



## Thirty-Two Recipients Shine at the Sixth Annual American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) ASPIRE Awards

*Paralympian and Gold Medalist Archer Matt Stutzman Makes Special Appearance to Speak and Honor Local Athletes*

**Atlanta, October 28, 2024**– The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, Inc. (AAASP) honored 32 recipients and organizations in 23 different categories on October 27<sup>th</sup> in Atlanta for their outstanding contributions supporting student athletes with physical disabilities to get “off the sidelines and into the game.” The Sixth Annual ASPIRE Awards Celebration, emceed by actor, writer and television personality **Patrick Cusick** with special guest speaker, **Matt Stutzman**, Paralympian and Gold Medalist in Para Archery in the 2024 Paris Games. The **Adapted Sports Programs in Recreation and Education (ASPIRE) Awards** recognized the significant contributions of individuals and organizations that have been central to the mission of making adapted sports programming available nationwide. Through these programs, student athletes with physical disabilities across the country reap the physical, social, emotional, and academic benefits of competitive athletics resulting in personal and social empowerment. A record 84 nominations were received this year!

### **Congratulations to the 2024 ASPIRE Awards Recipients: (categories are in bolded blue)**

#### **Vaughn-Storms Founders Award Recipients:**

- Barry Ewing (Eagle Sportschairs), Georgia
- Minnesota State High School League (Minnesota State High School League), Minnesota
- Kyoya Itoga (Wheelchair Football Japan), Japan
- Terri Lakowski (Active Policy Solutions), Washington DC

#### **Media Hero Award Recipients:**

- Jon Nelson, Electronic Media, GPB Sports
- Ethan Strang, Print Media, LaGrange Daily News

#### **Gail Hendrick Volunteerism Award Recipients:**

- Rosa Hamlin, Peach County Rolling Trojans (Peach County School District)
- Wellington deLuna Vazquez, Georgia Blind Sports Association, Georgia State University
- Logan Wegienka, West Georgia Wolverines (Troup County Schools)

#### **Eli Wolff Advocacy Award Recipients:**

- Dr. Tracy Butler – Atlanta Wolfpack (Atlanta Public Schools)
- Dr. Robbie Hooker – Clarke County Classic City Dawgs (Clarke County School District)
- Bobby Ryals – Houston County Sharks (Houston County School District)

#### **Spirit of AAASP Recipient:**

- Gavin Pijnenburg, West Georgia Wolverines (Troup County Schools)

#### **Community-Based Award Recipients:**

- Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center (Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center ) New York
- Therapeutic Recreation Department – Terry Nash, Harlon Matthews and Henry County Parks and Recreation Department (Henry County Parks & Recreation)

#### **Leslie Sweatman Official of the Year Award Recipient:**

- Steven Lewis (Official)

#### **Coach of the Year Award Recipients:**

- John Bolles, **JV Coach of the Year**– Muscogee Lions (Muscogee County School District)
- Bryan Watts, **Varsity Coach of the Year** – Houston County Sharks (Houston County School District)

[www.adaptedsports.org](http://www.adaptedsports.org) **Facebook:** American Association of Adapted Sports Programs **Twitter:** @AdaptedSports



#### Most Improved Athlete Award Recipients:

- Naomie Wilson, **Female JV Most Improved Athlete** – Houston County Sharks (Houston County School District)
- Laniya Jones, **Female Varsity Most Improved Athlete** – Clayton Eagles (Clayton County Public Schools)
- Jace Tolliver, **Male JV Most Improved Athlete** – Peach County Rolling Trojans (Peach County Schools)
- Gabriel Williams, **Male Varsity Most Improved Athlete** – West Georgia Wolverines (Troup County Schools)

#### Scholar Athlete of the Year Recipients:

- Elianna Stevens, **Female Scholar Athlete of the Year** – Houston County Sharks (Houston County Schools)
- Caleb Watters, **Male Scholar Athlete of the Year** – Peach County Rolling Trojans (Peach County School District)

#### High School Senior Athlete Award Recipients:

- McCarty McGraw, **Female High School Senior Athlete Award** (Muscookee County School District)
- JaQuavious West, **Male High School Senior Athlete Award** (Houston County School District)

#### Athlete of the Year Award Recipients:

- Madison Ryan, **Female JV Athlete of the Year** – Houston County Sharks (Houston County School District)
- Kila-Ray Brown, **Female Varsity Athlete of the Year** – Clayton Eagles (Clayton County Public Schools)
- Paul Hart, **Male JV Athlete of the Year** – Muscookee Lions (Muscookee County School District)
- Jaedin Lowe, **Male Varsity Athlete of the Year** – Clayton Eagles (Clayton County Public Schools)
- Caleb Merriken **Power Chair Athlete of the Year** – Muscookee Lions (Muscookee County School District)
- Najee Smothers, **Most Valuable Player Overall League in Georgia** – DeKalb Silver Streaks (DeKalb County Schools)

#### Education-Based Award Recipient:

- Troup County School System – Kitty Crawford - (Troup County School System)

#### Light Bearer Award:

Tommie Storms, Executive Director, American Association of AdaptED Sports Programs, Inc.

Thank you to the following 2024 AAASP ASPIRE Awards Sponsors: the **Georgia Department of Education**, the **Georgia High School Association**, **Eagle Sportschairs**, **Good Media Ideas**, **Grunduski Group**, **HAI**, **InkSpot**, **Stout Creative**, **Story Drive**, **Vocal Video** and the **AAASP Board of Directors**.

Learn more about the event and see all the photos at: <https://www.facebook.com/AdaptEDSports> and [2024 AAASP ASPIRE Awards - American Association of AdaptED Sports Programs®](#).

The American Association of AdaptED Sports Programs (AAASP), headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, is a not-for-profit association dedicated to developing interscholastic adapted sports programs in partnership with national, state, and local educational agencies. It represents a standardized approach to extracurricular adapted team sports and has developed one of the nation's most comprehensive school-based athletic programs for students with physical disabilities attending elementary, middle, and high school. For more information, please visit our website at <http://adaptedsports.org> or join our conversations on X (Twitter) and Instagram <https://adaptedsports.org/2024-aaasp-aspire-awards/> at: @AdaptEDSports.

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