

## 32nd Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day 21 athletes and sports leaders to be recognized Wednesday, February 7, 2018 – 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 7, 2018 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 32nd-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 2018 ceremony will honor 21 individuals, groups or programs that will receive 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 at no cost. Details about award winners are below.

**The Marie Berg Award for Excellence in Education – Marguerite “Betsy” Farness, Minnetonka Public Schools.** Today's female coaches and athletes stand on the shoulders of women like Marguerite “Betsy” Farness. After growing up in Richfield prior to the passage of Title IX, Farness earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in physical and health education at the University of Minnesota. She then dedicated her life to providing opportunities for young women to participate, learn and achieve through education and athletics. In 1966, Farness began teaching in Minnetonka Public Schools and coached girls track and field and tennis. She led the tennis program to back-to-back state titles in the early 1970s and was a dedicated advocate of equal opportunity for girls to compete in interscholastic competition. For 32 years, Farness also served as a volunteer official for the Minnesota State High School League and spent 20 years at the executive secretary of the Minnesota State High School Coaches for Girls Sports. She retired from coaching in 1999 and was inducted into the MSHSL Hall of Fame in 2002. For Farness, the most rewarding part of her career was the “accumulation of experience in watching the young women I taught and coached become coaches and teachers, and moments when these young women come to me and say, “Thank you for believing in me...that has helped me reach for my dreams and become a better woman, mother and athlete.”



**The Kwame McDonald Media Award – Marshall Radio.** Marshall Radio is dedicated to equality in sports broadcasting. It covers over 360 games a year and strives for 50/50 coverage of boys' and girls' youth and high school teams as well as men's and women's teams at Southwest Minnesota State University. Tyler Boddy of the Southwest Minnesota State volleyball coaching staff said, “Marshall Radio has done a great job of reporting all sports in the Southwest region of the state and here at the college as well. They continue to create a great broadcast that everyone looks to tune into if they cannot make it to the games, or they will check them out online. The Marshall community is very appreciative of their hard work and efforts over the years!”

**The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Colleen J. Stark-Haws, St. Cloud Tech High School.** Gymnasts at St. Cloud Tech High School have not only seen unprecedented success on the competition floor for more than a decade, but they have been motivated by a true role model in Colleen Stark-Haws. This inspirational leader began coaching as a teenager and carried her passion through college before starting a new high school program in 1993 in Sauk Rapids. Stark-Haws led the team to a state title in 1997 before accepting a coaching position at St. Cloud Tech with her husband, Joel, by her side as co-head coach in 1999. Since then, the St. Cloud Tech gymnastics team has captured 12-consecutive section titles and won its first state championship in 2016. The success of Stark-Haws' team is most notable, though, as she has continued to coach and lead the team despite her diagnosis with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2006. Just a year into her diagnosis, Stark-Haws began using a wheelchair but didn't let that stop her. With limited movement in her body, Stark-Haws is able to clearly articulate to her athletes what they need to do while Joel helps with physical guidance. As her disease progresses, Stark-Haws still relishes the opportunity to coach girls of all ages in gymnastics and inspire them to believe in themselves in and out of the gym. Stark-Haws says she is inspired by a quote from John Wooden, “Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can.”



**Special Merit Award – Theresa Ganley, University of Minnesota.** Theresa Ganley has been one of the most impactful athletes and coaches in the history of women's sports in Minnesota. In 1973 Ganley joined the women's swim team at the University of Minnesota and became the Gophers' first female All-American in any sport a year later. She went on to earn the AIAW honor three more times. Following her decorated career, Ganley began coaching as an assistant under legendary coach Jean Freeman. The two worked together for 27 years during which time the Gopher women won their first Big Ten title in 1999. In 2004, Ganley became co-head women's coach and was named Associate Head Coach of the men's and women's teams in 2014. During her time at Minnesota, the Gopher women have won seven Big Ten championships and more than 100 athletes have earned 450 All-America honors. Ganley has also been named Big Ten Co-Coach of the Year six times. From 2006 to 2015, the Gopher women finished 13th or better at the NCAA championships with three women earning national event titles. Ganley is also a member of the Minnesota Aquatics, Minnesota “M” Club and Minnesota Swimming Coaches Association Hall of Fames. Ganley considers her most important contribution to sport as, “being an integral part of the growth and development of opportunity for girls and women in sport to be respected and valued as athletes.”



**Special Merit Award – JoeAnn Jackson-Matthews, National Senior Games.** JoeAnn Jackson-Matthews is a woman who can't be stopped, both on the track and in her pursuit to make a difference in the lives of young girls and boys through sport. On the track, Jackson-Matthews inspires young girls to pursue their dreams as one of the top senior athletes in the nation and the world. In 2017, Jackson-Matthews was inducted into the Minnesota Senior Sports Association Hall of Fame. Last year, she was ranked in the top 15 in the US for her age group for eight different events. She also had the fourth-best performance in the world in the 50-meter dash and has medaled at the National Senior Games in five events including a gold-medal performance in the long jump. Jackson-Matthews holds 39 state records in six track and field events, serves on the USA Track and Field Board of Directors and works as a certified USATF official. In addition to her personal successes on the track, Jackson-Matthews coaches young athletes with the Eagles Wings developmental track club. She also spent 22 years as a volunteer coach with Hospitality House Youth Development - an organization that works with at-risk youth in North Minneapolis. For Jackson-Matthews, she finds great joy in seeing athletes succeed: “My greatest motivation is to show them that when they reach my age they are capable of exceeding my accomplishments.”



**Special Merit Award – Donna K. Palivec, Bemidji State University.** Donna K. Palivec retired from Bemidji State University in 2016, but the impact she made on the lives of many young women throughout her decorated career is still felt today. Palivec lettered in five sports at Indiana University and led the women's basketball team to an AIAW Final Four appearance in 1973. She earned her physical education degree and went on to coach high school sports before leading the North Dakota State University volleyball team to five NCAA Division II tournaments in nine seasons. Palivec spent several years at Montana State University before landing at Bemidji in 1994 where she made an immediate impact on the volleyball program and served as the physical education department chair. During her eight-year tenure, the Beavers finished second in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference twice and compiled 119 wins. Palivec finished her career among the top 15 active NCAA volleyball coaches with 484 wins. In addition to coaching, Palivec was actively involved in training coaches and athletes through the MSHSL and USA Volleyball. She is a Hall of Famer at both NDSU and BSU and with the Minnesota Volleyball Coaches. Today, Palivec actively volunteers within the Bemidji community. For Palivec, she sees her most



important contribution to sport as giving student-athletes a chance and seeing more potential in them than they saw in themselves, which has helped keep her connected to her athletes today.

**Special Merit Award – Krissy Wendell-Pohl, University of Minnesota, USA Hockey** Krissy Wendell-Pohl began making her mark on sports from a very



young age and continues to impact opportunities for girls and women in sports today. In 1994, Wendell-Pohl became the fifth girl to play in the Little League World Series and was the first to start at the catcher position. When she reached high school, Wendell-Pohl turned her energy to hockey leading Park Center to a state championship in 2000. In two seasons, Wendell-Pohl finished with 314 points including 109 goals as a junior and 110 as a senior. Her hockey dominance continued at the University of Minnesota where she led the Gophers to back-to-back national titles in 2004 and 2005. During her collegiate career, Wendell-Pohl was a three-time All-American, two-time WCHA Player of the Year and the 2005 Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award Winner. Wendell-Pohl finished near the top of most Minnesota women's hockey scoring lists, including being second in career points (237) and career goals (106). Wendell-Pohl competed with the US National Team for 10 years and accumulated 17 medals including Olympic silver in 2002 and bronze in 2006. Following her playing career, Wendell-Pohl has become a role model for young girls as a coach of both youth and high school teams in the Twin Cities. This fall, Wendell-Pohl continued to raise the bar when she joined the Fox Sports North college hockey

broadcast team.

**Minnesota Legacy Award – Kathleen C. Ridder, University of Minnesota.** Nothing says “Minnesota Legacy” quite like the collective lifetime of work and philanthropy of Kathleen C. Ridder. Perhaps one of the most active supporters of women's athletics in Minnesota history, Ridder dedicated her life to ensuring equal opportunities for women in society. Raised in New York, Ridder moved to Minnesota with her husband Robert in 1943. She spent six decades as a social activist which included volunteering, championing social causes that often embraced equality for all people, and lobbying for change at the local, state and national levels of government. After growing up in the pre-Title IX era, Ridder developed a passion for providing opportunity for women in sports. Her most notable contribution may be the financial gift for the construction of the University of Minnesota's Ridder Arena, the first women's-only collegiate hockey arena. However, Ridder also provided her opinion, mentorship and finances to projects at Minnesota that would benefit female student-athletes. The Kathleen C. Ridder scholarship is the first endowed scholarship for female student-athletes and supports women who pursue a major in medicine, science or math. Another annual scholarship is given to a women's hockey player at Minnesota.



Her involvement also included founding the Women's Athletics Advisory Council and chairing the campus facility project for the Gophers' Sports Pavilion and Mariucci Arena. In 1990, Ridder was inducted into the 'M' Club Hall of Fame, and she was given the University's 2004 Director's Award in recognition of outstanding generosity, service and commitment to Gopher Athletics. Ridder passed away in April 2017 at age of 94, but her true legacy will live on through the numerous lives of the female athletes she's impacted in Minnesota.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Carol Agnes, College of Saint Benedict.** Carol Agnes is a champion of women's athletics and leadership. From a young age, Agnes was troubled by the lack of opportunities for girls in sports and outdoor ventures. She became involved in Girls Scouts to hone her leadership skills before pursuing a physical education degree which deepened her passion for leadership and athletics. In 1972, Agnes arrived at the College of Saint Benedict and within two years became its first Director of Athletics. During her tenure, Agnes developed a thriving women's athletics department from the ground up, implemented vast intramural programming and worked tirelessly to advocate for resources to provide exceptional opportunities for young women to grow through intercollegiate athletics and recreation.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Nikki Fennern, Saint Mary's University.** Nikki Fennern has served as Director of Athletics at Saint Mary's University since 2006. Under her leadership, Cardinal women's programs have seen competitive success regionally and nationally. Fennern was named Women Leaders in College Sports 2016 Division III Administrator of the Year. She is a transformative leader who has instilled the institution's LaSallian values into the athletics experience. Cardinal athletes have earned numerous community service awards during her tenure. Most importantly, Fennern is an inspiring role model for young girls in the Winona sports community and women who aspire for careers in intercollegiate athletics administration.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Cheryl-Leigh Goodman, Minneapolis Police Activities League.** Cheryl Leigh-Goodman serves as the Southside Police Activities League coordinator through the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. She has been a strong role model for many girls ages 12-18 who face adversity in a diverse Southeast Minneapolis neighborhood. Goodman helps provide opportunities and encourage participation in several sports to girls who often do not have the money, transportation or parental involvement for extracurricular activities. Through the formation of several softball and volleyball teams, Goodman has inspired countless young girls through sport and introduced them to teamwork, leadership, commitment and positive athletics experiences they would otherwise not have.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Kris Jones, Wayzata High School.** Kris Jones was a legendary three-sport athlete in Moose Lake during the early years of Title IX. Jones developed her passion for competing into a successful teaching and coaching career. As a coach and teacher in Richfield, Jones began her lifelong journey of mentoring and inspiring young women to use sport to make a difference in their lives. In 1995, Jones moved to Wayzata High School where she coached a thriving girls' basketball program and chaired the physical education department. Jones retired from coaching in 2010 but soon developed intramural programs to ensure opportunities for all Wayzata students to thrive through sport.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Crissy Makela, Mankato West High School.** Crissy Makela is the only head girls soccer coach in Mankato West High School history. During those 22 years, Makela has turned the program into one of the most successful teams in southern Minnesota. She has compiled over 200 wins and led her team to four state tournament appearances. More importantly, Makela is a strong role model to her athletes and students. Last year, she was one of 50 winners of the Positive Coaching Alliance Double Goal Coach Award which is given to coaches who excel in teaching life lessons through sport, and has earned great respect from her coaching peers.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Jeanne Minder, National Senior Games.** Jeanne Minder has inspired women of all ages to reach their fullest potential through sports for over 30 years. Minder has completed over 400 triathlons and 25 marathons, and won the gold medal for her age group at the National Senior Games triathlon in 2015. Following her achievement, she was inducted into the Minnesota Senior Sports Hall of Fame in 2016 which has helped bring acknowledgement and recognition for the sport of triathlon. Minder had little background in sports before age 30 but found her passion for competing in triathlon and pushing herself to be her best, in turn inspiring others to do the same.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Dana Moore, College of St. Scholastica.** Dana Moore has spent 21 years enthusiastically leading the College of St. Scholastica volleyball program and inspiring young women to become successful leaders. Moore owns 385 wins at St. Scholastica and has led the Saints to multiple conference tournament titles and an NCAA tournament appearance. During her tenure, Moore has held many administrative positions including Director of Athletics and has been actively involved with the AVCA and Division III volleyball at the national level. Moore passionately believes in the power of women coaching and leading other women and dedicates her spare time to mentoring young female coaches to continue their careers in collegiate coaching.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Elvera “Peps” Neuman, Eden Valley-Watkins High School.** In 2017, Eden Valley-Watkins High School named its gym after Elvera “Peps” Neuman who has passionately dedicated her life to advancing opportunities for girls and women in basketball. Neuman grew up before Title IX

and formed her own Girls Athletics Association so she could play basketball. After seeing a women's traveling team compete against a men's team at her school, Neuman tried out for the Texas Cowgirls before creating her own traveling team - the Arkansas Gems. They traveled the country in a van competing, most often, against men's teams. Neuman's professional career spanned 26 years, and today she can be seen enthusiastically supporting Gopher women's basketball.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Carly Norman, Kelliher High School.** Carly Norman has served Kelliher High School as a teacher, coach and role model for 15 years. During her time, Norman has coached multiple sports and her dedication has raised participation in the small district to 60 girls in volleyball and basketball. Norman commits countless hours to developing students into successful and empowered young women. In addition to impacting sports, Norman raises money each year to take girls on a math and science weekend at North Dakota State. Her nominator says: "I have no doubt that with Carly's guidance and dedication, these girls will be successful in what they choose to do in life."

**Breaking Barriers Award – Ruby Rott, National Senior Games.** For the first 50-plus years of her life, Ruby Rott experienced sport vicariously through her daughter who excelled in multiple sports during college. Knowing she should become more active, Rott picked up the sport of tennis at 55 and has become one of the most inspiring Senior Games players in Minnesota. Rott has qualified for the National Senior Games every year since 1993 and was named a Personal Best Athlete by the National Senior Games at age 80 after winning a national medal despite two recent knee replacement surgeries. Rott is a member of the Minnesota Senior Sports Association Hall of Fame and continues to play tennis in multiple St. Paul leagues inspiring people of all ages to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Shannon Swanson, Blue Earth Area.** Shannon Swanson has left a lasting impact on basketball in Minnesota. Swanson graduated from Blue Earth Area High School in 2002 with 2,702 career points in girls' basketball before serving three years as captain for the Minnesota Gophers. Swanson led the Gophers to a Final Four appearance and was named the team's MVP in 2006 after starting every game of her four-year collegiate career. Swanson later coached at Winona State as an assistant for five seasons before returning to Blue Earth to serve as the youth development coordinator and a youth sport coach.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Jacqueline Dekker-Travis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.** Jacqueline Dekker-Travis has championed youth sports in Southeast Minneapolis for over 20 years. She recently founded a track team at Van Cleve Park and helped this neighborhood group become Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board city champions. Travis also created, recruited and coached the first girls-only basketball team in Van Cleve Park and led the team to a second-place finish in the postseason tournament in just its second season. The success of these programs has become a source of pride for the athletes and the entire neighborhood. Travis helps foster healthy competition and pushes her athletes to better themselves in all aspects of their lives.

**Breaking Barriers Award – Sue Wurl, White Bear Lake High School.** Sue Wurl has positively impacted young athletes for over 30 years as a coach, and has motivated others through her numerous personal achievements throughout her life. Wurl was a decorated high school athlete and competed in three sports at the University of Minnesota-Duluth in the early years of Title IX. Following her successful college career, Wurl began coaching middle and high school cross country and track and field in White Bear Lake while also running in road races of all distances. She has completed 14 marathons and qualified for the Olympic trials in 1984. Wurl still inspires young runners as an assistant cross country coach.

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