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WELCOME

FROM THE ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION

Welcome to the 2026 Musial Awards presented by Maryville University. Thank you for attending the 21st edition of our show honoring the greatest stories of sportsmanship and the people who created them.

Today would have been Stan Musial's 106th birthday! Stan the Man was born on November 21, 1920, and what better way to celebrate than for the Musial Awards to be entering its third decade.

We call the Musial Awards "the most important awards in sports" because we believe good sportsmanship is the most important part of sports. The recipients 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 to thank all those who have helped get us to this place with our show. Tonight, we are especially thrilled to recognize Billie Jean King and Kirk Gibson as our top honorees. Their grit, passion and willingness to give of themselves have inspired – and also comforted – generations. Billie Jean King won all there was to win in tennis and is a tireless champion of fairness, equality and advocacy. Kirk Gibson was one of Major League Baseball's toughest competitors and now works to provide strength, inspiration and understanding to thousands of individuals suffering from Parkinson's Disease. 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, with a few surprises along the way.

There are heroes onstage, and we have our own heroes in the seats and behind the scenes. Among them are our generous and committed sponsors, including many dear friends from Maryville University, our presenting sponsor…many members of the St. Louis Sports Commission…and countless teammates, producers, event partners, volunteers, staff, families and fans. All have worked together to create this homegrown event and build it into a world-class production with national and international reach and widespread impact.

We also and always extend our gratitude to the entire Musial family for joining us in the theater and 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 (and celebrate his birthday!) while encouraging 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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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 St. Louis Sports Commission's accomplishments include hosting the NCAA Men's and Women's Final Fours, NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships (9 times), NCAA Men's Frozen Four (twice), PGA Championship, Missouri vs. Illinois Arch Rivalry football series, U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Trials (twice), and most recently the U.S. Figure Skating Championships for the second time. The organization is also proud to have led the region's succesful bid to host the 2028 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials.

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 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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Musial Awards Executive Producer

Amanda Ryan
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MUSIAL AWARDS

LOMBARDI LEGEND

BART STARR

1934 - 2019



As a tribute to former Maryville University President Mark Lombardi's transformative impact on the event, the Musial Awards established a tradition: the annual recognition of a "Lombardi Legend." This provides an 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 the impact of these legends and highlighting their commitment to sportsmanship. We hope that with the Lombardi Legend homage, younger generations are inspired to emulate the example set by these iconic sports figures. We're proud to recognize the 2026 Lombardi Legend, Bart Starr.

Bart Starr was the quarterback of the Green Bay Packers dynasty in the 1960s, during which time Starr led the Packers to five world championships. He was the NFL MVP in 1966 and MVP of the first two Super Bowls. Known as the consummate clutch performer, Starr engineered dozens of comeback victories, most famously driving the Packers for the winning score in the legendary "Ice Bowl" game of NFL lore.

But for all his achievements, Starr was renowned for his class and humility on the field and his dedication to youth off it. In 1968, after winning Super Bowl II, he was awarded a new Corvette as the MVP. Starr promptly sold it and used the proceeds to buy the land on which the Rawhide Youth Services camp was built and still operates more than 60 years later, serving over 25,000 at-risk children.

He co-founded the Starr Children's Fund to support pediatric cancer research as part of the Vince Lombardi Cancer Foundation. Every year until his death, Starr wrote a letter to every starting quarterback in the NFL asking them to sign a helmet, which was then auctioned off raising millions more to fight pediatric cancer.

Each year the NFL gives out The Bart Starr award to the player who "exemplifies outstanding character and leadership in the home, on the field, and in the community." Anyone who knew Bart Starr will tell you he was the epitome of modesty and grace, a man of high character, and a selfless leader on and off the field – deserving of Musial Awards distinction as a Lombardi Legend.

CBS SPORTS

The Musial Awards is proud to have CBS Sports as its official television partner. CBS will air the 2026 Musial Awards throughout the country as a one-hour special on Saturday, December 26 at 3 p.m. ET / 2 p.m. CT (locally on KMOV First Alert 4). 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 eighth year for the Musial Awards to air on the CBS Television Network.

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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-Kersee
2018	Jim Thome
2019	Nadia Comaneci & Bart Conner
2020	Hank Aaron
2021	Wayne & Janet Gretzky
2022	Albert Pujols
2023	Bill Bradley
2024	Bob Costas
2025	Kristi Yamaguchi

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.
2025	Jen Pawol

2025

Zander Alcala
American Fork (Utah) High School Football Team
Darren "Jun" Buchanan, Jr.
James Buchanan, Vinny Haire & Zander Pedersen
Kaylee Montgomery
Jameson Pennings

2024

Jaydin Blackwell
Dave Mislan
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, Jasmyn 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 Hoefer
Mark Lombardi
LSU Gymnastics


Kristi Yamaguchi (2025)


Bob Costas (2024)


Bill Bradley & Adam Wainwright (2023)


Albert Pujols (2022)


Wayne & Janet Gretzky (2021)


Hank Aaron (2020)


Nadia Comaneci & Bart Conner (2019)

PAST RECIPIENTS





2020

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

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









From top down: Jackie Joyner-Kersee (2017), Jim Thome & Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt (2018), Cal Ripken Jr. (2016), Arnold Palmer (2015), Ernie Johnson with Taelor & Sydni Scott (2015), Joe Torre & Mo'ne Davis (2014)

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

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
Geofrey 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 Schettle & 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

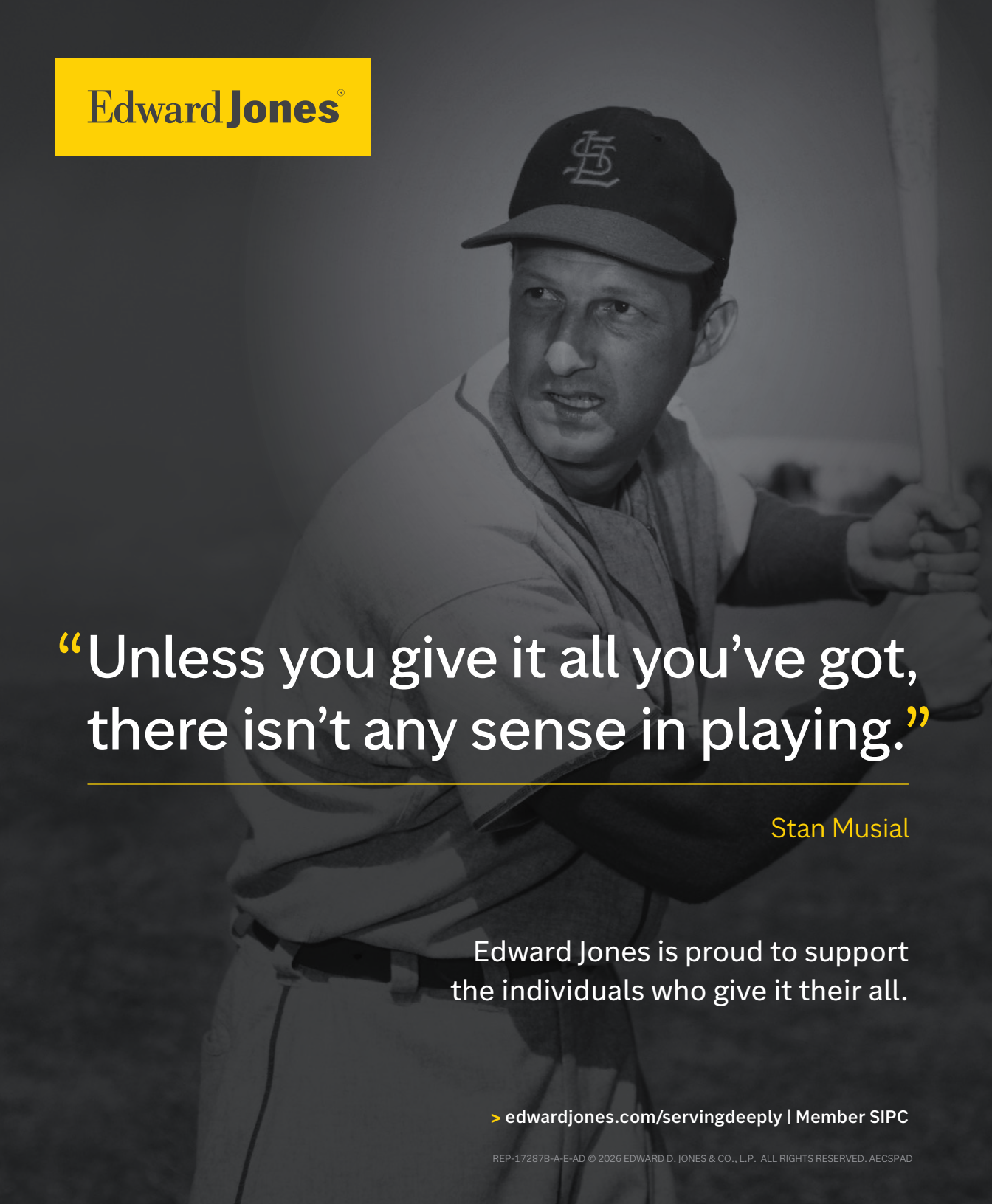
George Audu, Safiya L. Ingram & Lindsay Morton
Al Leiter
Luke Anderson
Samuel Perkins
Robyn Michelle Detty & Christopher Ryan Thomas
James Flanigan
Stan Mikita
Mindy K. Madewell
Rulon Gardner
Suzie McConnell Serio
John Byers, Gregg A. Hiland & Lori J. Satterfield

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-Kersee
Suzie McConnell Serio


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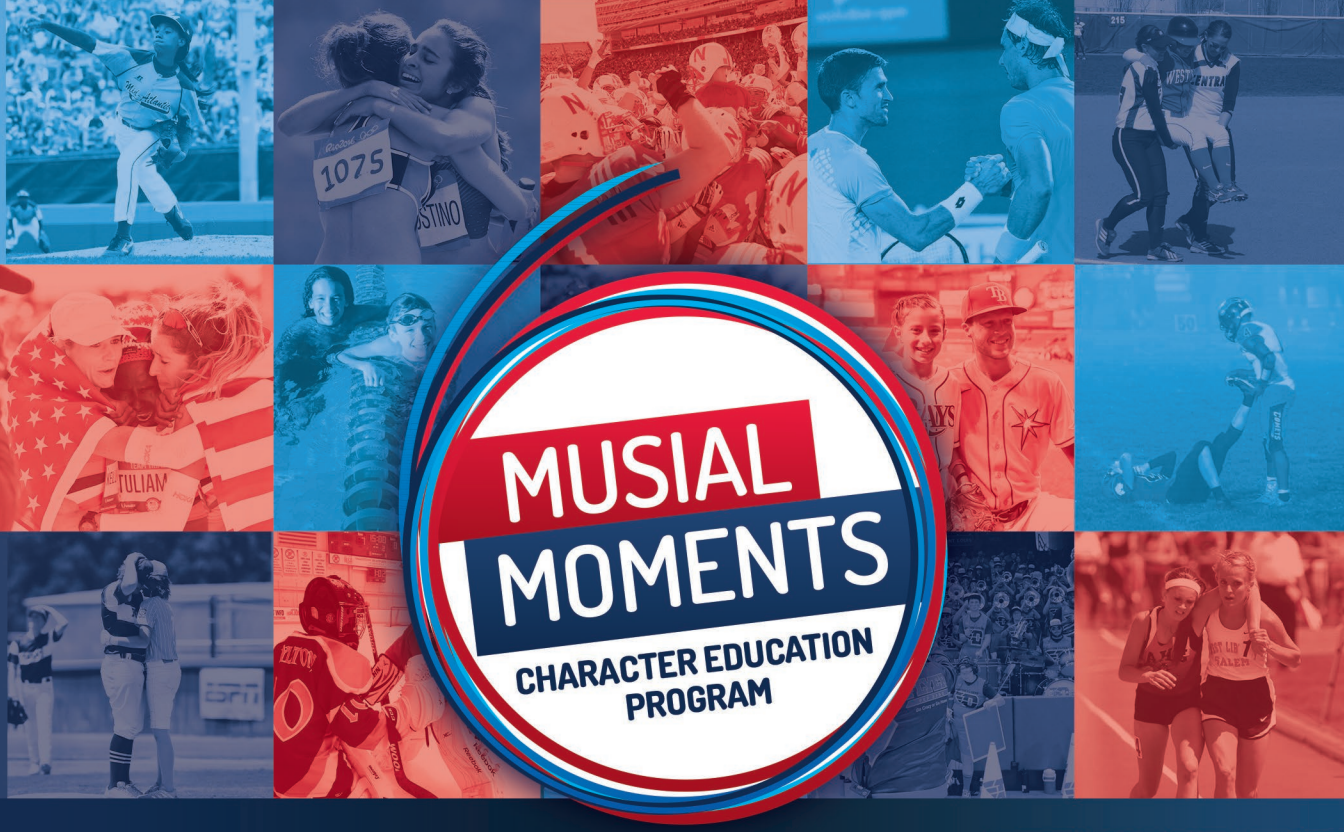


Defined by class, excellence, humility, and generosity, Stan Musial embodied the virtues of sportsmanship. That's why the most meaningful and inspiring night in sports bears Stan The Man's name. Beloved by our community and around the world, his legacy and spirit are forever honored when we celebrate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


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“We didn’t have much except
kindness.”
STAN MUSIAL | The Man’s Own Story (1964)
KINDNESS DEFINED STAN MUSIAL’S LIFE, ON THE FIELD AND OFF.
Congratulations to tonight’s honorees, who carry his legacy forward.
On behalf of the entire St. Louis region, we celebrate you and the
difference you make in your communities.
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INSPIRE SPORTSMANSHIP IN YOUR GROUP AS PART OF STAN THE MAN'S LEGACY

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.



BOOK NOW!

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

LEARN MORE AT **SPORTSMANSHIP.ORG/MUSIAL-MOMENTS**

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.

#MusialMoments



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For more than two decades, Mike Bush has been the voice, the face, and the spirit of the Musial Awards. What started as a one-night gig in 2005, the event's first year in St. Louis, has become a year-round passion and a constant in Mike's life. Whether the subject is a Hall of Fame wide receiver like Larry Fitzgerald, Jr. or a 6-year-old budding martial artist like Zander Alcala, Mike's honoree interviews move us to laughter and tears – sometimes simultaneously. Whether he tells the story of Salvador Perez crashing a backyard baseball game or young Rebel Hayes guiding a blind runner, Mike's masterful narration never fails to lift us out of our seats and to our feet.

For Mike, the Musials are a labor of love, the fruits of which have been honored beyond the event. Combining Mike's skills with those of producers Scott Suppelsa and Adam Dew, the stories of Musial honorees have resulted in 19 Mid-America Emmy Awards, 10 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.

This year marked a milestone for Mike, when he stepped down as news anchor at KSDK, a position he had held since 2003. Arriving at the station in 1985, he served as sports anchor for 18 years, while also providing play-by-play work for NBC, FOX, ESPN, the St. Louis Cardinals, St. Louis Rams, and Saint Louis University Basketball.

Throughout his broadcasting career, Mike won more than 100 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. Before joining KSDK, Mike's career took him to Kansas City and Tucson, Arizona.

Mike remains ingrained in the St. Louis community and a friend to charitable organizations. As the producer/host of the Muscular Dystrophy Association local telethon, he helped raise tens of millions of dollars. Another cause near and dear to Mike is a baseball camp for the hearing impaired, which was renamed "The Mike Bush Fantasy Camp for the Hearing Impaired."

A native of Chicago, Mike and his wife Claudia are proud parents and grandparents of four children and four grandchildren.



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– Knute Rockne

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THE Musial AWARDS®

HONOREES

2026

CELEBRATING EXTRAORDINARY SPORTSMANSHIP



JEFFREY GARROTT

HUEYTOWN, AL



Picture this: In the midst of one of the happiest moments of your life, you see a complete stranger who is hurting. Almost without thinking, you stop and take a moment to console him. You return to the jubilation, dismissing the incident in the chaos of celebration.

Amidst the hubbub, only one person witnessed this fleeting act of empathy. Thankfully, she had a camera and the wisdom to use it (thus, the phrase "picture this").

This snapshot in time, formerly known as a Kodak moment, was captured last fall and focused on Jeffrey Garrott, then a senior cornerback for Hueytown High School. His Golden Gophers had just clinched a 35-28 overtime victory over the Pelham Panthers in the first round of the Alabama state football playoffs, so he and his teammates were in the mood to celebrate. In between handshakes and high-fives, though, Jeffrey spied a youngster in tears, alone and inconsolable.

"It was like an instinct, something deep inside," Jeffrey says. He trusted that instinct, left his happy teammates and approached the young stranger. He put one arm around the boy, the other hand under his chin. "I told him to keep his head up, because I know how it feels to lose a game like that."

A moment later, Jeffrey rejoined the celebration with his teammates, who at the time had no clue he had briefly gone missing. The party went on for a while, and even Jeffrey didn't give the interlude another thought.

Unbeknownst to Jeffrey, the youngster was William Newton, who just happened to be Pelham's ball boy and the son of Pelham coach Ross Newton. Also unbeknownst to Jeffrey, the only witness to his kindness was Tracy Franklin, who just happened to be a photographer. Tracy captured the moment and quickly posted it on Facebook.

After savoring the victory, Jeffrey slept in the next day, only to be awakened by teammates who had seen the post. "I was surprised," he says, "but I guess it got attention because you don't see too much like that going on in football." Again, Jeffrey thought the incident had passed.

Despite the bitter defeat, the Pelham sports community wanted to show its appreciation. As luck would have it, the school's basketball teams were scheduled to face each other a week later. Jeffrey was convinced to attend, as was the Newton family. Between the boys and girls games, the public address announcer called Jeffrey, the Newtons and Tracy to the court, where Jeffrey and William were presented with framed copies of the photo.

> **"IN THE MOMENT, I WAS JUST BEING ME. IT'S WHO I AM."**
>
> **- JEFFREY GARROTT**

"I didn't know there would be a ceremony. I had no words," Jeffrey says. "In the moment, I was happy that I was recognized, but I couldn't have imagined being recognized for something as small as that."

After the ceremony, Jeffrey checked in with William from time to time, but it's been more difficult since Jeffrey accepted a scholarship to play at Garden City Community College in Kansas, 1,000 miles from Pelham. "There were a couple other offers," he says, "but I chose this because it's different."

His reaction after overtime was different, too – in all the right ways. A year later, Jeffrey's perspective hasn't changed. "In the moment, I was just being me. It's who I am."

It's easy to picture him staying exactly the same for a long time.

ROBSON DE OLIVEIRA & AARON BEGGS

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL & BANGOR, NORTHERN IRELAND



For unsurpassed international flair, we present Aaron Beggs of Bangor, Northern Ireland, and Robson De Oliveira of São Paulo, Brazil. Their unselfish performances at the Boston Marathon illustrate how sportsmanship and kindness transcend language barriers and geographical boundaries.

A self-described "handyman," Aaron has a track record as a useful runner. He entered his first race in 2013 to support a friend whose family member had died by suicide. A decade later, he joined a charity marathon relay team. Assigned the first leg, Aaron instead ran the whole race with his team members.

A machine operator in São Paulo, Robson started running in 2016, when his wife invited him on a run with friends. Since then, he has completed 11 marathons.

Both were pursuing personal bests in Boston but near exhaustion until they combined their superpower of compassion to assist Ajay Haridasse. A student at Boston's Northeastern University, Ajay had collapsed 300 yards from the finish.

"In the marathon, you turn to other runners and say 'keep it going,' or people say it to you," Aaron says. "No matter what, we all have a goal to cross the line. So, the instinct was ingrained: You don't leave a man behind."

Seeing Aaron had stopped to help the crawling Ajay, a drained Robson veered toward the pair. "Thankfully, Aaron stopped first," Robson says. "In that moment, I asked God to give me strength, because I knew two people could help more than one."

When Aaron saw Robson, "I remember thinking, 'Thank God you're here.' Then it was 'Let's go. Let's get him to the finish.'" Lifting Ajay's arms around their shoulders, the trio's journey to the finish caught the attention of the crowd, who whipped out their phones to capture the moment.

Sacrificing personal bests, the pair assisted Ajay across the line together in 2 hours, 44 minutes. Aaron called for a medical team, ostensibly for Ajay, just as Robson collapsed. "I was completely exhausted," Robson says, "and needed to get the weight off my legs for a moment." Robson ended up in the first wheelchair, though both received medical attention, testing and clearance.

Robson realized the significance of their actions as soon as he left the medical tent. Checking his phone, he was tagged in several Instagram posts. After Aaron met his wife and family for lunch, he got a message through his fitness app that he was tagged in a video already shared thousands of times.

"A few hours later, I got a message that Katy Perry shared it," Aaron says. "I just laughed." Before flying home the next day, he had interview requests from ABC and several broadcasters in the UK.

Like many Musial tales, this one has happy epilogues. After tweaking his training, Robson set a personal best, 2:38:57, 10 weeks later. Aaron met King Charles III. Yet, the accolades and good karma seem misplaced to both.

"It is a simple act of kindness and sportsmanship, but it's not heroism," Aaron says. Robson identified Jesus as "the one true hero. I'm just grateful that He allowed me to be part of that moment. It was a simple act of empathy – something that should be normal."

The trio remains in touch on WhatsApp, messaging about their training and triumphs and plans to reunite in person at the Musials. Robson and Ajay plan to meet again this spring in Boston. The day after the Musials, Robson and Aaron hope to race bright and early in the St. Louis Track Club's marathon relay. Aaron would love if someone would return the favor by running in his hometown race.

"It's nice to be nice," he says.



THE ACADEMY OF CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN STUDIES

GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Thanks to social media, Musial stories often earn attention and recognition in a way that follows a familiar pattern. A good deed is done. Instagrams and TikToks and Facebook pages blow up. In a matter of days, local and national media catch wind.

The sportsmanship displayed by the Lady Griffins basketball team at the Academy of Classical Christian Studies in Oklahoma City in February 2025 is a different beast entirely. Perhaps because it simmered for more than six months unnoticed, this good deed is worth savoring a little longer.

With the clock winding down in a district matchup versus Apache High School, referees halted the game for 15 minutes because the scoreboard and score book didn't match. Officials needed to get it right in the moment because Oklahoma rules state that after the final buzzer, the outcome is indisputable.

After verifying the "official" score, the Lady Griffins made a last-second shot that secured a 44-43 victory. "It was elation," Lady Griffins coach Brendan King says. "We had been pretty heavy underdogs and had staged a big comeback."

As soon as he stepped out of the locker room, though, the long delay gnawed at him. "I had to know in my heart that we really had won the game," he says. So Brendan watched the game tape. Twice. Each time, the score came out as a 43-42 victory for Apache. "I was torn into pieces."

He told his wife, Kristen, around 1 a.m., then called the Academy's athletic director. At a more reasonable hour, they called the state athletic association. "We wanted to approach them with honesty and integrity," Brendan says. "As the host school, we let them know we were at fault." The state governing body invoked a rule that allowed it to intercede in extraordinary circumstances to rescind the win.

Then, he had to tell the team. "I was so nervous because I didn't know how they would react," Brendan says. "I didn't want this to completely crush them. It was a good teaching moment to see that winning is not the whole point."

Senior Maya Beasley told the Christian Broadcasting Network that the team shared a moment of grief at the loss. "But there's nothing that could take away that hard work and all of our teamwork," she says.

From there, Brendan and his wife made the 90-minute drive to deliver the trophy to Apache. "I told them that we never meant to take away the moment from their team and families," he says.

Apache coach Amy Meriwether isn't sure that every coach would have done that. "He showed us that there are still good people in this world. It's something we'll always remember."

That act of sportsmanship seemed forgotten for months by everyone except Brendan's hometown in Texas, where the local paper reported the story over the summer. But when practice started in October with a roster that included 10 freshmen, he got an unexpected call from CBS's Steve Hartman, whose staff spotted the story and wanted to feature the team in an "On the Road" segment.

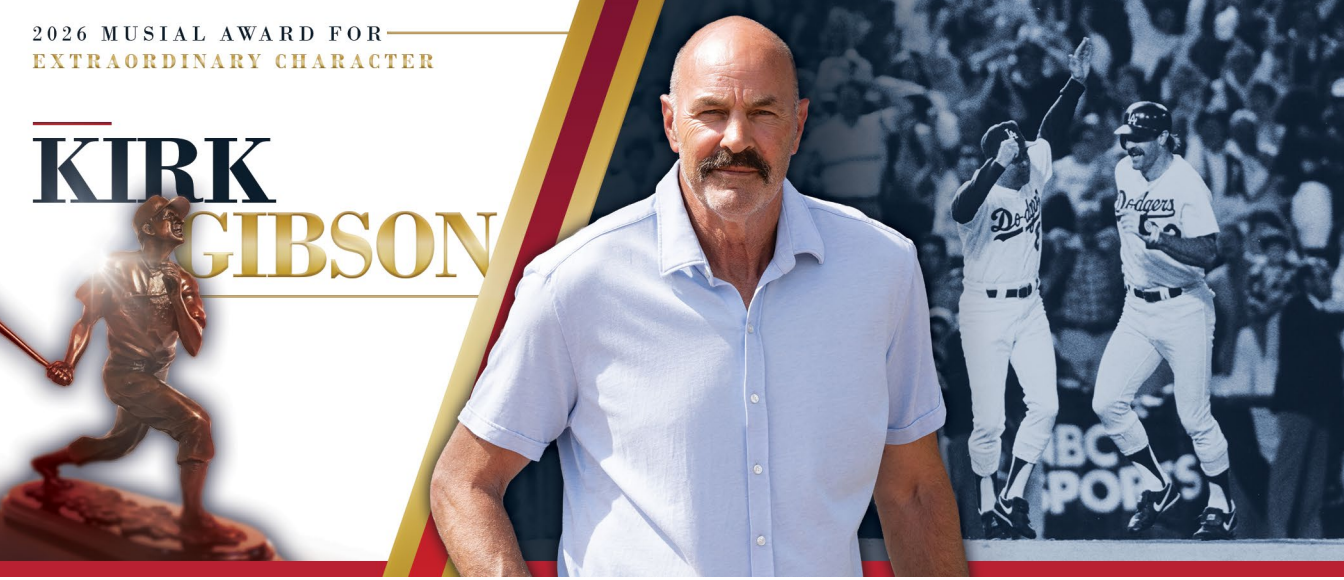
After that, reporters from The New York Times, CNN and The Guardian picked up the tale, which led to what team members referred to as an onslaught of "fan mail." The daily haul featured cash donations to the program, including $500 from an inspired good sport in Singapore.

"We never thought it would get to this point," Brendan says. "We were doing in our hearts what was the right thing to do. I hope everyone learns that honesty and integrity and sportsmanship go beyond wins and losses."

With or without instant gratification.

2026 MUSIAL AWARD FOR
EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER

KIRK GIBSON



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.

Despite a torn left hamstring and strained right knee, Kirk Gibson created an iconic World Series moment. Limping to the plate with two outs in the bottom of the ninth in the first game of the 1988 Series, his Dodgers trailed Oakland 4-3. With a man on second, Kirk fouled off pitch after pitch with two strikes until finally lifting the ball out of Dodger Stadium for a 5-4 victory. He fist-pumped and jogged deliberately around the bases to Jack Buck's immortal call: "I don't believe what I just saw."

Believe it. And so much more. Because we hadn't seen nothin' yet.

The hamstring and knee healed; the ailments that slow him today have no cure. Yet when Parkinson's disease tried to claim his passion and vigor, Kirk found the determination to dig even deeper, making life better not just for himself but for all who suffer from the disease.

"I was an average athlete who did some good things at the right time," he says, but now, "I want to be somebody that can provide hope for those who need it."

"I WANT TO BE SOMEBODY THAT CAN PROVIDE HOPE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT."

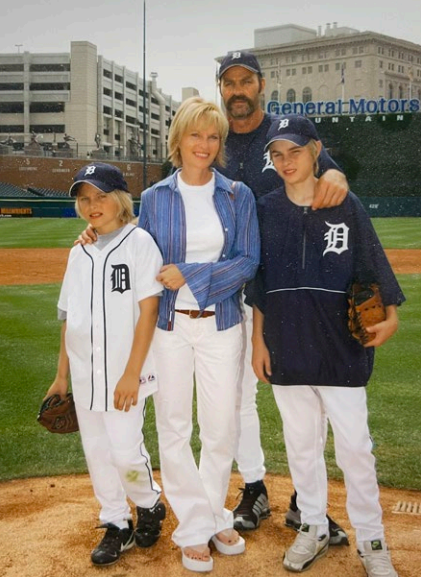
- KIRK GIBSON



Kirk initially gained notoriety, not all of it positive, as a multisport unicorn: an All-American wide receiver at Michigan State University and a draft pick of the Detroit Tigers. By his own admission, he was "pretty cocky" and had trouble transitioning from a fiery competitor on the field to "this nice person" off the field.

The values that Stan Musial embodied emerged gradually. He started to pay it forward as a manager, taking a young Paul Goldschmidt under his wing. "He was such a smart ballplayer," Paul says. "(People) thought he was like this old-school, hard-nosed guy. But he taught me so much early on in my career."

Kirk forged successful moves from the dugout to the broadcast booth but faced his most challenging transition in 2015. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's, a degenerative disorder of the nervous system that causes tremors, stiffness and problems with movement and balance. Ever the fighter, though, he faced the challenge head-on.





"To win your World Series," he says, "you must be willing to change your own picture of who you are today. I found the will to change my picture, and it transformed my life."

Fighting the disease for himself and others became his new World Series. Instead of searching for a cure, though, Kirk has focused on quality of life. Through his foundation, he established the Kirk Gibson Center for Parkinson's Wellness in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Opened in October 2025, the center is free for one and all and includes spaces for therapy, socializing and developing a sense of community for people with the disease and their care partners. Kirk not only has raised more than $30 million for the center, but he is present to share his struggles and triumphs with more than 3,000 people he considers his new teammates.



"You get the buy-in, and you imprint the good things," he says. "That's where the magic comes."

His struggles have also led to a born-again zeal for humility and generosity. He offered this advice in a commencement speech at his alma mater: "Remain humble, and always treat others with kindness and respect. A harsh comment can hurt another person, but a kind word can produce amazing things."



Though Parkinson's has muted some of his personal bravado, his passion and action for others has grown more impactful every day. But the journey is far from over.

"We try to stay true to our mission and help as many people as we can discover their quality of life," he says. "Because every step that you take, every battle that you fight, every day, there's more to be done."



2026 MUSIAL AWARDS

THE BEST OF THE WORLD CUP



2026 MUSIAL AWARDS
HONOREE

ASAHI UEDA

TOKYO, JAPAN

If all your guests behaved like this, you'd probably throw more parties.

With the soccer/ fútbol universe knocking at the door, North America had a chance to greet fans of The Beautiful Game with open arms in a spirit of joy and celebration and sportsmanship. And the world hugged us right back.

Several examples of sportsmanship among fans and teams stood out and even inspired others.

The first is a tradition dating to 1998, when Japan first qualified for the World Cup. Following every game, Japanese fans collect bottles, wrappers and food from their sections. This BYOB clean-up – Bring Your Own Bag – is considered standard procedure in Japan, which has no public trash cans. Fans are expected to pick up after themselves in public and take home what others are accustomed to leaving behind.

Among the organizers of the clean-up is Asahi Ueda, founder of the fan group known as the Ultras Nippon. Asahi was surprised that others were "so moved by it because it really just comes naturally," he said through an interpreter. "We're very grateful for it, but really our mission is to support Japanese sports."

For its part, the team, known as the Samurai Blue (aren't soccer team nicknames the BEST?) takes its cue from its supporters. Players leave the locker room spotless, except for a thank-you note in the host nation's language.

Another shining example: the Jordanians, making the most of their World Cup debut. Fans cleaned up the stands after the team's debut, a loss to Austria. Following a 3-1 loss to Argentina in Dallas, players tidied up the locker room, then left behind a spread of baklava with three boxes of official Jordanian merch. The note with the gifts read: "Thank you for helping make Jordan's first FIFA World Cup experience a truly unforgettable one."

Then there's the Algerians, paying it forward for the kindness of their hosts in Lawrence, Kansas. The city commissioned artwork and lamppost signs that read "1,2,3, Viva l'Algérie!" With support from thousands of Algerians who live nearby in Kansas City, the city hosted a rally at Rock Chalk Park, the team's training ground, where the university's marching band played the Algerian National Anthem as the team took the field. The fans adapted their treasured "Rock Chalk, Jayhawk," chant into "Rock Chalk, Algeria," and the university's track stadium hosted a kick around for hundreds of kids with Algeria's Desert Foxes (!).

The Algerian fans then wrapped it all up in a neat little bow. Following a 2-1 victory over Jordan, fans from both teams tidied the stands together. "Last time, we cleaned up the stands and showed fans who Jordanians are," one supporter of The Chivalrous Ones said on Instagram. "This time, we'll do it alongside our Algerian brothers to show the world who Arabs are."

> **"THE COMMON THREAD IS WE ALL LOVE SOCCER."**
>
> **- ASAHI UEDA, FOUNDER OF ULTRAS NIPPON**

The collaboration illustrates what Asahi says is at the heart of fandom. "At a base level, do you hate your opponent, or do you respect your opponent?" he says. "And, do you applaud your opponents' efforts?"

We have nothing but respect and applause for fans of Japan, Jordan, Algeria and all the others who displayed kindness, graciousness, good cheer, and sportsmanship. They are welcome back any time.











In recognizing excellent sportsmanship from the 2026 FIFA World Cup, we are proud to present a Musial Award to Asahi Ueda, who is the founder of the Ultras Nippon, the primary supporters group for the Japanese national soccer team. Asahi is accepting the award on behalf of the team's fans, who we celebrate for the extraordinary class and respect they showed at the host stadiums during the tournament.

Ultras Nippon was formed in 1992 and gained international attention in 1998, when Japan first qualified for the World Cup. While Asahi and Ultras Nippon are being honored for starting the trend of cleaning up the stands after a game, he said through an interpreter, "We're soccer fans first, not cleaner-uppers first." He wants other fans to leave the stadium thinking, "Those Japanese people are a force. They really come out strong."

A fan of baseball, basketball and wrestling, Asahi travels extensively to support the team and made several trips to the States before the World Cup. His goal was to drum up support for Japan as well as build bridges to other fan groups. Whether fans just want to join the revelry in neutrality or passionately support their own team, he says, "I can be friends with them, too. … It's not really about separating us from them."

Though the Samurai Blue fell short of Asahi's hopes, the team's fans extended their reach of enthusiasm and fair play. Their efforts to build friendships with fans from other countries embody the goodwill and camaraderie that stood out at the World Cup. "The common thread is we all love soccer," Asahi says.

CONGRATS!
2026 MUSIAL AWARDS

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MUSIAL AWARDS 2026





CARSON PICKETT

FLEMING ISLAND, FL

Carson Pickett has learned and lived the paradox that being different can be oh, so beautiful yet oh, so normal – at the same time. Now, she shares the message, making the soccer world – and beyond – a more welcoming place.

Born without her left arm from the elbow down, Carson – a member of Denver Summit FC of the National Women's Soccer League – grew to accept, then celebrate what seemed like a liability, and has become a role model to others.

Before sharing empathy, kindness and compassion, though, she leaned on those virtues from her parents, Mike and Treasure Pickett. Mike was her first soccer coach, who urged her to "never let anyone turn your sky into a ceiling." Soccer became a refuge "because I didn't ever feel isolated," she says, knowing that teammates "would always stick up for me if anyone said anything."

Her goal was to be just one of the gang, standing in the middle of team photos to hide her arm yet doing "so much more than everyone else… to show my worth." Describing her extra motivation, she explains, "I wanted to make teams and get scholarships, all because of my athletic ability. I didn't want to be known as a girl with one arm to play soccer."

She fulfilled that dream at Florida State, winning the 2014 NCAA Championship. The moment, however, offered both a professional and personal crossroads, when she could no longer avoid the obvious questions about her difference. A tearful Carson sought solace from her mom, who Carson says presented her with two options: "You can either use the platform God gave you, or you can just be selfish and kind of go the opposite way.'"

Carson's pro career has spanned 11 seasons in the NWSL, and she became the first player with a limb difference to play for the U.S. Women's National Team. But her inner advocate really blossomed earlier this year, when the team's media staff arranged a meeting with a fan, Hayden Stine, born without much of her right arm.

"I could just see it in her face, like a breath of fresh air being like, 'Wow. I have someone I can look up to who looks like me,'" Carson says. "I never had that growing up. So I can imagine that was a really good feeling to know that she can achieve all her dreams, even if she looks different."

Posing for a photo, Carson asked Hayden to raise her arm. "She put up her normal arm, and I was like, 'No, no, your other one. We're the same.'" It's hard to say, though, whether that moment of solidarity and empathy was more transformative for Carson or Hayden.

> **"WE'RE NEVER TOO BIG TO BE KIND TO PEOPLE."**
> **- CARSON PICKETT**

Since bonding with Carson, Hayden dreams big, hoping to play professional soccer. "Role models make you feel like you can do anything – just like them," she told CBS News. When her time comes to be a role model, Hayden says she'll be "up for it."

Carson popped in for one of Hayden's games and practices. The similarity in their difference opened the door, she says, "But I hope that I'm showing her so much more, and just being a good human."

To that end, Carson has partnered with Hand Camp Colorado by hosting youth soccer training sessions and greeting kids with physical differences at every one of the Summit's games.

"People get so nervous to talk to us," Carson says. "So, I just hope that it shows that, again, we're human beings, and we go through everything that everyone else goes through and that we're never too big to be kind to people."

A sentiment that's different, beautiful and normal – all at the same time.



2026 MUSIAL AWARDS

BILLIE JEAN KING

2026 STAN MUSIAL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR SPORTSMANSHIP

By Kathleen Nelson | Musial Awards Program Contributing Writer

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.

On a macro level, Billie Jean King's advocacy and influence seem capable of moving mountains. You could argue that she has been more successful than any individual in advancing equality, fairness and opportunity for all, especially in sports. Equally important, however, she exerts her influence on the micro level, touching individuals and inspiring them to carry the torch. Me included.

Before she could champion the cause of equality, Billie Jean honed her gravitas as a champion on the court.

- 39 Grand Slam singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles
- 20 Wimbledon championships (a record)
- 6 times ranked year-end No. 1
- 7-time winner of the Fed Cup, the women's equivalent of Davis Cup. She was so successful that the trophy was renamed for her.

In the midst of this, she conquered a made-for-TV spectacle sorely lacking in gravitas, facing Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes." I watched with my dad and 90 million other viewers in 1973. I'm not sure that he wanted to see Billie Jean win. But, just maybe, he wanted me to see Billie Jean win. Her victory freed a piece of my 14-year-old soul, convincing me that women could do so much more than others envision for them.

Almost simultaneously, she founded the Women's Tennis Association, achieving equal prize money for women at the U.S. Open. She established the Women's Sports Foundation to protect the gains of Title IX and provide access to girls and women in sports. She also co-founded World Team Tennis (WTT), which featured the first professional co-ed teams competing together. For more than a half-century, each has deepened and widened the growth of women in sports.

Maybe more important, she has used her one-on-one charisma to anoint keepers of the flame, spreading the message of equality to other sports and other causes. Among her ambassadors of fairness are Chris Evert and the Williams sisters in tennis, Julie Foudy in soccer and Kendall Coyne Schofield in hockey.

I'm humbled to have benefited from her personal touch as well. I covered the Aces, St. Louis's entry in WTT, which meant I occasionally interviewed Billie Jean. In those moments, she channeled traits that served Stan Musial so well: empathy and kindness. Time stood still during our conversations, seemingly for her as much as me. She always asked about me, never in a hurry.











And she remembered. I covered her appearance to commemorate an anniversary of the Battle of the Sexes. In the midst of explaining its significance, she spotted me taking notes in the back of the room. "Kathleen will back me up on this, right?" she said, as all eyes turned to me. Stunned that she remembered, or was reminded of, my name, I managed to wave, nod and give a thumbs up.

A few years later, she met the editors of my employer, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, to make a pitch not only for tennis but for women's sports. "Kathleen, you're a runner," she started. I had forgotten that we discussed my hobbies and can't recall what she said after that. She brought it up, I believe intentionally, to show the others in the room that she saw value not just in Team Tennis and women in sports, but maybe in me.

That wink and a nod empowered me to bolster the courage of my convictions. Since then, several editors at the Post and colleagues with the Musial Awards have referred to me as "the conscience of the group." I'm not sure I would have spoken my mind or stood up for my truth as often without that Billie Jean – or was it a Musial – moment.

So, thank you and congratulations, Billie Jean, for your impact great and small.





"SHE CHANNELED TRAITS THAT SERVED STAN MUSIAL SO WELL: EMPATHY AND KINDNESS."

- KATHLEEN NELSON, MUSIAL AWARDS CONTRIBUTING WRITER



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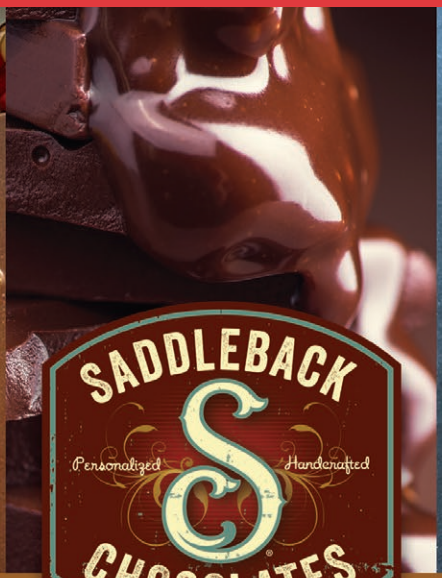
ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION

UPCOMING EVENTS

2027

MARCH 3-7 2027	**MISSOURI VALLEY CONFERENCE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS** ENTERPRISE CENTER
MARCH 11-23 2027	**ACHA NATIONAL HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS** CENTENE COMMUNITY ICE CENTER
MARCH 18-20 2027	**NCAA DIVISION I MEN'S WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS** ENTERPRISE CENTER
MAY 2027	**ANNUAL BIZ DASH 5K PRESENTED BY WORLD WIDE TECHNOLOGY** ENERGIZER PARK & DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS

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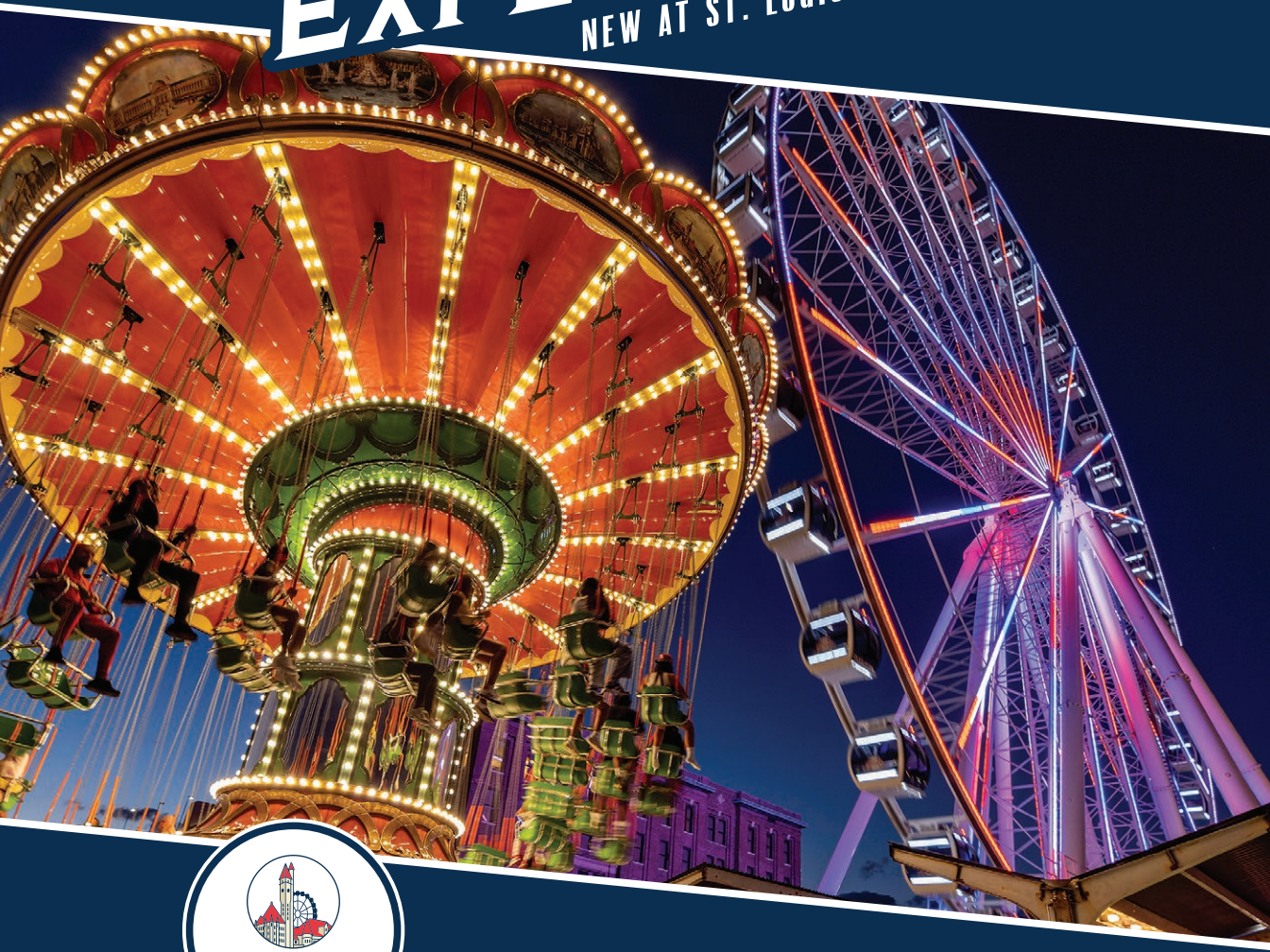
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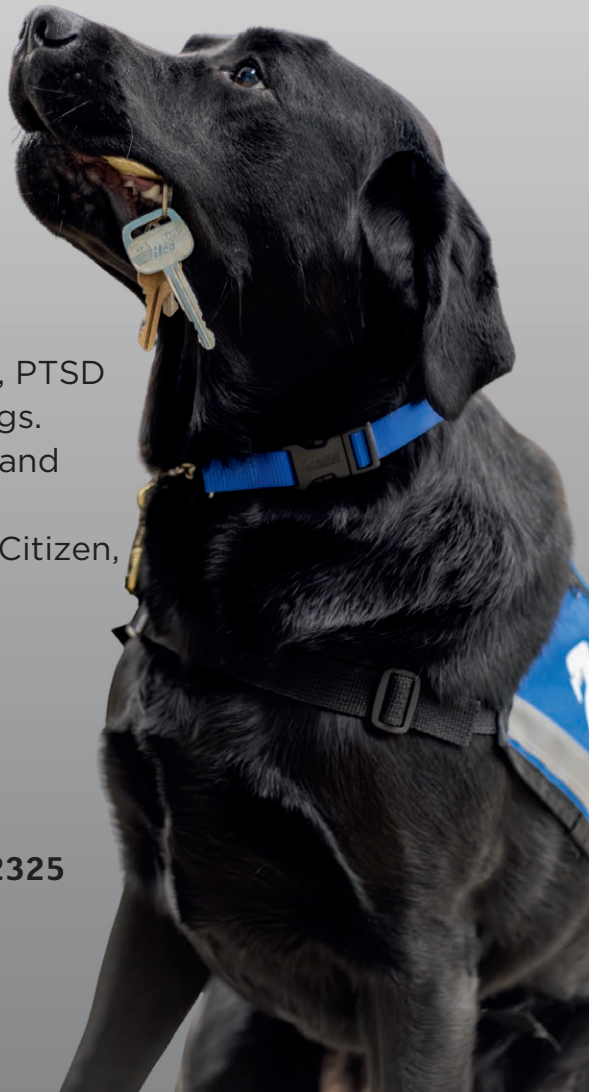
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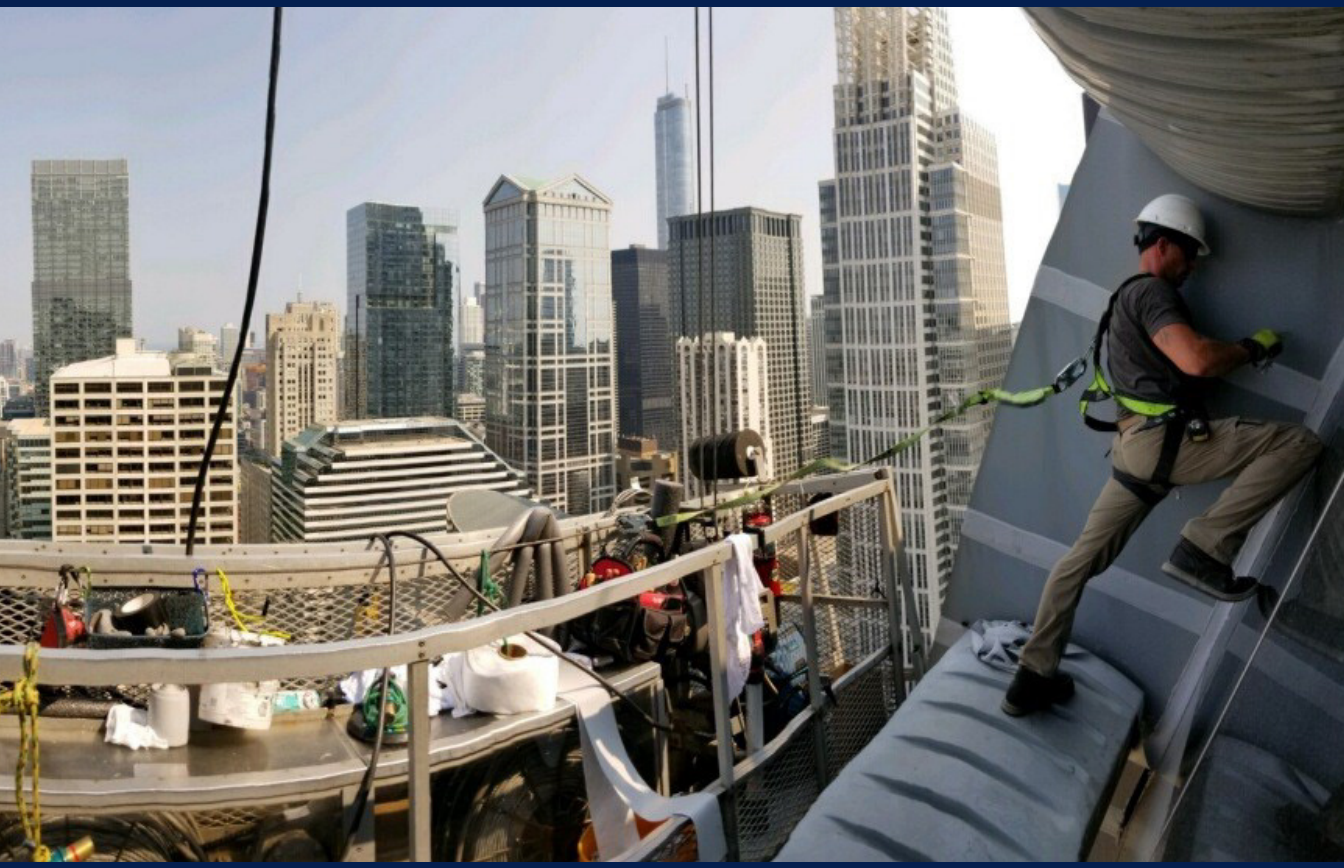
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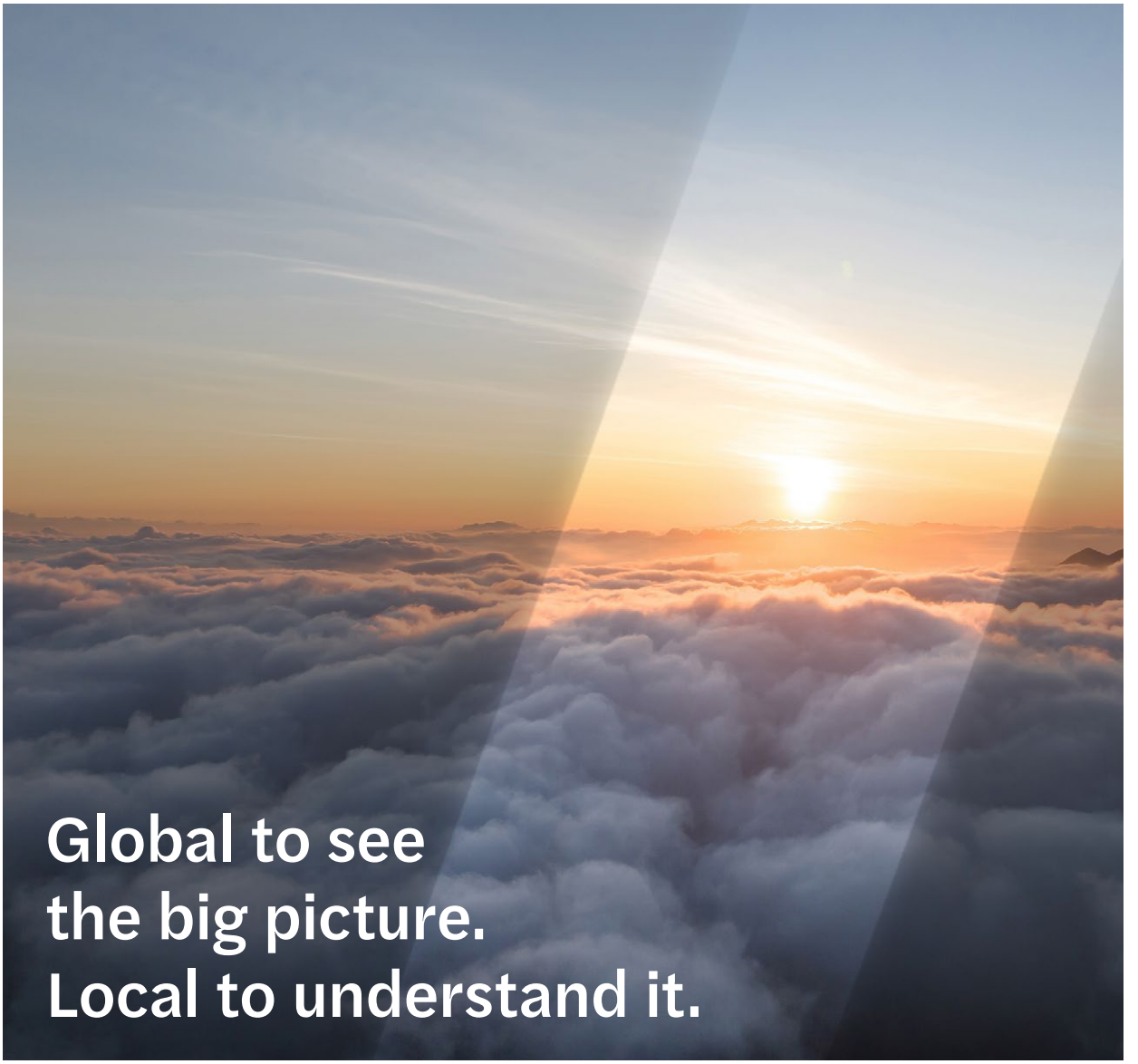
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