



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NATIONAL CONGRESS OF STATE GAMES ANNOUNCED 2018 ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

*Grand Rapids, Mich.*, September 26, 2018 – Officials with the National Congress of State Games (NCSG) announced the 2018 Athletes of the Year. A youth female, youth male, adult female and adult male athlete are chosen as Athlete of the Year. Athletes are nominated after winning Athlete of the Year at their local State Games. Thirty-One State Games organizations awarded Athletes of the Year in 2018 and submitted their nominations for the national award.

### The 2018 Athletes of the Year are:

- Adult Female: Sharon Harris – Multi-Sport – Billings, MT
- Adult Male: Chad Lorenz – Track & Field – Beloit, KS
- Youth Female: Maycee Peacher – Wrestling – Omaha, NE
- Youth Male: Adin Fetibegovic – Taekwondo – Shelby Township, MI

The 2018 recipients will be recognized at the NCSG Annual Symposium and TEAMS Conference and Expo on Wednesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Louisville, KY.

Sharon Harris, 70, has been participating in Road Race, Cycling and Duathlon for over 30 years and participating in the Big Sky State Games for 20 of those years. In the last five years, she has won eight golds in Cycling and Duathlon. Harris was a classroom teacher for 48 years and taught more than just science. She also taught her students that physical activity is not only vital for a productive life, but it can be fun. Harris was not always the athletic type, but she got involved in sports (running) to quit smoking and never looked back. She can be found in races across Montana. This year she was the overall winner in the Big Sky State Games Duathlon, where she ran one mile, cycled 16 miles, and ran another three miles. She did all that after winning a gold medal in the 25 miles cycling event the day before. For the past two years, Harris was the Super Masters winner of the Big Sky State Games Heart and Sole 5k Run and was the age group winner in previous years. She has also been a consistent winner of the Montana Women's Run, where she has been the Super Masters winner four times since 2006. Harris's cycling accomplishments are just as impressive. She has won her division in the Big Sky State Games cycling event for the past 10 years. When she puts her running and cycling together in the Big Sky State Games Duathlon, she really shines. Harris's athletic lifestyle is not just about competing. She enjoys the friendships she has made on her athletic journey. The bonds made during these endeavors keep her going and inspire others to take their first step.

Chad Lorenz, 36, was born with a congenital heart defect, a bicuspid aortic valve. Lorenz battled throughout junior high and high school, receiving mixed opinions from doctor on whether he should be running or not, with some doctors even saying he was cured. Lorenz loved to run, so he continued running cross country during high school and casually after graduation. Lorenz's yearly physicals with echocardiograms always came back with no issues, until 2015 when the results showed his heart had gone from moderate concern to severe concern. His heart valve was now similar to someone over 60 years old and doctors told him he should not be able to run let alone run 5-10 miles every other day. Lorenz's condition was a rarity given how healthy and active he was, so he was sent to KU Medical Center to see a specialist. He was scheduled for open heart surgery to have a mechanical heart valve replacement a month later and the surgery was successful. Recovery at home wasn't easy, during that time Lorenz ruptured a disc in his lower back that required surgery. After being off work for over 6 months recovering from both surgeries, he was finally able to return to work and resume exercising.

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In early March of 2017, Lorenz went for a run, where someone saw him weaving and collapse. His heart was shocked twice, before he was brought to the local hospital and airlifted to KU Medical Center. Lorenz had suffered a “widowmaker” heart attack caused by 99% blockage caused by scar tissue in his left anterior descending (LAD) artery. Post-surgery, Lorenz was kept in a medically induced coma, which he came out of on his own within an hour, but he was having problems with his short-term memory. It took three days for Lorenz’s short-term memories to start sticking and was soon able to move to regular room for monitoring, before heading home. Lorenz made some life changes after this, while his job was great it required him to be alone in remote locations and he was no longer comfortable with that. He wanted to help people and was presented with the opportunity to work at the local Wellness Center and help people work toward their own health and wellness goals. In addition, he continued coaching the local youth club track team among many other types of community involvement. He chose to participate in the Sunflower State Games for the “opportunity to continue the quest to be a great athlete, never give up, achieve new goals, set new records, keep moving, and stay active. We all still have that dream inside of us to grow up to be an Olympic Athlete standing on top of the podium, the games give you the opportunity to feel that way again and dare to dream to be the best you can be. I participate to keep pushing myself, to stay active, to set a good example for my daughter and the kids on my track team.”

Maycee Peacher, 11, won the Cornhusker State Games Female Youth Athlete of the Year. In 2018, she enrolled in 10 of the 11 events offered in wrestling. Five were girls divisions and five boys divisions. She wrestled 21 matches in two days, defeating 20 opponents. Of her 20 wins, seven were by fall (pin) and nine tech fall (pin). Peacher competes across the country and trains year-round. Many of her tournaments are against boys who have trained for more years than her and appear to have more strength. She doesn’t let that get her down, instead uses it as fuel to train harder and realizes that competition and losses are a way to learn and improve. This summer she attended three wrestling camps and trained at five different clubs. Two tournaments were all girls and the last one, only four girls attended. She won the takedown tournament at the end of this intense camp, defeating all four boys that challenged her. Peacher has always loved the sport of wrestling, watching her brothers wrestle and asked for years to go out for the sport. It was not allowed at the club her brothers attended, so her family switched clubs to Mustang Wrestling Club (where she would train for 3 years) and the coaches welcomed her with open arms. The athletes, however, weren’t sure what to think. So, her brother stepped up and partnered with her until others too were comfortable training with her. By the end of the season, other sisters tried out wrestling too. Her and her brother transferred to Nebraska Boyz for a new angle and mix of training partners and coaches. She also trained with Tony Vanderpool and NWA, who had trained both boys and girls. She has also been a team member on all Nebraska Girls National Dual teams, both AAU and USA. She continuously supports and encourages many other girls in her sport. Outside of wrestling, she earns straight A’s at Buffett Magnet Middle School and participated in Student Council this last year. She also participates in an all-girls football league under the direction of coaches Matt and Morgan Cutler.

Adin Fetibegovic, 8, started with martial arts at the age of 3. At age 7, he earned his Jr. Black Belt, becoming the youngest Black Belt ever at his martial arts school, Sidekicks Martial Arts. He won 3 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze medals at the International Michigan Cup in 2016 and 2017 which were the first tournaments he ever participated in. At the 2018 Meijer State Games of Michigan, he was the youngest Jr. Black Belt and won gold and two silver medals although he competed in the age category of 8/9 while being 7 years old. What is even more impressive than winning medals is Fetibegovic’s passion and commitment. His school starts at 8:50 am and ends at 3:50 pm, each day his mom takes him on a 45-minute drive to Sidekicks Martial Arts immediately following school where he practices 1-2 hours every day and then again 2 hours each Saturday. He arrives back home after 7:00 pm and still manages to complete his homework. He loves to read and was the first among his first-grade class to accomplish the challenge to read 50 books, needing only 2 months to get there. Fetibegovic is an outstanding student consistently recognized for helping his peers. Fetibegovic has developed great IT skills thanks to his ongoing computer science classes and his commitment to learning more. He volunteers with his dad by helping prepare school supply filled backpacks for those in need. He also acts as a class assistant for the Little Kickers Program at Sidekicks Martial Arts making a positive impact on the other children. Fetibegovic is also bilingual, fully fluent in 2 languages.

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The NCSG has awarded Athletes of the Year since 1994.

### Previous Athlete of the Year award winners include:

- **2017:** Youth: Male – Daylin Toms – Wrestling – Cool Ridge, WV, Female: Hailey Poole – Multi-sport – Worden, MT. Adult: Male – Dave Winslow – Bowling – Billings, MT, Female – Dorian McMenemy – Swimming – Northboro, MA.
- **2016:** Youth: Male – Sabastian Harsh – Wrestling – Scottsbluff, NE, Female: Collette & Elyse Levens – Multi-sport – Lake Orion, MI. Adult: Male – Don “Boomer” McCrea – Multi-sport – Portland, OR, Female – Janet Brady – Track & Field – Canton, MI.
- **2015:** Youth: Danika Osman – Swimming - Missouri, Female: Andrea Weiss – Badminton – New Mexico, Male: Josh Majerus – Wrestling – Nebraska
- **2014:** Youth: Branden Ivey – Martial Arts – Mississippi, Female: Jennifer Buckner– Weight Lifting – New Mexico, Male: Elmer Hawse – Shooting – Missouri
- For complete list of previous winners please visit [www.stategames.org/aoy](http://www.stategames.org/aoy)

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**About the National Congress of State Games:** The National Congress of State Games (NCSG) is a membership organization comprised of over 30 Summer State Games and 10 Winter State Games organizations and a member of the United States Olympic Committee's Multi Sport Organizational Council. The mission of the NCSG is to support State Games member organizations in the promotion of health, fitness and character building through Olympic-Style competitions and physical activities.

**About the Cornhusker State Games:** The first Cornhusker State Games in 1985 offered 19 sports and attracted 4,000 participants. In 2014, the Cornhusker State Games attracted 13,460 participants in more than 60 competitive and participation sports. Participants came from 78 counties; the oldest official participant was 87 years, the youngest was 9 months. The 2015 State Games of America, which replaced the 2015 Cornhusker State Games, attracted 15,244 participants from 47 different states, plus Washington D.C. The oldest official participant was 89 years and the youngest was 9 months.

**About the Sunflower State Games:** The Sunflower State Games is the largest amateur multi sport festival in Kansas conducted annually in July. The Sunflower State Games began in 1990 as an idea presented by the Governor's Council for Physical Fitness. Lawrence, Kansas hosted the first competition with 2,381 athletes competing in 14 sports. In 2002, after 12 years in Lawrence, the Games moved to Topeka with expectations of growing participation and community involvement. In 2017, a total of 7,222 athletes participated in 47 different sports at the 28th Annual event. Participation records were set in 12 sports and participation increased in 24 of the 47 sports compared to 2016. A total of 397 communities were represented with athletes in the Games.

**About the Big Sky State Games:** The Big Sky State Games is located in Billings, Montana. The Big Sky State Games has grown since the inaugural year in 1986 when 3,376 athletes participated in 12 sports, to 10,000 athletes competing in 35 sports last year.

**About the Meijer State Games of Michigan:** The Meijer State Games of Michigan, a West Michigan Sports Commission signature event, is an Olympic-style, multi-sport event(s) that welcomes athletes regardless of age or ability level. The games embody the values of participation, sportsmanship, and healthy living among the residents of Michigan. Since 2010, Meijer State Games of Michigan has hosted over 65,000+ athletes. The Meijer State Games of Michigan has also contributed over \$25 million in estimated economic impact to cities throughout Michigan.