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WIN for KC Announces 2022 Women's Sports Awards Honorees

KANSAS CITY, MO (January 12, 2021) – On Thursday, February 3, WIN for KC will host the Women's Sports Awards presented by Burns & McDonnell. The longstanding awards ceremony, now in its 28th year, is the largest celebration of National Girls and Women in Sports Day in the country. This annual event recognizes women and girls throughout the Kansas City area making a difference through sports and fitness.

"Each year, I'm inspired and motivated by the impact our award winners have had in their communities," says Jessica Blubaugh, Director of WIN for KC. "As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of Title IX in 2022, it's important to remember how previous generations of women were trailblazers and advocates, committed to moving us every day forward."

The awards luncheon will be held at Municipal Auditorium with a networking reception from 10:30am to 11:30am, lunch from 11:30am to 1pm and an autograph session with keynote speaker **Sue Bird**, an Olympic gold medalist and eleven-time WNBA All-Star, from 1pm to 1:30pm. Emmy Award-winning KSHB 41 anchor and reporter **Dia Wall** will emcee the event. To purchase tickets and tables click [here](#) or inquire about sponsorship opportunities [here](#).

WIN for KC is proud to recognize the 2022 Women Sport's Award Honorees:

The **Lockton Courage Award** will be presented to a local woman or girl who demonstrates the ability to redefine barriers despite physical or mental challenges through her participation in sports, who has overcome tremendous obstacles to succeed in sports, or who has made a significant comeback in life and sports.

Rachel Rhodes: Rachel has a long history overcoming challenges through sports and fitness. In high school, team sports like basketball and softball provided her with a sense of community and belonging. After a horrific car accident her junior year resulting in her being ejected from the car and significant damage to her leg, Rachel struggled with limited physical abilities and weight gain. Eventually, running became a catalyst for change and she successfully completed several 5k, 10k and half marathon races before competing in the Seattle Marathon in 2017. At the age of 30, Rachel was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She lost the ability to walk and had trouble speaking. However, her courage once again prompted Rachel to make lifestyle changes, like eating healthier and practicing yoga, and she is now training to complete her first Iron Man after successfully participating in other triathlons. Her commitment to pushing herself physically and doing the best she can every day in spite of her diagnosis, make Rachel our 2022 Courage Award winner.

The **Kissick Construction Game Changer Award** will be presented to a local individual or group who personifies the true spirit of sport not as a participant, but as a supporter, promoter, or champion of girls' and women's sports and fitness. This award recognizes those who give their all to girls' and women's sports through an outlet other than participation. Nominees demonstrate empowerment by working behind the scenes to promote or create opportunities for women and girls in sports.

Mildred Barnes: A champion and pioneer for women's sports, Mildred was the basketball coach at the University of Central Missouri 1971, beginning the second year of the program and prior to the implementation of Title IX. She has been an advocate through multiple committees and organizations. For

example, she served on the Rules Committee, which existed before the AIAW or NCAA. Additionally, Mildred was a driving force for the inclusion of women's basketball in the Olympics, participating on the US Olympic women's basketball committee from 1965 to 1972, ultimately chairing the committee and overseeing the inaugural competition in 1976. She has been inducted into several Halls of Fame, including: Boston University, New Agenda Northeast Hall of Fame, University of Central Missouri, Women's National Basketball Hall of Fame, US Lacrosse National Hall of Fame, and Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

The **Hallmark Cards Leadership Award** will be presented to a local female inspirational leader who best exemplifies the characteristics of a mentor to female athletes of all ages. Nominees should actively make significant contributions and a lasting impact on female athletes throughout the community.

KeKe Blackmon: Originally from Arkansas, KeKe grew up as the youngest of three siblings. Her initial love in sports was basketball, so it's no surprise her first coaching opportunity was to lead the women's basketball team at Lawrence High School in 2001. From there, she was signed to play football for the Kansas City Tribe in 2009. It was the beginning of an incredible career, with highlights including multiple division championships, a national championship in 2009 and a gold medal as the 2013 World Champion. Now, Keke focuses on the next generation of athletes as the head football coach for the KC Glory, as well as the freshman football coach and the head JV girls basketball coach for Olathe East. Her leadership has been particularly impactful during the COVID-19 pandemic when one of her staff passed away from the virus. Off the field and court, Keke spends her free time raising her five children.

The **UMBFC Charitable Foundation Lifetime Sportswoman Award** will be presented to a local woman, age 55 or older, who demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities, encourages participation of girls and women in sports and still engages in athletics.

Terry Miller: Since she was an elite junior player, competing as part of the United States Wightman Cup team in 1964, Terry has been a passionate and involved advocate for the sport of tennis. Even when she was a full-time teacher, her free time was dedicated to the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) where she served as a volunteer, and was consequently awarded the Distinguished Service Award from both the Heart of America and USTA Missouri Valley in 1987. Undaunted by struggles with physical health, Terry continues to organize competitive tennis leagues for youth and adults. Among that, she teaches lessons during the week, encouraging participation and providing opportunity for people to play. She has helped grow tennis in the area through her participation, engagement and passion for the sport. In 2006, Terry was inducted into the USTA Missouri Valley Hall of Fame.

The **Children's Mercy Sports Medicine Center Rising Star Award** will be presented to a local girl (18 years of age or younger) who demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities, setting and achieving goals and has made a special impact on the community.

Lily Sowle: Since early on in life, Lily has had a passion for soccer. She began playing at the age of three, ultimately preferring soccer games over dance lessons. However, a setback occurred in sixth grade when she received her first concussion. It would be one of many, ultimately forcing her to stop playing in 2020. When she was 12, Lily began a philanthropic organization to collect and donate soccer equipment for kids in Haiti. Currently, over 3,600 items have been donated and \$200,000 has been raised to support the nonprofit mission. As a 17-year-old student at St. Pius, Lily will not be able to compete during her senior year and final season. However, she now coaches first graders, just one way Lily is staying connected to the sport she loves.

WIN for KC

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BKD WOW Award is presented to an individual or group in the community who has made an outstanding impact on women and girls in sports. **This award is nominated and voted on by the WIN for KC Advisory Board.**

Raye Pond: A true icon, Raye is often credited for changing the landscape of endorsements and sponsorships for female athletes. Her sports journey began at Oklahoma University where she served as the manager for the women's basketball team. She would then go on to work as a graduate assistant at Wichita State University before interning at the Women Sports Foundation in 1993. Raye secured a position at Nike in 1995, managing the professional women's basketball account. There, she advocated for diversity and equity by identifying the "best athletes" for sponsorship opportunities, regardless of gender or race. Her legacy continues at Nike to this day and many professional athletes reflect on her commitment to equality with the phrase, "If it wasn't for Raye."

For more information about the Women's Sports Awards presented by Burns & McDonnell go to <https://www.sportkc.org/win-for-kc/awards-celebration>.

About WIN for KC

The Women's Intersport Network for Kansas City (WIN for KC), was established in 1994 under the umbrella of the Greater Kansas City Sports Commission, with the mission to ignite girls and women through advocating and promoting the lifetime value of sports and fitness, while providing opportunities for participation and leadership development. WIN is a volunteer, membership-driven organization that operates as a program of the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation. For more information, visit WINforKC.org. For the latest on WIN for KC news, follow on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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