 2006 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease. Patty's influence far exceeded her 60 tournament wins, and 15 major titles, which are still a women's record. She was a sound role model and, as one of the founders and first president of the Ladies Professional Golf Association, helped build the women's game to its current success alongside the men's. Berg was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she was a tomboy whose first love was American football. Berg was a teenage golf sensation and while a student-athlete at the University of Minnesota, she was part of the team that won the Curtis Cup. Her amateur career began at Interlachen cCountry Club where she first participated in the U.S. Women's Amateur in 1935. In 1938 she was named the Associated Press athlete of the year, an award she received again in 1943 and 1955. After volunteering for the marines in 1942, she was commissioned a lieutenant and her celebrity status was used to promote the war effort at home. In 1946, she returned to civilian life by winning the inaugural US Women's Open. For the next few years she dominated women's golf, along with the 1946 Amateur champion, Babe Didrickson. Despite the popularity she and Didrickson had brought to the women's game, they still had remarkably few stages on which to play. So in 1950 they, along with 11 other pros, formed the LPGA. Berg retired from the tour in 1962, but continued playing and promoting golf, and her charitable work. In 1963 she received the Bobby Jones award for sportsmanship in golf. Berg was inducted into the LPGA Hall of Fame, an association that now gives a Patty Berg award to the person who each year makes the greatest contribution to women's golf. Berg leaves behind a legacy of success measured best by her dedication, drive, and an unflinching desire to be her very best defined by this rule of hers: "Don't think you really win until you live up to that high thing within you that makes you do your best, no matter what."



**Breaking Barriers Award – Kara Douglass Thom, Go! Go! Sports Girls.** In 2011, Kara Douglass Thom joined forces with Jodi Bondi Noorgard to bring to life the empowering Go! Go! Sports Girls doll by publishing a series of books that support creative play and social growth through sport. These books have encouraged young girls to be active and dream big. Together, the dolls and books have earned Thom and Noorgard national awards and recognition including a trip to a White House conference on breaking gender stereotypes. Thom also coaches an after school fitness class for girls in third through fifth grade in Eastern Carver County that introduces girls to sports and provides lessons in character building.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Girls On the Run Twin Cities.** In 2011, Kori Fitschen and Mary Uran founded Girls on the Run Twin Cities, a non-profit organization that encourages lifelong fitness and health through educational programming and running for girls in third through eighth grades. The 10-week program weaves physical activity into lessons focused on positive contributions to society and culminates with a celebratory 5k run that provides a tangible confidence in achieving a goal. Since its inception, Girls on the Run has empowered over 2,500 girls and now boasts programs at over 70 locations across seven Twin Cities counties and expects to reach over 3,000 girls in 2016-17.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Crystal Lamont, Waterville-Elysian-Morristown High School.** Crystal Lamont was a standout high school and college athlete who has continued to support the Waterville-Elysian-Morristown community following her playing days by developing opportunities to empower girls through sport. As the head high school softball and volleyball coach, Lamont consistently returns from coaching conferences wanting to share ideas and concepts with her student-athletes. In August 2016, Lamont brought her idea to life as Waterville-Elysian-Morristown hosted the first "Female Athlete Empowerment Symposium" featuring speakers on the history of girls sports, sports psychology and health and wellness. Over 120 girls attended the first event and a second is planned for 2017.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Marcia Mahlum, College of Saint Benedict.** Marcia Mahlum has been a critical player in the growth of thriving intramural and recreational opportunities at the College of Saint Benedict. Mahlum has expanded participation numbers and fought for funding to improve recreational facilities and locker rooms at the College to meet the changing needs of female students. She has been integral in the current CSB gym renovation and \$12 million athletic and intramural facility and fields. Mahlum has also been an advocate for the LGBTQ community by developing diversity and inclusion initiatives as well as working to create policies and facility accommodations and modifications for transgender students.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Fartun Osman, Urban Youth Leadership Connection.** Fartun Osman fled Somalia to Minnesota due to violence in 1996. Upon arriving, the 20-year-old single mother began working at Urban Youth Leadership Connection in St. Paul where she recognized a need to build confidence in Muslim girls and felt sports was the answer that could also bridge the cultural gap with their peers. She began coaching soccer and organized a tutoring program where she acted as a mentor, drove girls to and from practice and connected with families. Osman now orchestrates similar initiatives at Higher Ground Academy and continues volunteer coaching making a profound impact on countless young girls.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Tom Peart, Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association.** Tom Peart has been involved in the Minnesota girls hockey community for nearly 20 years as a coach at the youth, high school and college levels. As a volunteer with the Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association,

Peart spends countless hours contacting coaches and organizing details for the girls high performance program, tryouts and Final 54 Festival. These opportunities allow over 1500 of the top girls players in the state to receive skill instruction and coaching with the top 35 players advancing to a national camp. Peart's time and dedication provides opportunity for girls to compete in hockey at the highest level.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Patricia Percival, White Bear Lake High School.** Patricia Percival has dedicated her life to serving as a mentor for many female coaches through her success coaching and service in physical education at White Bear Central Middle School. Percival was an all-state cross country and track athlete at Mounds View and a successful athlete at the University of Minnesota. She continued to share her passion for competition as a coach of middle school, high school and college programs. Percival helped 12 cross country teams qualify for state between Mounds View and White Bear Lake High Schools and led Mounds View to two True Team State Track and Field titles.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Sara Daymont Schwartz, Mound Westonka High School.** Sara Daymont Schwartz has become a role model for female athletes in the Mound Westonka community as the head high school track and field coach and a cross country coach leading both boys and girls and encouraging athletes of all abilities to participate. Her nominator describes her as “a vibrant, positive and exemplary coach in her field.” As a runner herself, Schwartz models the power of hard work, determination and attitude for her athletes. She also developed a running club that encourages teachers at the high school to be active and creates a positive group of women that supports each other's well-being.

**Breaking Barriers Award – University of Minnesota Dance Team.** The University of Minnesota dance team is led by head coach Amanda Gaines. Earlier this month, the Golden Gophers once again took top billing at the UCA & UDA College Cheerleading and Dance Team National Championship in Orlando, Fla. Minnesota's dance team led the way as it staked claim to two more national championships on the weekend. The Gophers won their eighth straight Pom title and are still the only team in the history of the UDA to win the Pom division. The dance team finished first in Jazz as well after finishing second a year ago. The Gopher dance team has clearly set the bar nationally for what it means to be a top program.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Brittany Walsh, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.** Brittany Walsh is a positive role model for numerous young girls in the Minneapolis community through her work as a recreation specialist with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Walsh has developed many innovative programs and teams for girls such as t-ball, softball and volleyball. Her passion for athletics has extended beyond her job as Walsh has coached volleyball within Park and Recreation Board programs for many years. Her nominator said, “As a coach Brittany was a positive role model, loyal to the program, demonstrated strong work ethic, emphasized team work, showed passion for the game and engaged players and parents to have fun!”

**Breaking Barriers Award – Beth Wilmeth, University of Northwestern.** In 12 seasons leading the University of Northwestern volleyball, Beth Wilmeth has developed a team culture rooted in Christian values bringing unprecedented success to the program and the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC). Wilmeth's Eagles have won 10 UMAC championships and have seven-straight NCAA tournaments appearances. This fall, Wilmeth was named the AVCA Division III National Coach of the Year after leading her squad to the NCAA Final Four - the furthest any UMAC team has ever advanced in the NCAA tournament in any sport. Most notably, Wilmeth's program has earned national sportsmanship awards and recognition for the practice of making honor calls.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Bonnie Young Johnson, University of Minnesota.** There isn't much Bonnie Young Johnson hasn't done to improve the landscape of health and wellness and sports for girls in Minnesota. Young Johnson has earned numerous accolades, including National Health Teacher of the Year in 2004, for her work as a physical educator and coach in multiple school districts. Her most impressive accomplishments include her initiatives related to health education and development of standards at the state level. Young Johnson has served as a writer, speaker and consultant on health and wellness topics related to children, founded the Metropolitan Coalition of Health Education Teachers and currently instructs at the University of Minnesota.

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