

27th Annual Minnesota Girls and Women in Sports Day

20 athletes and sports leaders to be recognized

Wednesday, February 6 – 12 p.m. at the Minnesota State Capitol

Some of Minnesota's most inspiring and influential student-athletes, coaches and athletic leaders will be recognized at an award ceremony on Wednesday, February 6, at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. The award ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with the 27th 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 2013 ceremony will be honoring 20 individuals who will be receiving 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 - Anna Anderson, Roseville Public Schools, coach and official. Anderson was a long-time physical educator in the Roseville Public Schools. She coached basketball at Fridley High School and softball at both Inver Hills Community College and North Hennepin Community College. As an athlete, Anna played softball in the 1967 Pan American Games, winning a Bronze Medal. She also "lettered" in volleyball, basketball and softball while attending the University of Minnesota. Later, she was a Minnesota State High School Meet Track & Field Judge and Head Scorer at the State Meet, while she served as the supervisor of volleyball officials for the State High School Tournament. She founded the Metro Volleyball Officials Association in 1974, managed it for 25 years, and to this day assigns officials for both high school and college games throughout the metro area. Nationally, Anderson served on the volleyball rules committee and was the Volleyball Observer for the Big Ten Officials at the U of M. She was inducted into the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame in 1991, the Minnesota State Volleyball Hall of Fame in 1997, and the Minnesota State Softball Hall of Fame in 2012.



The Girls' and Women's Sports in the Media Award - Donny Henn, Rochester Post Bulletin. Henn has been a sports writer for the Rochester Post Bulletin for nearly 30 years. He has been honored 34 times with awards from the Associated Press, Minnesota Newspaper Association, the National Newspaper Association, Society of Professional Journalists and the Small Newspaper Group. In 2012 he received the Merit Award from the Minnesota High School Section 1AA Athletic Administrators in recognition for his contributions to the athletic programs of Region 1AA. Henn is being honored for his exemplary coverage of girls' sports in Southeastern Minnesota, particularly his piece reviewing Minnesota's history of girls athletics for the 40th anniversary of Title IX.



The Wilma Rudolph Award for Courage and Inspiration – Amy Gardner, Robbinsdale adapted sports cooperative, Gardner has been involved in adapted sports for much of her life, in fact, she was responsible for bringing adapted sports to her high school. She successfully petitioned the school board for funding to allow her Mound-Westonka School District to join the Robbinsdale adapted sports cooperative. Throughout high school, she played with The Robbins on successful teams in floor hockey, soccer, basketball and softball, winning many State Championships and lettering in all four sports. Following high school, Amy has continued her passion for athletics with the Courage Center traveling basketball team and Special Olympics teams in floor hockey and assisted bowling. Her motto is, "EVERYONE should get out and play! Don't let anything stop you!"



Special Merit Award – Marilyn Pearson Florian, Augsburg College. Pearson-Florian has devoted her entire professional life to serving Augsburg College. She has been a student-athlete, a basketball and volleyball coach, an assistant professor and chair of the physical education department and an athletic administrator. She has been a constant advocate for opportunities for young women. Since 1988, she has led a steady increase in both the number of sports offered for women and the level of participation by female athletes. Under her leadership, Augsburg added women's golf, cross country and swimming. In 1995, when she proposed the start of women's varsity ice hockey, Augsburg became the first intercollegiate program in the midwest. She also initiated the first women being inducted into the Augsburg Athletic Hall of Fame. Pearson-Florian has served on the Board of the Minnesota Association for Health, Physical Education and Dance and has lobbied at the State Capitol for increased time requirements for health and physical education in the public schools. She was inducted into the Augsburg Athletic Hall of Fame in 1997 and was named to the 1970's all-decade team as part of the college's 40th anniversary of women's athletics.



Special Merit Award – Toni St. Pierre, Title IX and girls' and women's sports advocate, Hopkins. St. Pierre was breaking barriers and blazing the way for opportunities for girls and women from her days in high school. Since teams for girls were few and far between before Title IX, competing with the boys was one of the few options for talented girls. St. Pierre and Peg Brenden convinced the ACLU to represent them in a lawsuit before Title IX was being considered by the Federal Government. The victory allowed her to compete on the boys cross running and skiing teams at Hopkins Eisenhower High School -- making national news. She went on to graduate from the College of St. Benedict, unfortunately before they started their cross country program. After college she became a fixture in the running world, competing in local and national marathons. She also started competing in triathlons in 2009 and qualified for nationals in her age group. St. Pierre has been inducted into the Hopkins High School Hall of Fame. She credits the passage of Title IX with giving young girls and women the motivation and encouragement to be active in sports.



Special Merit Award – Faith Johnson Patterson, North and DeLaSalle High Schools. Johnson-Patterson has been one of Minnesota's most successful and inspiring girl's high school coaches. She has won seven State High School Basketball Championships—five at North High School and two at DeLaSalle High School. Her teams have participated in 13 State Tournaments and she has 20 former players who have earned Division I basketball scholarships. Her players have gone on to graduate from college and become role models and mentors for other young women. She is the founder and director of "Striving for Success, Inner City Basketball Camps for Girls," and has been intimately involved in many local community organizations. In addition to her coaching, Faith works as an Employment Support Consultant for Goodwill Easterseals. In 2012, Faith was inducted into the Minnesota Girls Basketball Association Hall of Fame and was also named among the "Top 5 Best High School Tournament Coaches" by the Minnesota State High School League.



Special Merit Award – Cheryl Reeve and the Minnesota Lynx. Since their run to win the WNBA World Championship in 2011, Coach Reeve and the Lynx have become the media darlings in the Minnesota sports scene. The rise of the Lynx has brought with it an appreciation for the athletic abilities that can result when young women are given opportunities to compete. Coach Reeve has taken a talented group of young women and molded them into a team which epitomizes all the best qualities coaches hope to instill. They display teamwork, unselfishness, feisty determination, incredible athletic ability, discipline, genuine caring for each other and on top of it all, they are phenomenal role models. Anyone who has followed the Lynx since their inception knows that much of their rise in prominence comes from the leadership of a determined and talented woman, Coach Reeve. It has been a delight to see the Lynx play before cheering, sold-out crowds of fans...they are the perfect example for the legacy of Title IX.

2013 Breaking Barriers Awards

Dawn Engebretson	Rockford Area Schools	Michael Miller	Van Cleve Recreation Center
Mary Beth Holmberg	Morris Area Schools	Ann Miller	Pipestone High School
Brenda Holmgren	Elk River School District	Mary Beth Mitteco	Totino Grace High School
Tracy Hrouda	Harding High School	Jen Rademacher	Robbinsdale Cooper
Dr. Jill P. Johnson	Wayzata Public Schools	Lynn Swanson	Vadnais Heights Parks and Recreation program
Wendy Kohler	Alexandria Public Schools	Doreen Zierer	Bagley High School
Janna LaFountaine	College of St. Benedict		

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

For more information about the event contact: Kelly Anderson Diercks - diercks@augsborg.edu - (612)-330-1245 or find us online at <http://ngwsd-mn.com/>

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Dawn Engebretson, Rockford Area Schools -- Engebretson has worked in the Rockford Area Schools system since 1992. She started as a gymnastics coach and volunteered as the junior high softball coach. Her varied roles have constantly expanded, thereby increasing athletic opportunities for girls in her community. She has served as head volleyball coach, organized and directed a youth volleyball club, coached summer softball and served as highly successful head high school softball coach. Engebretson also took on duties as the MSHSL 5A Section Representative.

Mary Beth Holmberg, Morris Area Schools – Holmberg has been a person of many “firsts” in the Morris Area Schools. She started the first girl’s softball team in 1981, the first girl’s basketball team, the first girls swimming and diving team and the first girl’s hockey team. Holmberg has served for 17 years as the Morris Athletic Director, coached the softball team for 32 years while racking up more than 475 wins and served as the Minnesota State High School League 6A Athletic Director Representative. Highly respected by her peers, Holmberg won accolades as the Morris Area Teacher of the Year and Region 6A Athletic Director of the Year.

Brenda Holmgren, Elk River School District – Holmgren has worked in the Elk River School District as a coach and social studies teacher for 31 years. While coaching volleyball and track she also served as the 7AA Girls Sports Representative to the MSHSL. She was a member of the MSHSL Officials Advisory Committee and the only female on the MSHSL Steering Committee for the 2010 “Officiate Minnesota” conference. Holmgren has distinguished herself as a basketball official and mentor to many aspiring young women officials. For 26 years she has officiated high school basketball, including more than 10 State Tournaments, collegiate Division II and III games and the NCAA Division II Final Four. She has been a pioneer in forging opportunities for women officials.

Tracy Hrouda, Harding High School – Hrouda is an Attendance Specialist at Harding High School in St. Paul where she has been the head coach of the girls badminton team since 1996 and the volleyball team since 1997. She has earned Conference Coach of the Year honors on numerous occasions and her badminton team has won eight Conference Championships and nine State Championships. More important than the wins, she consistently has more than 70 girls actively participating on her badminton team. She has never cut a player and believes it is critical to give all the girls a meaningful experience.

Dr. Jill P. Johnson – Johnson grew up breaking barriers as a multi-sport athlete in the early days of Title IX at Glenco High School and then at Minnesota State, Mankato. She moved into her role as an educational leader in the public schools, first at Minneapolis South and now as the Executive Director for Teaching and Learning in the Wayzata Public Schools. Throughout her professional career she has been a strong advocate for supporting and enhancing athletic opportunities for girls and young women at all levels. Johnson has been a tireless voice and leader for the expansion of athletic opportunities for young women.

Wendy Kohler, Alexandria Public Schools – Kohler has been a teacher and coach in the Alexandria Public Schools since 1985. She has coached basketball, softball and cross country, while being a role model and mentor for thousands for young people. In Alexandria, she incorporated the “Top 20 Philosophy” which has had an enormous impact on changing the culture within the school. Her support for young women, teaching life skills while encouraging them to reach high for their goals, has compassionately influenced the future of the young women in the Alexandria Schools.

Janna LaFountaine, College of St. Benedict – LaFountaine was a standout gymnast and contender for the 1976 Olympic Team, but deemed “too tall” to make the team. After graduating from Gustavus, she coached gymnastics, swimming and softball at St. Cloud Apollo High School while also mentoring new gymnastics judges and advocating for equitable opportunities. In 2002 she began teaching and coaching tennis at the College of St. Benedict. As a professor, she developed course work on gender, culture and sport which has focused around Title IX and encouraging students to explore their own sport experiences. Most recently Janna helped lead a campus community celebration for the 40th anniversary of Title IX.

Michael Miller, Van Cleve Recreation Center – Miller has been coaching volleyball for young girls at Van Cleve Recreation Center in Southeast Minneapolis for 25 years. His players describe him as kind, thoughtful, giving and selfless. For years Miller has been willing to put his own money toward uniforms, pizza parties, volleyballs, equipment and transportation when needed. His teams have been successful, winning numerous championships and racking up numerous undefeated seasons. Beyond the x’s and o’s, he teaches life lessons, personal responsibility and inspires a love for sports with young girls who may never have had opportunities.

Ann Miller, Pipestone High School – Miller began teaching and coaching at Pipestone High School in 1970 and made an immediate impact from the day she arrived. Prior to formalized athletic opportunities for girls at the high school level, Miller began the GAA program and then began the volleyball team. She was also the first girls basketball coach and then later coached track and field. Miller found success in all of her sports, but her volleyball teams specifically won District and Region Championships and qualified for the first ever Girls Volleyball State Tournament in 1977. Her basketball team blazed a similar path of success and her mentoring of young women continues to this day. In 2009 Miller was inducted into the Pipestone/Jasper Hall of Fame and in 2011 was honored by the Section 3A Girls Coaches Association for her dedication, loyalty and service to high school education, athletics and volleyball.

Mary Beth Mitteco, Totino Grace High School – Mitteco taught physical education and coached at Totino Grace High School for 30 years. In the early days of Title IX, Mitteco was a strong advocate for competitive girl’s sports at Totino Grace HS, while coaching softball and volleyball. As a teacher, she promoted life-time sports and started a Physical Education Aide program to mentor girls who had an interest in physical education. She spearheaded the selection of the Athena Award winner every year and made a “Wall of Fame” to promote and recognize Totino award winners and student-athletes who went on to collegiate athletic careers. She has been a role model for young women, urging them toward healthy life styles.

Jen Rademacher, Robbinsdale Cooper – Rademacher has been a physical education teacher and basketball coach at Robbinsdale Cooper for 15 years. She learned the importance of athletic opportunities for girls early on as a high school athlete, then as collegiate basketball star at NDSU where they won four consecutive National Championships. She has been a role model and advocate for high school girls’ opportunities, particularly promoting girls basketball. She has given back to the community through her work as chair of the Girls HS Basketball Clinic, Section Representative for Girls Basketball, a member of the All-Star Series Committee and as President of the Girls Basketball Coaches Association.

Lynn Swanson, Vadnais Heights Parks and Recreation – Swanson has been a volunteer coach with the Vadnais Heights Parks and Recreation program for the past 13 years. She started volunteering for her daughter’s softball program and has been going back yearly, donating over 100 hours of coaching each year. Lynn has accumulated over 1300 volunteer hours, coaching girls’ softball, indoor and outdoor soccer. Her love of sports and young kids has been a driving force for the Vadnais Heights Park and Recreation programs, enabling them to offer athletic opportunities for young girls in the Vadnais Heights community.

Doreen Zierer, Bagley High School – Zierer has spent her life as a role model and advocate for athletic opportunities for young women. Most recently she was the Athletic Director and Title IX Director at Bagley High School and also the Elementary School Dean of Students. She has coached college basketball at NDSU and Bemidji State and served as the Athletics Director at Bemidji State. Zierer has led efforts at Bagley to raise operating funds for all sports. She has worked tirelessly to make sure all students have appropriate uniforms and equipment. She has been the face everyone sees at sporting events, making her a truly admired and cherished figure in the community.