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UNIVERSITY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2025

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WELCOME

FROM THE ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION

Here's to 20 years!

Welcome to the 2025 Musial Awards presented by Maryville University. Thank you for attending our 20th anniversary show.

This is a night to salute great stories and great people – and to look back on two decades of celebrating sportsmanship and honoring the best of us. Humbly beginning as the Citizenship Through Sports Alliance Awards Dinner... continuing as the National Sportsmanship Awards... and now as the Musial Awards, I wonder each year if we can match our previous event, and each year, I am more impressed and gratified by the incredible people and acts of sportsmanship that we find. The recipients of the Musial Award not only represent all that's right in sports, they embody the human spirit. And in times like these, with all their challenges, it's meaningful to come together and be reminded of the good around us. We salute our honorees, past and present, for uplifting us through their extraordinary sportsmanship.

It is a true privilege for us to honor this year's award recipients. And it is a great joy that our two top honorees are women. Kristi Yamaguchi is the model of grace and grit – an elegant mentor, trailblazer, and champion. Jen Pawol is the epitome of perseverance, hard work and dedication who broke the gender barrier as Major League Baseball's first female umpire. And as always, the stories and the people you aren't already familiar with will make you laugh, make you cry, and dazzle you with their sportsmanship and goodness. Get your Musial Awards tissues ready; we're in for another special night.

And this year, as a special bonus, we will be inspired by "re-celebrating" some of the best moments from our 20-year past. We're excited to welcome back some of our all-time favorite honorees and sportsmanship "greatest hits."

There are heroes on the stage, and we have our own heroes in the seats and behind the scenes. Among them are Mark Lombardi, the guardian angel of the Musial Awards...dozens of friends from Maryville University,

our presenting sponsor...many members of the St. Louis Sports Commission...and countless teammates, producers, event partners, sponsors, volunteers, staff, families, and fans. All have worked together to create this homegrown event and build it into a world-class production with national reach and widespread impact.

We also and always extend our gratitude to the entire Musial family for entrusting us to honor Stan in a manner that matches the excellence he embodied. They make us feel like family, and we share a collective joy in being able to further Stan's legacy while inspiring people across the country to be good sports.

Finally, as we say each year... As you watch tonight's show and leave the theater, think about creating your own "Musial Moment." How can each of us channel the emotion and inspiration we feel during the Musial Awards to accomplish our own good deeds? How can we use the model Stan set to help one another and improve our community? It doesn't need to happen on the playing field. Your Musial Moment – a simple act of kindness, compassion, selflessness or generosity – can happen anywhere.

Thank you all for joining us. Enjoy the show!



Marc Schreiber
St. Louis Sports Commission President

The St. Louis Sports Commission is the privately-funded nonprofit organization that grows, strengthens and moves St. Louis forward through sports. The organization uses the power of sports to enhance the area's quality of life and generate economic and social benefit for the St. Louis region.

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Dayton Flyer Pep Band (2023)



Billy Crystal & Bob Costas (2024)



Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt (2018)



Mallory Holtman, Liz Wallace & Sara Tucholsky (2008)

20TH Musial AWARDS[®] ANNIVERSARY

REFLECTING ON 20 YEARS OF CELEBRATING EXTRAORDINARY SPORTSMANSHIP

BY KATHLEEN NELSON

In addition to being the picture of elegance on ice and this year's Stan Musial Lifetime Achievement honoree, Kristi Yamaguchi is an accomplished author. Among her five volumes is a children's book titled "Cara's Kindness." The book tells the story of Cara, a figure skating cat. Cara can't find the right music for her program, but while searching, she teaches a friend to skate. She requests he pay the kindness forward. He does so with another friend, making the same request.

The charming story holds a special place in our collective hearts. After all, sportsmanship is rooted in kindness. And the book's lesson – "caring and passing on a small kindness, one good deed at a time, will come full circle" – hits especially close to home when reflecting on the Musial Awards' journey over the past 20 years.

The St. Louis Sports Commission first hosted the event in 2005 with the ungainly name Citizenship Through Sports Alliance Awards Dinner. Honoring almost 250 good sports, the event's venue and name varied. The constants remain the virtues in those stories that Stan embodied: fair play, compassion, generosity, selflessness, class, humility, dignity, grace, and kindness.

The emotional tug of each story necessitated adding a pack of tissues in every seat's cupholder. They have corralled the tears from

stories that inspire us and tug at our hearts through the spectrum of emotions.

We've shed tears of laughter when Billy Crystal gently roasted Bob Costas, and of unabashed joy when Dr. Willie Morris and the University of Dayton Pep Band serenaded us in the aisles, after being honored for playing for other teams in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.



Cody's Wish & Team Godolphin (2023)



Laila Anderson (2019)



Amaliya Zafar & Aliyah Charbonier (2017)



Brett Phillips & Chloe Grimes (2022)

We've wept in grief at the loss of Cody Dorman, who was born with a rare genetic disorder but formed a mystical bond with the wildly successful thoroughbred Cody's Wish. Cody died just after seeing his namesake run – and win – his last race.

We've caught our breath at the longevity and persistent grace of Sister Jean Delores Schmidt, who served as chaplain for the Loyola University men's basketball team, until retiring and passing away this year at age 106. She remains forever young.

We've dabbed our eyes in pride when boxer Aliyah Charbonier stood up for rival Amaliya Zafar, who was disqualified for wearing a hijab, then actually helped change an international rule of the sport.

We've cried more than once over acts of kindness initiated by Meghan Vogel McCormick, Mallory Holtman-Fletcher and Liz Wallace and repeated through the years. Following their lead, competitors have extended a helping hand to an injured rival over and over on fields and tracks for more than a decade. It never gets old.

We close this circle by bringing back past honorees, including Henry Frasca, Chloe Grimes, Lonni Alameda, Ty Koehn, and Laila Anderson. Their roads have continued to twist – and in some cases, challenge them. But they continue to rise above, gracing us with their presence and inspiring us anew.

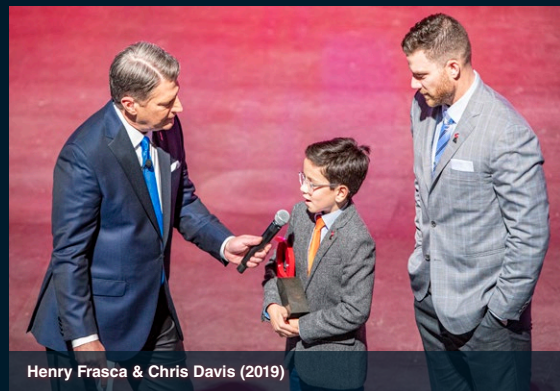
Our duty to share their good deeds drives us, and we are blessed to be the curators of these acts of sportsmanship. Just as Cara finds the perfect music, thanks to the thoughtful deed of a friend of a friend of a friend (oops, sorry, late spoiler alert), we receive so much more than we give. The honorees reinvigorate our faith in humanity and transform this job into more than a labor of love. It's a reason to get up tomorrow and do it all over again for 2026, 2027, 2028 ...

May we complete another full circle. May we continue to pay it forward for at least two decades more.

Retired St. Louis Post-Dispatch sportswriter Kathleen Nelson has been a key member of the Musial Awards team as the program's contributing writer and author of its honoree profiles. She is the conscience of the Musial Awards.



Ty Koehn (2018)



Henry Frasca & Chris Davis (2019)



Lonni Alameda (2018)



ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION



The Musial Awards is produced annually in St. Louis by the St. Louis Sports Commission and the National Sportsmanship Foundation. Meet the organizations responsible for the most inspiring night in sports:

The St. Louis Sports Commission is the independent, privately-funded nonprofit organization that makes St. Louis a better place to live, visit, work and play through sports. Its efforts focus on attracting, creating and managing major sporting events for the St. Louis region. The organization uses the power of sports to enhance the area's quality of life and to create economic and social benefit for the community.

Since its inception in 1989, the Sports Commission has fulfilled its mission by producing high-profile events that generate excitement, revenue and positive exposure for the region. The organization helps make St. Louis a stronger and more vibrant community. It adds to the impact of the area's professional and collegiate teams to make a great sports city even better. By achieving the highest level of success with its events, the Sports Commission has fortified St. Louis' status as an outstanding sports destination.

The Sports Commission's accomplishments include hosting the NCAA Men's and Women's Final Fours, NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships (9 times), NCAA Frozen Four, SEC Men's Basketball Tournament, PGA Championship, Missouri vs. Illinois Arch Rivalry football series, U.S. Figure Skating Championships, U.S. Olympic Diving Trials, and the record-breaking 2021 U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Trials (just to name a few).

Reflecting a vision to be a leader and innovator in addition to an event producer, the Sports Commission takes the lead in celebrating and furthering St. Louis' Olympic legacy as host of the 1904 Summer Games, the first Olympics in America. The organization represents St. Louis in the World Union of Olympic Cities and has recently implemented several visible projects that raise the profile and impact of the region's Olympic affiliation. The Sports Commission aims to positively impact St. Louis through its opportunities as an Olympic city.

The Sports Commission also operates the St. Louis Sports Foundation, its 501c3 charitable affiliate. The Foundation focuses on promoting sportsmanship in St. Louis and fostering a culture of kindness, respect, civility and selflessness. Foundation programs also strive to make youth sports more enjoyable and to create positive environments for kids to play sports so they stay active and lead healthier, happier lives. The Musial Awards is at the forefront of the Sports Commission's commitment to sportsmanship.

A catalyst for civic benefit, economic development and charitable good, the Sports Commission is recognized as a leader in its industry and in the community. Among several honors, the organization has been selected as the national sports commission of the year three times (2002, 2005 and 2013). The recognition is a testament to the Sports Commission's value to St. Louis and its efforts to help grow, strengthen and advance the region through sports. For more information on the Sports Commission and its events, visit stlsports.org.

THE STORY BEHIND THE **MUSIAL AWARDS**

Out of the heartland of America, a unique and important tradition of celebrating extraordinary sportsmanship has been established. Since 2005, the nation's best sports have come together in St. Louis for the Musial Awards, the most important awards in sports.

Named for Baseball Hall of Famer Stan Musial, the Musial Awards recognize the year's greatest moments of sportsmanship and honor those in sports who embody class and character. The event takes place annually the Saturday before Thanksgiving at the historic 3,000-seat Stifel Theatre in Downtown St. Louis. It is produced by the St. Louis Sports Commission and the National Sportsmanship Foundation. In addition to keeping Stan The Man's legacy alive, the mission of the Musial Awards is to inspire kindness, selflessness, integrity and civility in sports and society.

The roots of the Musial Awards go back to 1999 when the Citizenship Through Sports Alliance (CTSA) launched an awards program recognizing character in sport. In 2005, the event moved to St. Louis. A year later it was renamed the National Sportsmanship Awards. In 2012, with the blessing of the Musial family, organizers announced the event and its awards would be named in honor of the St. Louis hero and Cardinals legend – one of the greatest players in baseball history and the ultimate good sport.

Since 2011, Maryville University has served as the presenting sponsor of the Musial Awards. The school's involvement, leadership and generosity have helped make the show one of the great nights in all of sports.

NATIONAL **SPORTSMANSHIP** FOUNDATION

Expanding on its efforts in St. Louis, the St. Louis Sports Commission launched the National Sportsmanship Foundation in 2012 to change the way society views and values sportsmanship. The groundwork for the organization's creation was established a year earlier when the Sports Commission was asked to take over management of the Citizenship Through Sports Alliance. After developing a new strategic direction for CTSA, the Sports Commission rebranded the organization. The National Sportsmanship Foundation was born.

Today, the 501c3 nonprofit aims to empower people to lead healthier, happier lives through the values of sportsmanship. Leveraging the Musial Awards and other platforms, it wants to inspire people across the nation to be good sports.

St. Louis is regarded as a great place to raise a family; its fans are known as good sports. So it makes sense for St. Louis to be the epicenter of this national drive. The presence of such an important movement can ultimately enhance St. Louis' stature around the country and can help the Sports Commission further contribute to the area's quality of life.



ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION

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Chair

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President
Musial Awards Executive Producer

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Director, St. Louis Sports Foundation

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Musial Awards Program Contributing Writer

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MUSIAL AWARDS

LOMBARDI LEGEND



ROBERTO CLEMENTE

1934 - 1972

In honor of former Maryville University President Mark Lombardi, who has had a transformative impact on the event, the Musial Awards announced in 2024 the establishment of a new tradition: the annual recognition of a "Lombardi Legend." This provides the opportunity to celebrate iconic sports figures who met the Musial standard, but we never had the chance to personally honor at the event. Mark has long emphasized the importance of remembering these sports heroes, highlighting their commitment to sportsmanship, and ensuring that younger generations know of their impact. We hope that with the Lombardi Legend recognition, we accomplish just that. We're proud to recognize our inaugural Lombardi Legend, the great Roberto Clemente.

From 1955 to 1972, Roberto Clemente, outfielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates, owned right field in Major League Baseball. He was an outstanding hitter with a lifetime .317 average and 3,000 hits. He was a 15-time All-Star, two-time world champion, World Series MVP, 12-time Gold Glove

winner and four-time NL batting champion. More than 50 years after he died, he still holds the major league record for assists from right field at 266. For anyone who saw him play, he was the greatest defensive outfielder in baseball history.

Clemente was also a pioneer. As the first great Latin American ballplayer after integration, he blazed a path for generations. He was incredibly skilled, fiercely proud of his heritage, and mindful of the example he was establishing for generations to come.

He was also a man of deep generosity and selflessness. In December 1972, he was killed when the plane he chartered to take emergency relief supplies to Nicaragua after an earthquake, crashed. Today, Major League Baseball honors him annually by presenting the Roberto Clemente Award to the player who best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement, and contribution to his team.



The Musial Awards is proud to have CBS Sports as its official television partner. CBS will air the 2025 Musial Awards throughout the country as a one-hour special on Sunday, December 28 (check local listings for the airtime in your market). The broadcast will also run twice on CBS Sports Network and later as a local encore presentation on KSDK 5 On Your Side in St. Louis. This is the seventh year for the Musial Awards to air on the CBS Television Network.



In addition to its partnership with CBS Sports, the Musial Awards is pleased to have Al Roker Entertainment (ARE) as its broadcast production partner. Guided by 14-time Emmy winner and iconic television personality Al Roker, ARE is an industry-leading producer of original, award-winning TV programs and storytelling content.



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THE Musial AWARDS®

/// PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS ///

THE STAN MUSIAL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR SPORTSMANSHIP

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 2014 | Joe Torre |
| 2015 | Arnold Palmer |
| 2016 | Cal Ripken Jr. |
| 2017 | Jackie Joyner-Kersey |
| 2018 | Jim Thome |
| 2019 | Nadia Comaneci & Bart Conner |
| 2020 | Hank Aaron |
| 2021 | Wayne & Janet Gretzky |
| 2022 | Albert Pujols |
| 2023 | Bill Bradley |
| 2024 | Bob Costas |

THE MUSIAL AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 2013 | St. Louis Cardinals |
| 2014 | Mo'ne Davis |
| 2015 | Lauren Hill |
| 2016 | Tamika Catchings |
| 2018 | Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt |
| 2019 | Laila Anderson |
| 2020 | Bubba Wallace |
| 2021 | Zaila Avant-garde |
| 2022 | Warrick Dunn |
| 2023 | Adam Wainwright |
| 2024 | Larry Fitzgerald, Jr. |

2024

Jaydin Blackwell
Dave Mislán
Lindy Noel
Salvador Perez
Breasha Pruitt
Lake Mary Little League All-Stars
Pitt County Girls Softball

2023

Noah Bjerke-Wieser
Cody's Wish & Team Godolphin
Chapel Cunningham & Leah Gonzalez
Emilia Rossatti
Southern University Athletics
University of Dayton Flyer Pep Band

2022

Brittany Bowe
Isaiah Jarvis
Mike Lanzillotta
Demeria Moore, Jorja Roberson,
Jasmyin Stamper, Cara Robertson
& Syrianna Jones
Brett Phillips & Chloe Grimes
Nadia Popovici
Frank Viverito

2021

Mutaz Barshim & Gianmarco Tamberi
Buffalo Bills Fans (represented by
William Burke & Dan Konopski)
Lavel Dumont
Bryce Harper
Rebel Hays
Mario Hoefler
LSU Gymnastics
Mark Lombardi

2020

Laurent Duvernay-Tardif
Ireland Lacrosse
Madison Keys
Chris King & Max Gerschman
Sabrina O'Heron
Josh Speidel
Kellyn Taylor, Aliphine Tuliamuk,
& Stephanie Bruce



Bob Costas (2024)



Bill Bradley & Adam Wainwright (2023)



Albert Pujols (2022)



Wayne & Janet Gretzky (2021)



Hank Aaron (2020)



Nadia Comaneci & Bart Conner (2019)



Jackie Joyner-Kersey (2017)

PAST RECIPIENTS

2019

Jerod Aker & Jeff Shillington
Marek Bush
Chris Davis
Forest Lake Christian School
Girls Volleyball
Henry Frasca
Chris Kerber
Darius Kruah
Laura Mazur & Jessica Robertson

2018

Lonni Alameda
Jordan Bohannon
Gerald Hodges
Ty Koehn
Ozzie Smith
Kaiden Whaley
Kate Wynja

2017

Michael Bidwill
Kaleb Carter & Carla Collins
Aliyah Charbonier
Abbey D'Agostino
Carl Edwards
Matthew Garcia
Paul Mainieri
Dion Puthoff
Krista Young, Levi Thompson &
The Hawkeye Wave

2016

Amed Castro-Chavez
Joel Jensen
Nic Nelson
Judie Offerdahl, Sarah Myhre & Shelby Baker
Travis Rudolph
Buck Smith
Jack Sock
Hayes & Tammy Stripling
Charlie Wilson

2015

John Blaine & Matt Woodrum
Jason Boulais
Keaton Hamin
Ernie Johnson
Mike Matheny
Tim Smyczek
Chase Vazquez, Scooter Terrien &
Miles Rodriguez
University of Virginia & Loyola
Marymount Women's Rowing
Wichita State University Cheerleading

2014

David Belisle
Cari Hampton
James Hawkins
Derek Herber
Jason Millard
Olivet (Mich.) Youth Football
Nathane Simniok
Malik Stewart
Josh Zuchowski
Marc Schreiber
Scott Suppelsa
Eric Voss

2013

Casey Mack
Ethan McConnell
Kirsten Moore & Westmont College
Fraser Valley Fusion '97
Bri Ebenroth
Steve Bonastia & Seckman Softball
The University of Nebraska
Mike Bush

2012

College of the Ozarks Women's
Basketball Team
Demetrius de Moors
Lee Gibson & Colorado Academy
Rashawn King
John Mohrmann & Saint Louis
Priory Soccer
Rob Nugent & Washington College
Greg Schiano & the Tampa Bay
Buccaneers
Nate, Nick, Kim & Pat Smith
Meghan Vogel

2011

Camp Kilpatrick Mustangs Basketball Team
Daniel Crum
Jocelyn Fischer
Bryane Heaberlin & the United States
U-17 Women's Soccer Team
John Huether
Manchester (Conn.) High School
Wrestling Team
Northwestern College (Minn.)
Women's Volleyball Team
Tyler Parks & Mike Smith
Roncalli (Ind.) High School Softball Team
Andria Scheese
Skyline (Ala.) High School
University of Albany Men's Basketball Team
Rick Wallace
Tom Walter
Grant Whybark



From top down: Jim Thome & Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt (2018); Cal Ripken Jr. (2016), Arnold Palmer (2015), Ernie Johnson with Taelor & Sydnie Scott (2015), Joe Torre & Mo'ne Davis (2014)

2009

Albert Pujols
 Azusa Pacific University
 DeKalb (Ill.) High School Boys'
 Basketball Team
 Grapevine (Texas) Faith High School
 Football Team
 Monte Vista (Calif.) High School
 Ohio State University
 Anthony DiCarlo
 Aleksandra Mackiewicz
 Courtney Teatro
 Geoffrey Kalanzi
 Shawn Crawford
 New York Yankees
 Minneapolis South High School
 Nordic Ski Team
 Maryville University Baseball Team
 Jared Ingram

2008

Allan H. (Bud) Selig
 Edwardsville (Ill.) High School
 Wrestling Team
 Framingham State College (Mass.)
 Women's Soccer Team
 Brian Hung
 The Lake Fenton Five: David Bittinger,
 Lucas Hasenfratz, Jake Kirk,
 Ethan Merivirta & Matthew
 Taneyhill
 Christopher Glaze
 Marvin Stoner
 John Fernandez &
 The Wounded Warrior Project
 Craig Biggio
 Rick Horton
 Chris Draft
 Manny Legace
 Jeff Wedding
 Warner Robins, Ga.,
 Little League Baseball Team
 John Graf & Connor Sherwood
 Mallory Holtman & Liz Wallace
 Nicholas Kirkpatrick

2007

Tony Gwynn
 Sarah Dawn Schettler & Mike Rose
 Kelly Schmidt & Russ Davis
 Angela Verbeelen
 Army Women's Basketball Team
 Rainer Martens
 Trevor Bunch & Travis Jones
 Carlos Delgado
 Josh Kinney
 Marc Bulger
 Jamal Mayers
 Chad Riegel

2006

Joey Cheek
 Philip Barr & Lauren Clary
 John Smoltz
 Teresa Clark & Brandon Cole
 Grant Hill
 Adam Van Houten
 Joshua Harter & Jim Johnson
 Patrick Lepper
 Taj McWilliams-Franklin
 Bill Byrne & Texas A&M University
 Pat Hewitt
 Lea Plarski
 Lou Brock
 Isaac Bruce
 Hollis Thomas

2005

Torry Holt
 Danny Gathings, Chanda Gunn &
 the Mesa State Football Team
 Edgar Martinez
 Jim Kessler & Amanda Larsen
 P.J. Brown
 Jamie Vest & Shane Laurie
 Doug Weight
 Kayla Shaul
 Paul Hamm
 Teresa Edwards
 Wood Selig & Tim Van Alstine
 Daniel Gould, Ph.D.

2004

Darren Woodson
 Eric Montalvo & Kristen Zaleski
 Jamie Moyer
 Jessica Stollings
 Ray Allen
 Rachel Butler
 Marty Turco
 Theresa Berry
 Michelle Kwan
 Edna Campbell
 Vince Dooley
 Jay Coakley

2003

Shelton Quarles
 Paul Moore & University at Buffalo
 Women's Soccer Team
 Jim Thome
 Jessica Lenderman
 Bob Lanier
 Revae Green & Tyler Yonge
 Adam Graves
 Melanie Mendrop
 Apolo Anton Ohno
 Jennifer Gillom
 Andy Geiger
 Jody Brylinsky

2002

Jerome Bettis
 Jeffrey A. Steele & Heather Weinhold
 Curt Schilling
 Jodi Henderson
 Steve Smith
 Brian Hartley & Devin Reed
 Brian Mullen
 Jermaine Harris
 Vonetta Flowers
 Sue Wicks
 Donald Marsh & Velma Pruett

2001

George Audu, Safiya L. Ingram
 & Lindsay Morton
 Al Leiter
 Luke Anderson
 Samuel Perkins
 Robyn Michelle Detty &
 Christopher Ryan Thomas
 James Flanigan
 Stan Mikita
 Mindy K. Madewell
 Rulon Gardner
 Suzie McConnell Serio
 John Byers, Gregg A. Hiland &
 Lori J. Satterfield

2000

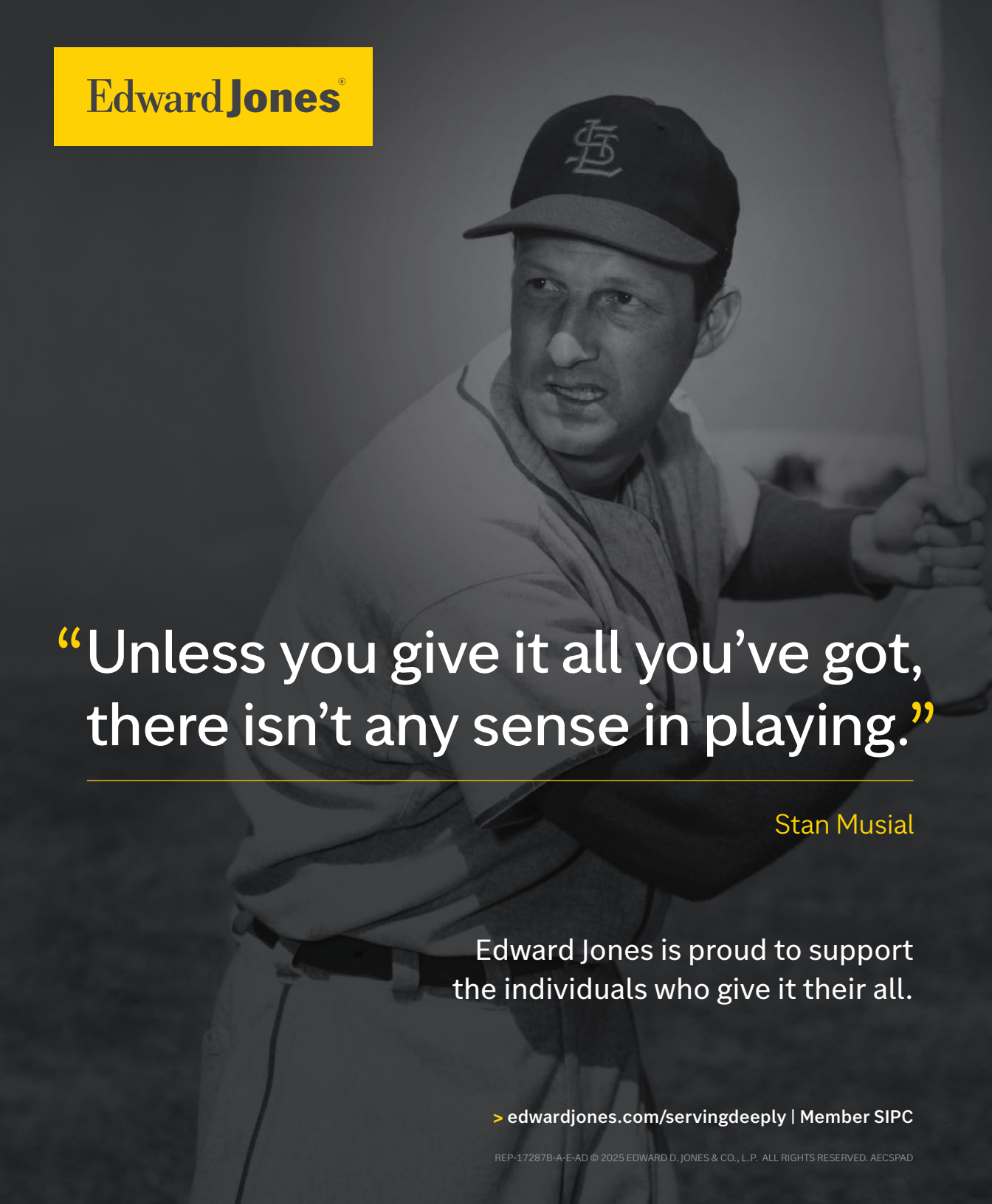
Allison Beightol
 Tony Gwynn
 Jessie Garrett
 Hersey Hawkins
 Jennifer Arrington & Matthew
 Simmons
 Will Shields
 Paul Stewart
 Larry Scheller
 Michelle A. Akers
 Ester Kim
 Dawn Staley

1999

Allison Beightol & Jarrett Erwin
 Sammy Sosa
 Rebecca Whittle
 Avery Johnson
 Marco Binion & Sheree Riley
 Frank Sanders
 Ron Francis & William "Willie" O'Ree
 Sarah Wood
 Jackie Joyner-Kersey
 Suzie McConnell Serio



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there isn’t any sense in playing.”

Stan Musial

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THE MAN



Defined by class, excellence, humility, and generosity, Stan Musial embodied the virtues of sportsmanship. That's why the most meaningful and inspiring night in sports bears Stan The Man's name. Beloved by our community and around the world, his legacy and spirit are forever honored when we celebrate extraordinary sportsmanship and all that's right in sports.

Stan is considered one of the greatest baseball players in history with 22 seasons as a St. Louis Cardinal. He totaled 3,630 hits, ranking fourth all-time and is considered to be the most consistent hitter of his era. Playing first base and later in the outfield, he helped the Cardinals win three World Series championships, was named the National League's MVP three times and made 24 All-Star Game appearances. A first-ballot inductee into the National Baseball Hall of

Fame in 1969, Musial received numerous awards for his contributions to baseball and society. He was selected to the Major League Baseball All-Century Team in 1999 and posthumously inducted into the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame in the inaugural class of 2014. In 2011, President Barack Obama presented him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States.

Given the nickname "Stan The Man," he was a role model on and off the field. It is for this reason that his statue outside Busch Stadium is inscribed with the quote from former baseball Commissioner Ford Frick: "Here stands baseball's perfect warrior. Here stands baseball's perfect knight." A true icon of sportsmanship, he left a legacy that few can match.

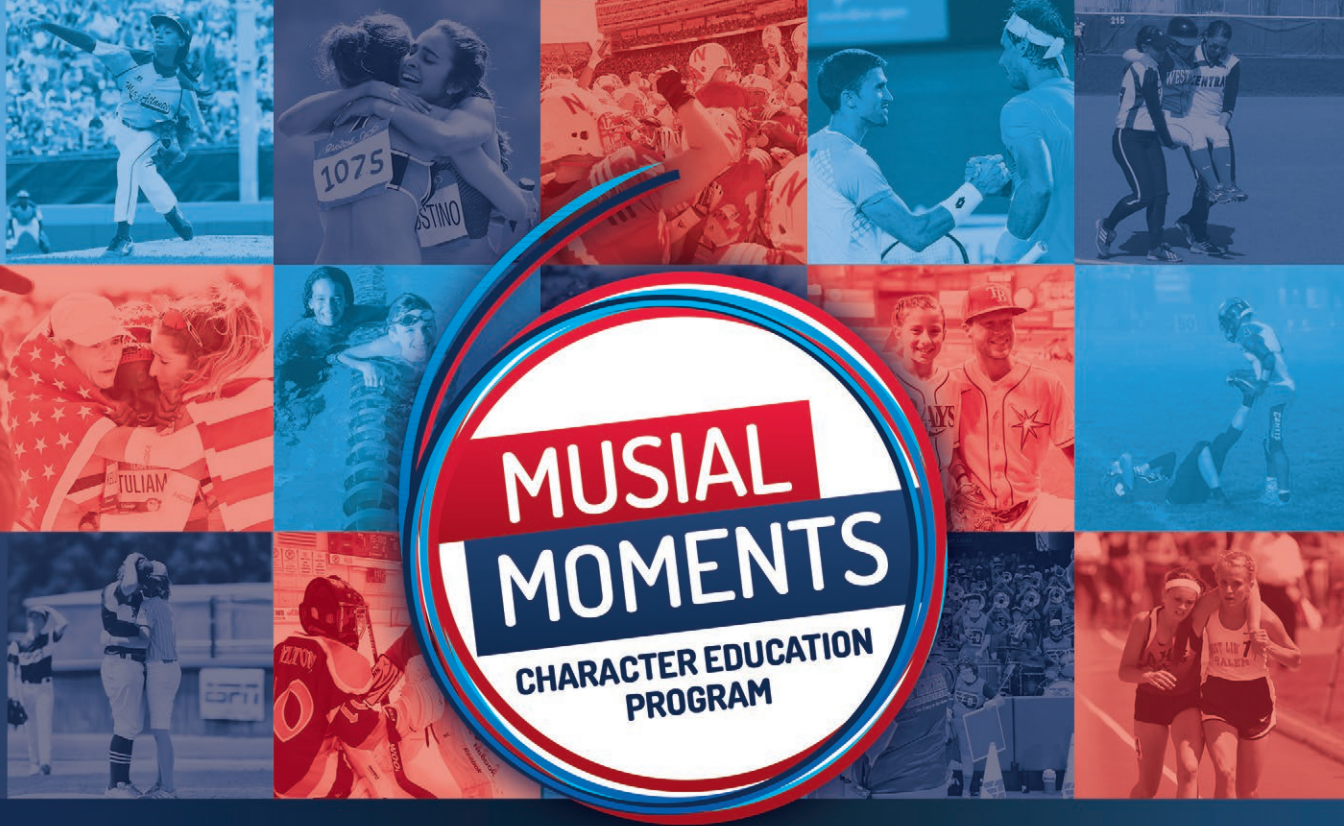


CONGRATULATIONS

The St. Louis Cardinals are proud
to support the annual Musial Awards.
Congratulations to this year's recipients!

MUSIAL AWARDS 2025





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The St. Louis Sports Commission has created an innovative program fostering civility, respect and selflessness among young people in our region. Inspired by the great Stan Musial, the organization visits schools in the metro area to introduce the concept of "Musial Moments" and to instill the qualities of sportsmanship on and off the field.

Presentations are led by Solomon Alexander, the director of the Sports Commission's Sports Foundation. Through a fun, interactive and impactful 45-minute session, Solomon motivates students to care about sportsmanship and to be good to those around them – just as Stan The Man did during his illustrious career and life.



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To bring Musial Moments to your school or organization, contact Solomon Alexander at 314-345-5130 or salexander@stlsports.org.

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Musial Moments presentations are geared for young people in third grade through high school.

Funding from St. Louis Sports Commission supporters enables this program to be offered at no cost to participating groups.

Musial Moments is a program of the St. Louis Sports Commission's affiliated 501c3 St. Louis Sports Foundation. The program is conducted in conjunction with the Musial Awards, produced by the Sports Commission and the National Sportsmanship Foundation. For more information, visit sportsmanship.org and MusialAwards.com.



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STLMADE



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THE MUSIAL AWARDS

The Musial Awards is grateful for the dedication of Mike Bush. The veteran St. Louis news and sports anchor has emceed the event all 20 years it has taken place in St. Louis. Mike also travels the country – separate from his day-to-day newscast responsibilities – to showcase the greatest moments of sportsmanship and bring them to life in the most entertaining and inspiring way.


Mike and producer/videographer Scott Suppelsa, together forming Onyour6 Productions, provide the featured stories highlighted at the Musial Awards and in the Musial Awards broadcast. Along with producer Adam Dew, their work has resulted in prestigious recognition, including 18 Mid-America Emmy Awards, nine regional and two national Edward R. Murrow Awards, the Associated Press Award for best TV sports story, and the 2023 and 2024 Sigma Delta Chi Award for Excellence in Journalism presented by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Throughout his distinguished career, Mike has won countless Emmys to go along with a national Edward R. Murrow Award he received in 2009. In 2012, he was inducted into the National Academy of Arts & Sciences' Silver Circle, which recognizes broadcast pioneers who have worked in the industry for at least 25 years.

Arriving in St. Louis in 1985, he helped KSDK, St. Louis' NBC affiliate, become one of the top-rated stations in the country. He is now the news anchor for the station's evening newscasts. He moved to his current position in 2003 after 18 years in the sports department. As a sportscaster, Mike did play-by-play work for NBC, FOX, ESPN, the St. Louis Cardinals and Saint Louis University Basketball. He was the radio voice for the St. Louis Rams during the team's 1999 Super Bowl season.

Mike is ingrained in the St. Louis community and a great friend to many charitable organizations. As the producer/host of the Muscular Dystrophy Association local telethon, he has helped raise tens of millions of dollars. Even with the national telethon no longer in existence, Mike has kept alive the local Labor Day weekend special that continues to benefit MDA. Another cause near and dear to Mike is a baseball camp for the hearing impaired. In 1995, after years of involvement, organizers renamed the camp "The Mike Bush Fantasy Camp for the Hearing Impaired."

Prior to joining KSDK, Mike was the sports director at KMBC-TV in Kansas City. The Chicago native began his career in 1978 as a news reporter in Tucson, Ariz. Mike and his wife Claudia are proud parents and grandparents. They have four children and four grandchildren.



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ZANDER PEDERSEN, JAMES BUCHANAN AND VINNY HAIRE

Mandy Mulligan is always on guard. Her daughter, Olivia Chavez, has Down syndrome. Olivia enjoys playing in the park, especially during baseball practice for her brother, Elijah, so Mandy keeps one eye on practice and the other on Olivia.

One day early this spring, Mandy was unwittingly on the lookout for kindness. Zander Pedersen, Vinny Haire and James Buchanan also were at the park for their first Little League practice of the season, when they spotted Olivia.

“My initial thought was that I should go get her because I didn’t know if she would bug them or if they’d be nice,” Mandy says. “But I decided to let it play out.” Olivia threw her hands up, and the boys immediately grabbed them and formed a circle.

“She might not be able to talk, or even to play with us, but I think what makes her special is that she’s a great person inside,” Vinny says. Without Olivia saying so, the boys seemed to know that she wanted to play. She started walking in a circle, then fell down. They followed suit, to her delight.

“It’s funny because I’ve never played Ring around the Rosie with her,” Mandy says. “They put down the need to be cool and just played with her.”

Mandy didn’t know the trio but wanted to find a way to let their parents know “how amazing these boys are.” So she grabbed her phone and took a video of a portion of the 10-minute, impromptu play date. She posted it on a local Facebook page in the hopes of putting names to faces.

Instead, Mandy said, the post “went nuts,” and perhaps most amazingly, “all the comments were positive.” The reaction was so overwhelming that Mandy reached out to a local TV station in Arizona, which ran a story that drew national attention.

“It was such a kind and beautiful thing to me as her mother, but I didn’t realize how impactful it would be to strangers,” she says, “Maybe it’s the innocence of childhood and the inclusion of people who don’t always belong. Maybe it’s because boys at this age aren’t always known for kindness. Maybe it’s just the simple beauty of inclusion.”

Perhaps best of all, the story didn’t end with one act of kindness. After seeing the videos, the local Little League association asked Olivia to throw out the first pitch at the season opener. Elijah stepped up in a big way, working with his little sister to teach her how to pitch.

“SHE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TALK, OR EVEN PLAY WITH US, BUT I THINK WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL IS THAT SHE’S A GREAT PERSON INSIDE.”

- VINNY HAIRE

“I was a little worried that when the time came, she might be a little intimidated,” Mandy says, “But she really hammed it up and was great. Her brother was a big part of that.” Not only did she throw it once, she threw it twice and jumped up and down when people cheered for her. And the families’ bonds have grown. The boys played with Olivia at another game, and she has attended their games as a fan. Since the season ended, the families have dined together and were scheduled to be guests of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

“It’s really nice to have a circle,” says Mandy, who moved from North Carolina to Arizona in December 2023. “The boys’ parents have said, ‘You can’t get rid of us. You’re family.’ I guess it’s not surprising that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”



KAYLEE MONTGOMERY

Kaylee Montgomery of Batesville, Arkansas, stood at the start of the State 5A Cross Country Championships, hoping to set a PR (personal record) in the last race of her high school career, “or, at least, to give it all that I had.”

She missed the first goal but far exceeded the second by helping a competitor in distress. Nearing the finish line, Kaylee saw Julia Witherington of Greenwood crawling on the ground. Eyes on the prize, other runners sidestepped or ignored Julia, a top ten finisher the previous two years at State. But Kaylee’s goals disappeared.

“I wasn’t really thinking,” she says. “I saw her down and everyone passing her. I thought that Jesus wouldn’t pass me by. He’d pick me up.”

So Kaylee stopped and bent down, telling this rival and stranger, “You got this! She couldn’t get up on her own. I didn’t know if she could speak at the time, but she put her arm around me.”

Kaylee, too, was exhausted, so she turned to prayer. “And in that moment she got up. I kept encouraging her and asking the Lord to give her strength. She went from barely walking to almost jogging. To me, that’s almost a miracle.”

“If she hadn’t stopped and picked me up,” Julia says, “I would have been crawling across the line.”

Kaylee’s father, Rob, captured video of the moment that harkens to 2012, when the Musials honored Meghan Vogel-McCormick. Seeing rival Arden McMath lying exhausted during the final lap of a state track meet, Meghan picked up Arden, who leaned on her to the finish line. Meghan’s story is among the Musials’ most memorable. It has legs, if you will.

But Kaylee had never heard of Meghan. Like Meghan, though, video

of Kaylee went viral. “It’s a reminder to see that good things are happening,” Julia says, “and it’s a great way to see the spirit of the sport.”

Though the two runners live almost four hours apart, they continued to connect via Instagram and text. Local TV stations in both regions of Arkansas picked up the story, in part because Kaylee’s actions have special resonance in Greenwood. The community was mourning football player Isaiah Arrington, who died in a house fire with his mother and younger sister just a month earlier.

“That school was hit with a lot of sadness. When Julia went down, her teammates worried about her because of what happened on the football team,” says Kaylee’s mom, Amy. “It seemed like they were hungry for some good deed for their community. But before we knew it, we had more than 1 million shares. I guess people everywhere are just hungry for good deeds.”

After the story gained national attention, Kaylee received scholarship offers from several universities. She turned them down to remain close to home, pursuing a degree in medical sonography. Her kindness, however, has extended as far as Uganda, where she joined a humanitarian aid mission over the summer.

Kaylee still runs – now seeking goals beyond a PR. She entered a half-marathon to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital because of the care that her cousin received there for brain cancer. So perhaps the aid she offered Julia was a precursor of bigger steps ahead.

“Something like that was so little,” Kaylee says, “but God let me glorify him through this action. Because of the amazing things He has done for me, I want to do my best to show others.”



DARREN BUCHANAN, JR.

As a youngster, Darren Buchanan Jr. had two hoop dreams: playing in the NBA and hosting his own basketball camp. At the time, the two seemed intertwined.

“When I went to a camp in seventh grade,” he says, “I told my mom that one day I’d have my own.”

But, why wait? Darren’s decision to use the bulk of his money from Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) endorsements to host a camp and other events before turning pro turned heads, including here at the Musial Awards.

“I think this story matters because I’m so young,” says Darren, 20, known to many as “Jun.” “And, it’s rare to see someone in D.C. give back to the community. Once they leave, they can’t or don’t come back.”

Darren was the Washington, D.C., player of the year as a senior at Jackson-Reed High School in 2022. But like many, he left the area to continue playing basketball. In his case, it was at Virginia Tech. After sitting out a year as a redshirt, though, he came home, transferring to George Washington (GW) University. Darren decided to host a homecoming, enlisting his parents, Darren and Tiffany, to inspire and aid his call to action.

“My mom and my dad did a good job teaching that what you put out is what you get back,” Darren says. “Once I was on the stage, I wasted no time.”

“WE CAN’T ALL CHANGE THE BIG STUFF, BUT WE CAN FIND THE SMALL STUFF IN OUR COMMUNITY.”

- DARREN “JUN” BUCHANAN, JR.

He started before his sophomore season, hosting a basketball camp near GW. But he didn’t stop there. With his family’s help and his ties to the community, he added the following:

- Organizing a back-to-school drive, giving away 120 book bags filled with school supplies. He also provided free haircuts, hair braiding and nails, a moon bounce, ice cream machine and, of course, a basketball court.
- Serving meals to the homeless at Thanksgiving.
- Serving as secret Santa for D.C. families, buying all the presents on their lists.

“It was easy to coordinate events and know that my family was there to help with everything,” Darren says of the events he has branded Leg3ndary Experiences. “Being in DC, where it all started for me, made it more impactful.”

Over two seasons, Darren averaged 13.0 points, 6.2 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.1 steals before transferring in May to Rutgers. Though he spent much of the summer preparing with his new teammates in New Jersey, Darren returned to D.C. to host his second basketball camp in July and another Back to School Kickoff in August, with more haircuts and even more backpacks.

He also started to make a mark in the New Jersey area at Rutgers’ camp, helping elite players, high schoolers and youngsters. “We were just having fun with the kids, playing basketball,” he says, adding that he hopes to expand Leg3ndary Experiences in his new hometown. He’d also like to expand the mission beyond himself and basketball.

“I encourage all my friends and teammates, even my friends who don’t play basketball back home, to get up and do something for the community,” he says. “I believe God gave all of us a purpose, and it’s our job to fulfill our purpose. There’s a lot of changes to be made in the world. We can’t all change the big stuff, but we can find the small stuff in our community.”



JEN PAWOL

2025 MUSIAL AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER

The Musial Award for Extraordinary Character is one of two special honors bestowed at the Musial Awards. It recognizes an individual who demonstrates remarkable class, perseverance and overall sportsmanship.

The arrival of the first woman umpire in the major leagues was a long time coming, for both the sport and Jen Pawol. The wait was worth it, though, because of the extraordinary character Jen displayed on every step of the journey. She prepared with years of hard work, perseverance and dedication. She seized the moment with poise and courage, striking the perfect balance of confidence and humility. And she embraces the label of role model, encouraging other women to follow their hearts.

"We are proud of the strong example she has set, particularly for all the women and young girls who aspire to roles on the field," MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred says.

Jen's love of the game was instilled early. She played as a youngster and earned a softball scholarship to Hofstra University, where she was named All-Conference three times. She umpired college softball games to help fund her master's degree in studio art and continued while she taught in upstate New York.

"WE ARE PROUD OF THE STRONG EXAMPLE SHE HAS SET, PARTICULARLY FOR ALL THE WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS WHO ASPIRE TO ROLES ON THE FIELD."

- MLB COMMISSIONER ROB MANFRED



Her aha moment came in 2015, when she attended a Major League Baseball Umpire Camp in Cincinnati. "That was when the dream was planted for me," she says. "When I realized that maybe I could be a major league umpire, I just went for it."

Jen then toiled in the minors for a decade, much longer than most players. She endured the hard travel, the arguments over balls and strikes, and had managers kick dirt at her shoes "dozens of times. It doesn't go very well for them. We're professionally trained to argue as umpires."

Always, she was her own best and worst critic. "Anybody in baseball will tell you that you've got to keep it simple, keep working hard, put your all into it," she says. "Get better before tomorrow."

Among the players encouraging her along the way was fellow Extraordinary Character honoree Adam Wainwright. Jen was umpiring in Memphis in 2023, when Adam was on a rehab assignment.



As she completed her check for foreign substances after an inning, Adam said, “Jen, I have four daughters, and I think what you’re doing is awesome.”

When Jen made her major league debut at first base in August, everybody seemed willing to bend the umpire’s golden rule: Do not distract from the game. Fans in Atlanta gave a standing ovation and waved homemade signs. Players shared congratulations, and she appeared at a postgame press conference.

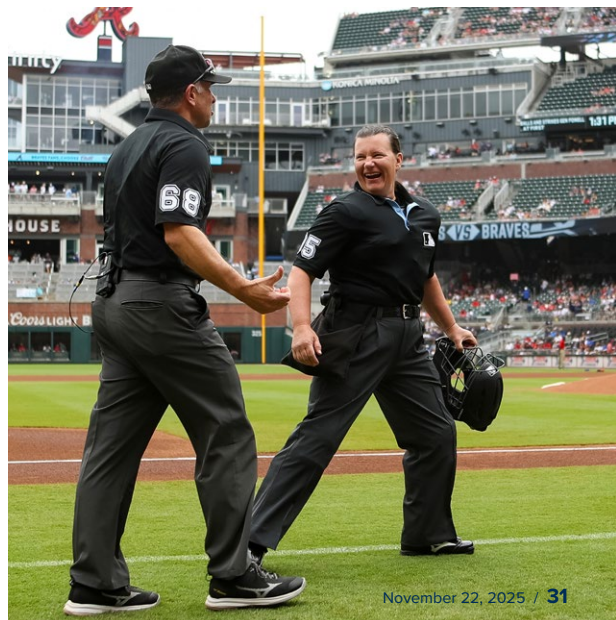
Jen accepted the accolades with a humble smile. Seeing her name on the scoreboard, she thought, “Wow. The dream actually came true. ... It was pretty amazing when we took the field. It seemed like quite a few people were clapping and saying my name, so that was pretty intense and very emotional.”



She was behind the plate the next day when Braves pitching coach Rick Kranitz visited starter Joey Went on the mound. Kranitz heard the crowd clapping as Jen approached them. “We all agreed,” he said, “Let’s let her come all the way out. Let’s get the crowd into this.”

Jen worked three more regular-season series as a rover, so among her next career goals is a regular spot on a crew. She also plans to continue to embrace her status as a role model and to encourage other women to join her or to pursue dreams that seem unattainable.

“Give it a try, first and foremost,” she said. “Have some grit to see it through. It’s a long road. There’s countless things you have to do. A lot of people give up along the road. Just see it through and make friends and have fun.”





ZANDER ALCALA

For Zander Alcala, knowing the agony of defeat makes winning all the sweeter for everyone – especially his rivals.

After taking first place at a Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ) tournament this summer in Dallas, Zander displayed sportsmanship and empathy by inviting the competitors who finished 2nd, 3rd, and 4th to share the top spot on the podium. Zander's gesture prompted his proud papa to post a TikTok video, with the title "God gave you a talent. Humility is how you honor it." Intended as a family moment, Zander's gesture has earned more than 27 million views, 5 million likes, 219,000 shares, and a Musial: an impressive resume for a 6-year-old.

Zander understands how it feels to lose. "That's why I invited them," he says, "because that's when you're sad. I wish someone had done that for me."

His parents, Yadiz and Edgar Alcala, were eager for Zander to learn BJJ with his brothers, Giovanni, 14; Ezekiel, 12; and Lucas, 8. Perhaps a little too eager. "When he was 4, he just sat there," Yadiz says. She credits Keiser Girao "for making it fun." In most sports, Girao would be called a coach; in Brazilian jiu jitsu, he's referred to as a professor. The distinction matters.

"He's a words-of-affirmation guy and praised Zander for whatever he did," says Yadiz, who also was concerned that Zander needed to learn self-defense to ward off bullies. But in short order, Zander turned her fears into pride, both on the mat and the podium of kindness. Again, she credits professor Girao for instilling the sport's foundational virtues. "Kindness and respect are very big in the jiu jitsu world," she says. "When we saw what it did to his confidence and physical fitness, we dropped out of everything else because this was the biggest tool I could give my son."

Still, the results of the tournament and the aftermath of Zander's actions exceeded everyone's imaginings. Zander had recently been

promoted to a gray belt and faced tougher opponents. "We weren't expecting him to win," Yadiz says. "He was an underdog. But he worked so hard. To see him invite the others was sweet."

He also emulated his role model, Mikey Musumeci, UFC BJJ bantamweight world champion. Like Zander, Mikey started competing at age 4. Like Zander, Mikey wears glasses and is known for respecting sportsmanship and the rules.

After the surprise victory and spontaneous act of kindness, Yadiz and Edgar were unprepared for the world's reaction. "At first I was shocked," she says. "But with so much negativity and sadness, the moment was a breath of fresh air. It gives people hope."

She also thinks the varied ethnicities of the kids adds to the initial video's impact. "It focuses on the humanity," she says. "Regardless of our differences, we can also come together. So it was a lot deeper than that moment. Kids don't see color; they see heart. Can we learn from this as human beings? I hope so."

Since then, Zander has extended his grace in victory to include friendship building. Another video, shot a month later and watched by a scant 24,000, shows him hugging an opponent he has defeated, then playing a game of Rock Paper Scissors with him off to the side. "He tries to talk to other competitors," Yadiz says. "He reminds them, 'You're not my enemy. Tomorrow, I could be the one losing.'"

Win or lose, we can't wait to see what Zander does at his next tournament in December.

"THE MOMENT WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR. IT GIVES PEOPLE HOPE."

- YADIZ ALCALA



JAMESON PENNINGS

The assignment was to bring home a baseball. But by giving it away, Jameson Pennings gained so much more.

The Pennings are Phillies fans. We cut them some slack, since Jameson, 9, wears the jersey of former Cardinal Harrison Bader. His mom, Eve, noticed at a game early this year that when Phillies Ballgirls retrieved a foul ball, they tossed it to one of the kids seated nearby.

Eve thought it would be fun to attend a game with the goal of bringing home one of those balls. So, she searched out a pair of tickets for Jameson and his dad, James, in a section near the ballgirl for a game in September versus the Mets. At the end of the fifth inning, one of the Mets rolled the ball to the ballgirl near Jameson. She tossed it to him.

"I felt REALLY good," he said. Assignment complete.

Or so he thought. His real mission had just begun.

About 15 minutes later, he heard a woman from the next section talking to the ballgirl. She was attending with her mom, Donna Morey, celebrating her 80th birthday, and wondered if Mom could have the next ball. Without really thinking, Jameson says, "I made a promise to myself that if she didn't get the next ball, I'd give mine to her. We have a lot more time to come to games. Maybe she doesn't."

The next opportunity came early in the ninth inning. Again, the ballgirl shared it with a youngster.

"Jameson put his head in his lap for about 5 seconds, then he got up," James says. "I thought he had to go to the bathroom, but he said, 'No I'm going to give this to that woman.' I followed his lead and went over to her."

Donna says she was "absolutely amazed. I was just blessed to be at this (game) with him. Really, I think it was meant to be."

James and Jameson heard cheering from the upper deck – Donna's family recording and applauding the moment. The ballgirl noticed, too. When she got another foul ball in the ninth, she held it. At the end of the game, she stared at Jameson until he caught her eye, then gave it to him.

"I felt really good," Jameson says, "Again."

When the two shared their excellent adventure with Eve, "I wasn't necessarily shocked because Jameson has a heart of gold," she says. "These days, people hesitate to do an act of kindness, especially for a stranger. It was kind and sweet."

**"IF YOU SEE SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING GOOD,
IT MAKES YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING GOOD.
THAT'S JUST HOW IT WORKS."**

- JAMESON PENNINGS

Donna's family reached out to Philadelphia's Fox affiliate to share their video and story. From there, the story appeared nationwide. Since then, Jameson has been showered with tokens of appreciation: autographed Phillies baseball cards, game worn jersey patches, even an offer for a boat ride "the next time we're in Tokyo." And a Musial.

To James, the story's broad impact lies in its ability to touch the good that's not always apparent. "People have a good heart way more often than a bad heart," he says. "Why we find ourselves attracted to the negative, I don't know. But I think people need a dose of love in their life. They see it, and they want to share it."

To Jameson, it's way simpler: "If you see somebody do something good, it makes you want to do something good. That's just how it works."

A large group of American Fork High School football players in red jerseys and white pants, posing in front of a red inflatable archway that says "AMERICAN FORK". A marching band in white uniforms with red hats and pom-poms is visible in the background. The title "AMERICAN FORK HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM" is overlaid in large, bold, white and yellow letters.

AMERICAN FORK HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Orien Landis, director of bands at American Fork High School, played on the offensive line of his high school football team. Aaron Behm, American Fork's football coach, took a few piano lessons, strums a guitar occasionally, and played trombone in his junior high marching band. "I marched once in my life, in a city parade," Coach Behm says. "I'd need more than a few lessons if I picked up the trombone again."

So, each gets the ultimate goal of the other, which extends beyond music and sports. "It's about students and community," says Coach Behm, in his 16th year at the school, situated midway between Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah. "We want to guide them to be good people."

Even before Landis arrived in 2019, Behm exemplified that by supporting the band in a way few, if any, coaches do. For the past nine years, Behm's football team has dressed in their uniforms, sitting together in the stands and cheering for the band at an annual competition.

This long-overlooked role reversal is more than worthy of a Musial. But, resist the urge to call this a band-aid fix for the silos that separate high school students.

"It's hard not to get emotional when I remember vividly from my high school days that the football team didn't give two craps about the band at the game, let alone would they show up to one of their competitions and cheer them on," Landis says. "I think it speaks to who Aaron is as a coach and a person that he realizes that the community involvement is what we're trying to teach the kids. The more you're involved, the more you're supported, the better the whole school is."

In American Fork's case, the band's performances have elevated

the whole school's reputation. The Marching Cavemen have consistently ranked tops in Utah. Since Landis' arrival, they also have earned regional or national honors every year in the Bands of America Grand National competition. Last year, they made the finals and starred in an hour-long documentary.

"When we're working early in the morning and lifting weights, I see the band," Coach Behm says. "They're on the field, playing, marching, working out. They devote as much time as we do. They support us and add a huge part to the Friday night football games. I don't know if we add to the atmosphere at their events, but we see how hard they work and wanted a way to acknowledge that."

Not until last year had the team's show of support garnered much attention, when an appreciative band mom posted a video on Instagram of the football team cheering on the musicians. The post eventually inspired a story that was broadcast nationally on ABC.

"My first reaction was 'That's nice. Glad they picked up on it,'" Behm says. "But eventually, I was surprised at the number of people who are supportive of it. I think it tells us there's a gap between different programs, not just at our school, but everywhere."

Landis hopes that heightened attention leads to more schools following Coach Behm's lead. "I think that if there were more people invested in this concept like Aaron, students would have a more profound respect for one another, where everybody comes from, and their diverse talents."

And if Coach Behm ever wants to take another shot at marching with his trombone, Landis says, "I'd take time out of my own schedule to give him a few lessons."

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THAN A HUNDRED TEACHING IT.”*

– Knute Rockne

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KRISTI YAMAGUCHI

2025 STAN MUSIAL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR SPORTSMANSHIP

The Stan Musial Lifetime Achievement Award for Sportsmanship is the pinnacle honor bestowed at the Musial Awards. It recognizes iconic sports figures who exemplify sportsmanship and embody the class, dignity, generosity, excellence, civility and integrity for which Stan The Man was known.

Floating across the ice, Kristi Yamaguchi embodied elegance. Since ending her competitive skating days, she has exuded similar grace as an author, mentor for Asian American skaters, and ambassador for the sport. Few would guess at the grind and hard work required to rise up, blaze a trail, and guide others to greatness: steps that define her journey to the Stan Musial Lifetime Achievement Award.

Kristi's beginnings were humbling and stumbling. Her mother, Carole, was born in a World War II internment camp. Kristi was born with club feet, wearing braces and corrective shoes as a toddler. Because her older sister, Lori, skated, Kristi took up the sport as physical therapy.

It freed her soul. Kristi was naturally shy, but skating provided "a feeling of freedom, of gliding on the ice, where I could express myself in a way I had never felt."

Her favorite toy was a Dorothy Hamill doll, modeled after the 1976 Olympic gold medalist. But Kristi's role model was Tiffany Chin, who in 1984 became the first Asian American U.S. figure skating champion.

There were no Tiffany Chin dolls.

Kristi took a leap forward in 1992, becoming the first Asian American to win a gold medal at an Olympic Winter Games. Though she later won two world championships and entered the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Hall of Fame in 2005, taking on the mantle of role model was at first awkward.

"I think it's really intimidating as an athlete to think, 'Oh, wow. I'm representing a whole culture out there,'" she told U.S. Figure Skating in May. "So, I don't think I really thought about it."

But just as she practiced the elements to perfect her triple lutz-double toe combination, she worked step-by-step at her dual roles as ambassador and role model. Among the stops on her journey:





In 1996, she founded Kristi Yamaguchi's Always Dream, which provides thousands of families with the tools to build early literacy skills at home. She also has written five books, "Figure Skating for Dummies" (1997) and "Dream Big, Little Pig" (2011), which rose to No. 2 on The New York Times bestseller list and received the Gelett Burgess Children's Book Award. We have a special place in our hearts for "Cara's Kindness," (2016) since sportsmanship is rooted in kindness.

She served as a Goodwill Ambassador for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City and received the Thurman Munson Award in 2008 for excellence in competition and philanthropy. In 2018, she became the third athlete to receive the Jesse Owens Olympic Spirit Award, which recognizes community involvement.

Kristi serves as ambassador of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Foundation, dedicated to supporting Team USA athletes on and off the field. In doing so, she inspires Asian American skaters

of all abilities. She has also mentored Karen Chen, who helped Team USA win the team event at the 2022 Olympics, and reigning world champion Alysa Liu.

"Now, I think there's a lot more pride and a lot more consciousness about (being a role model), and I think it's amazing because it does really help lift up...and bring more attention and more engagement with the Asian American community. I think about Tiffany Chin...to see how far it has come has been amazing."

At long last, in 2024, she became a doll, part of Barbie's "Inspiring Women" line. It's a fitting counterpoint to the rough-hewn, kinda cumbersome Musial. One highlights her grace and elegance. The other portrays her struggle, grit, perseverance and strength otherwise unseen.

"THERE'S A LOT MORE PRIDE AND A LOT MORE CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT (BEING A ROLE MODEL), AND I THINK IT'S AMAZING BECAUSE IT REALLY DOES HELP LIFT UP."

- KRISTI YAMAGUCHI





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