

33rd Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day
Historic leaders in Minnesota sports to be honored
Wednesday, February 6, 2019 – 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 Lindsay Madryga, Lamadryga398@stkat.edu or 651-33-4815
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Some of Minnesota's most inspiring and influential athletes, coaches and leaders in sport will be recognized at an award ceremony Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, Minn. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 33rd-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 2019 ceremony will honor 22 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 each award winner are below.



The Marie Berg Award for Excellence in Education – Ruth Nearing, St. Cloud State University. The list of Ruth J. Nearing's published works, presentations and conferences attended is long and impressive, and at the heart of that list, she kept the same goal throughout her career: create opportunities for girls, women and individuals to compete, regardless of ability. Nearing, a longtime faculty member at St. Cloud State University, started the Huskies' women's competitive swimming and diving program in the early 1970s. After getting the swim program up and running, Nearing switched her focus to adapted physical education. She helped develop the Developmental/Adapted Physical Education program and served as the director until she retired. The program allowed SCSU students to work with local school children with mental, emotional and physical disabilities, and take those experiences with them into the classroom once they graduated. Nearing's work helped give women the chance to be a part of a competitive team at SCSU, and also helped give children and students of all ages and genders the ability to participate in sports.



The Kwame McDonald Media Award – Kelly Schultz, Bemidji State University Beaver Radio Network. Kelly Schultz is living her dream – and opening doors for female sports broadcasters in the process. An avid sports fan since she was young, Schultz is the radio play-by-play announcer for the Bemidji State University women's hockey team on Beaver Radio network. She was the first female play-by-play announcer in WCHA women's National Collegiate ice hockey, and she remains one of few female play-by-play announcers in college hockey across the board. In October 2018, another dream became reality for Schultz as she broadcast her first NWHL game as the voice of the Minnesota Whitecaps – the state's newly formed professional hockey team. She will serve as the team's play-by-play announcer during its inaugural season in the NWHL. She has had young girls and college-aged women ask her how they can become involved in radio and play-by-play announcing, and she says making those connections are her biggest contribution to women's sports.



The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Cynthia Hugley, Minnesota Power Hockey League. Cynthia Hugley has had an athletic career that most anyone would envy. After playing three sports for four years in high school and earning the Athena Award in 1999 at Minneapolis South High School, Hugley immediately moved on to the next level and has played 19 seasons in one of the sports she loves. Hugley played adapted hockey, soccer and softball at South High School from 1995-99, and upon graduation, she joined the U.S. Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association, where she has made her mark on the Minnesota power hockey scene, including being named USEWHA Goaltender of the Year three times. Hugley has had a successful career in the Minnesota Power Hockey League. She is currently the goalie for the Norsemen, and she is also a player and fundraising coordinator for the Saints. In her career, she has been a part of four North American Power Hockey Cup championship teams.



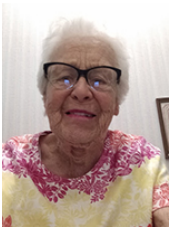
Special Merit Award – Walt Weaver, Apple Valley High School. When Walt Weaver started coaching at Apple Valley High School in 1976, he noticed a lack of respect for girls in sports. When Weaver got to Apple Valley, he remembers school officials asking if six volleyballs would be enough for practice, other coaches wanting the team to share the gym with the boys' basketball team – who wanted to use a court to shoot hoops – and a general unfairness in local media coverage, summer gym use and state tournament venues. But Weaver persisted, and coached Apple Valley to Minnesota state titles in 1985 and again in 1992. He also won a state title with Lakeville North High School in 2012. After retiring from Apple Valley following the 2006 season, Weaver was hired as a head coach in the Northern Lights Junior Volleyball club program, a position he still holds. He has won four national championships with Northern Lights, and has helped grow the program into one of the most respected club teams in the nation.



Special Merit Award – Linda Larson, University of Minnesota-Duluth. The University of Minnesota-Duluth women's athletics teams have long been respected within the region and the nation for their success. In the late 1970s, it was Linda Larson who helped get the Bulldogs started on that road. Larson started at UMD in 1975 as the school's Coordinator of Women's Athletics, and in 1976 she added coaching responsibilities for volleyball, women's basketball and softball to her resume. In six seasons with the Bulldog volleyball program, Larson won 278 games and led UMD to three AIAW Division II National Tournament berths. She guided the team to a combined 59-6 an overall record in two seasons and won the first three Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference titles in conference history (1979-81). After leaving coaching, Larson stayed at UMD as the Women's Athletic Coordinator and Senior Woman Administrator, and in 1999 she was the recipient of the President's Award for Outstanding Service for the University of Minnesota System. She was also the first recipient of the Outstanding Woman of the Year award, given to a UMD faculty/staff member annually, in 2002. In 2007, she was inducted into the UMD Athletic Hall of Fame.



Special Merit Award – Barb Leopold, Martin Luther College. When Barb Leopold first started at Martin Luther College – then Dr. Martin Luther College – she helped bring women's athletics to the school to give women more opportunities to compete and participate. By the time she left in 2014, she had helped bring Martin Luther to the top of the conference. Leopold came to Martin Luther in the 1974-75 school year and started coaching on campus. In 1978 she took over the softball program and stayed with the team through her retirement in 2014. Over the course of her 40 years at MLC, Leopold served as athletic director for two years and assistant athletic director for 35 years. She coached both men's and women's cross country for 23 seasons, basketball for 16 and softball for 37, and also served as an assistant volleyball coach for two seasons. She earned conference coach of the year honors three times in each of the sports she coached, including one final award in 2013 when she was named the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC) Softball Coach of the Year.



Special Merit Award – Darlene Palmer, Brainerd Community College. When Darlene Palmer got to Brainerd Community College in 1969 (now Central Lakes Community College), women didn't have any school-sanctioned varsity sports teams to be a part of. By the time she left in 1987, not only were there several varsity programs for women – but they also had their own conference. Palmer started women's athletics programs at BCC in 1969 and was on the committee that helped develop the state community college women's athletic conference, which became a sanctioned conference in 1974 and is now known as the Minnesota College Athletic Conference. Not only did Palmer start the women's athletic programs at BCC, she also coached most of them. She served as the school's volleyball, basketball, and softball coach until 1976 while teaching physical education classes, and in 1976 she stopped coaching basketball but added the title of Women's Athletic Director. In 1984, she helped bring golf to BCC and coached men's and women's golf until 1987. She was later inducted into both the Raider Athletic Hall of Fame and the Minnesota Community College Hall of Fame.



Minnesota Legacy Award – Grand Meadow Meadowlarks Girls Basketball Team, Grand Meadow High School. The biggest dynasty in Minnesota high school basketball is one that most don't even know existed. From 1929-1939, the Grand Meadow Meadowlarks girls' basketball team played 94 games – and won all 94. In that 11-year stretch, the Meadowlarks played between 10 and 14 games per season. They outscored opponents – which included a semi-professional team from Mason City, Iowa – by a score of 591-153. Four players remain from those Meadowlark teams, which were one of few – if any – others in the state that practiced every day. Beulah Travis Ankeny, Mae Harvey Gross, Hazel Peterson Blanchard, and June Wright Kramer all played for the Meadowlarks during their high school days, and all four are proud of their contributions to the team's spotless record.



Minnesota Legacy Award – Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, University of Minnesota. For 25 years, the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport has been conducting research and educating people around the country about the importance of girls and women not only competing in sports but coaching and being involved in sports at all levels – from right here in Minnesota. Housed in the College of Education and Human Development's School of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota, the Tucker Center was started in 1993 by Dorothy McNeill Tucker and is the first research center of its kind in the world. It is dedicated solely to the study of girls and women in sport. Since its inception in 1993, the Tucker Center has helped provide advocacy, education, and outreach on issues of both national and local significance, and has encouraged researchers, policymakers, educators, parents and practitioners to work together to improve the lives of girls and women in sport. Through that education and training, the Tucker Center has helped to bring awareness in Minnesota and at a national level not only to the inequalities girls and women face in sports, but also the positive impact that sports can have on girls and women throughout their lives.

Breaking Barriers Award – Jane Reimer-Morgan, Minnetonka High School. Jane Reimer-Morgan has been breaking barriers for girls and women in sport since her playing days in high school. She competed in both basketball and track and field at Bemidji State, and upon graduation in 1977 started her 42-year coaching career. After coaching volleyball, basketball and track & field – boys and girls – at various schools, Reimer-Morgan came to Minnetonka in 1985 and has been there ever since. She served as the school's head track and field coach from 1999-2016 and was named state Track and Field Coach of the Year in 2005 and 2014 while guiding her team to six state titles. She has served as the Skippers' head cross country coach since 1999, guiding them to two state titles. She has been inducted into five halls of fame and was a finalist for National Track and Field Coach of the Year in 2013.

Breaking Barriers Award – Chris Howell, University of Minnesota. Chris Howell has long been an advocate for student-athletes, coaches and officials. She is in her 32nd year at the University of Minnesota, and her 22nd with Athletics Administration, where she provides daily support for the Executive Associate Athletic Director, organizes major projects for the department and manages travel for post-season competitions. She is a former assistant basketball coach at both UCLA and Minnesota, was inducted into the University of Minnesota's Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006 as an assistant coach for the 1981 Big Ten Champions and in 2009 for the 1982 AIAW Region VI Champions. She served as a college and high school basketball official, is a member of the Minnesota Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership Committee, Vice President of the Minnesota High School Basketball Hall of Fame Committee, a facilitator for North Memorial Hospital Safe Journey Program and mentors young athletes and basketball officials.

Breaking Barriers Award – Maggie Mercil, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. Maggie Mercil spent a large part of her career making sure young girls in the Twin Cities had the opportunity to participate in sports. In her 26-year career with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, Mercil has created basketball, hockey, softball, volleyball and wrestling teams for girls as young as six and as old as the high school from Webber Park to Whittier Park and Kenwood to Nokomis. Mercil believes that participating in sports encourages girls to be strong, assertive and confident, and teaches them respect for one another. She loves that the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board encourages all girls to get involved.

Breaking Barriers Award – Tim Morris, Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association. When girls' hockey became a sanctioned high school sport in 1994, Tim Morris was one of the first people to get involved, and he's played a key role in the development and leadership of the sport ever since. He has served as a head girls' hockey coach at Totino-Grace, Eden Prairie and Lakeville South, and won state titles with Eden Prairie in 2006 and 2008. He has coached numerous Division I and III recruits and had six Academic Section Championship teams. He coached Team Minnesota in 2004 and 2005 and served as the president of the Minnesota Girls Hockey Coaches Association from 2001-04. A staunch defender of girls' hockey programs, Morris created, developed and grew the MGHCA website as a tool for coaches and athletes across the state. He oversees events and off-season programs and camps in order to help girls' hockey continue to grow in Minnesota. Tim is proud to have been able to serve the girls high school hockey community for 25 years, especially during this historic 25th anniversary of the Minnesota State High School League girls' hockey state tournament.

Breaking Barriers Award – Beth Johnson, Richfield High School. Beth Johnson has dedicated her life to giving boys and girls of all ages an opportunity to compete in – and excel at – sports at all levels. A three-sport athlete at Mahtomedi High School and a three-time state track and field champion, Johnson played basketball at Bethel where she received her math teaching degree – a profession she chose so she could make a difference in the lives of young people. Since 2000, Johnson has served as the boys' and girls' hurdle coach at Richfield High School, and she was an assistant girls basketball coach for 10 years. She works basketball camps, coaches traveling basketball teams and serves as the school's middle school intramural director. In her free time, she competes in various basketball and flag football leagues.

Breaking Barriers Award – Trish Reimer Kealy, Becker High School. A standout athlete in high school and college, Trish Reimer Kealy is now using that experience to help girls and women continue to break barriers. She was a standout volleyball, basketball and track and field athlete in high school, and was the first female Senior Athlete of the Year award winner at Pillager High School. She was a standout track athlete at Bemidji State and started her coaching career

in 1981. After coaching track and field, volleyball and basketball throughout the 1980s, Reimer Kealy moved to Becker in 2005 and has served as the school's head track and field and cross country coach ever since. She was named the Minnesota State Girls' Class AA cross country coach of the year in 2008 and was named a Bemidji Top 60 Athlete at the 30th Anniversary of Bemidji State Women's Athletics.

Breaking Barriers Award – Angie Iverson-Ohnstad, Lakeville South High School. Angie Iverson-Ohnstad has dedicated her life to girls' and women's athletics. The Owatonna, MN native starred as a member of the University of Minnesota basketball team. She was a four-year letter winner, two-time team captain and earned All-Big Ten honors twice. Making the transition from player to coach, Iverson-Ohnstad has coached girls' basketball in Lakeville for 13 years. After serving as an assistant at Lakeville North from 2000-06, she took over as the head coach at Lakeville South in 2011 – a position she still holds. As well as coaching high school basketball, Iverson-Ohnstad also coaches youth traveling basketball and AAU basketball. No matter what level she coaches at, she provides her athletes with an environment where they gain confidence by learning new skills and achieving success.

Breaking Barriers Award – Bonny Donzella, Minnesota Senior Games. Bonny Donzella is out to show that age is just a number – even when it comes to cycling. While dominant in cycling competitions at local and national senior games, Donzella has also found success amongst competitors of all ages. She is a four-time Minnesota Cycling Federation Rider of the Year and an 11-time state time trial champion. At the senior level, she has four medals (two gold, one silver, and one bronze) from the National Senior Games and has won gold medals in multiple events at the Minnesota Senior Games, and is a silver medalist at the USA Cycling National Masters Championships. She is a 2017 inductee into the Minnesota Senior Sports Hall of Fame.

Breaking Barriers Award – Dale Magnuson, Rochester Century High School. Dale Magnuson is a champion for girls' swimming and diving at Rochester Century, and a model of hard work and dedication. He started coaching the Rochester Century girls' swim and dive program in 2002, and in 17 seasons he has earned numerous Big 9 and Section 1AA coach-of-the-year awards. Perhaps most impressive: all of his accomplishments and his team's successes have come without a pool. In 17 years, Magnuson has grown the program from 20 athletes to 60 while shuffling pool equipment and practice gear to and from various pools in his car so that his athletes have every opportunity to advance their skills and compete in a sport that they all love.

Breaking Barriers Award – Susan Adams Loyd, Minnesota Senior Games. Susan Adams Loyd didn't have the opportunity to participate in track and field when she was growing up, but she's making up for lost time now. After taking up sprinting at the age of 45, Adams Loyd has made a name for herself in the Master's track and field world. She won a national title in the 400-meter run and is part of two American-record relay teams. She was named the USA Track and Field Minnesota Master Sprinter of the Year in both 2014 and 2016 and holds 10 state records. Since finding an opportunity to pursue what she loves, she now tries to give others those same opportunities. She is the co-chair of the University of Minnesota Track and Field fundraising committee and was the co-chair of the 2015 National Senior Games held in Minnesota.

Breaking Barriers Award – Bev Ebbecke, Orono High School. Bev Ebbecke started her career in the Wayzata School District as a physical education teacher. After nine years there, she retired to raise two girls with her husband. She later resumed her career in the Orono School District as a physical education teacher, but she quickly became much more than that. Ebbecke was a pioneer for girls' sports in Orono. After Title IX was passed, she was quickly selected to coach the basketball, volleyball, and softball teams. She had little to no experience as a coach, and the early teams spent much of their time focusing on the basics of the game, but Ebbecke – who coached from 1972-1989 – helped to lay the groundwork for what continues to be successful programs at Orono, and she continues to be a fixture at the softball and basketball team's practices and games.

Breaking Barriers Award – Judith Thompson, Mahnomen High School and Long Prairie High School. In a pre-Title IX world, Judith Thompson was breaking down barriers for girls in sports before there was national support for such a movement. Thompson started coaching high school athletics in Mahnomen, Minn., in the mid-1960s, and later coached in Long Prairie from 1969-76. When she announced practices for the school's first-ever girls' basketball and track and field teams, dozens of girls showed up, filling the small gyms and spaces proved to them. When the first competitive girls' meets were held in the early 1970s, it was Thompson who stepped in to organize and run the meets, watching as district records were established and broken by girls eager to have the chance to compete. All of Thompson's work and time came out of the goodness of her heart – she was never paid for the hundreds of hours she spent working with her teams over the course of her 10-year coaching tenure.

Breaking Barriers Award – Barbara Larsen, Minnesota Senior Games. Barbara Larsen doesn't hold all of the state Senior Games swimming records yet – but she's working on it. Larsen holds 36 of the 53 possible Minnesota Senior Games swimming records in the 65-69 and 70-74 age groups and she's also in the records books for the Iowa Senior Games as well as holding an impressive number of records in the same age groups in the Minnesota (LMSC) Masters swimming. She is a three-time individual United States Masters Swimming All-American – with her first honor coming in 1994 and the latest in 2012 – and has been a part of two All-American relays. She won four gold, one silver, and one bronze medal at the 2015 National Senior Games and has 83 Top-10 USMS swims. In 1997, Larsen received the USMS Dorothy Donnelly Service Award, in 2016 she was inducted into the Minnesota Senior Sports Association Hall of Fame, and in 2018 she was inducted in the Minnesota Masters Swimming LMSC Hall of Fame. She is active in the Rochester Masters Swim Club and teaches swimming locally.

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