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**MEIJER STATE GAMES OF MICHIGAN ANNOUNCES
2022 ATHLETES OF THE YEAR**

*Don Passenger named 2022 Volunteer of the Year
Presented by Lake Michigan Credit Union*

Grand Rapids, Mich., November 15, 2022 – Officials with the Meijer State Games of Michigan revealed the 2022 Athletes of the Year as well as named Don Passenger the 2022 Volunteer of the Year presented by Lake Michigan Credit Union. The four categories for the Athlete of the Year award are adult male, adult female, youth male, and youth female. The following names are the award recipients.

2022 Meijer State Games of Michigan - Athletes of the Year
Bios are included below.

- Adult Female: Tamara Steil – Swimming – Grandville, MI
- Adult Male: Matthew Tesch – Track & Field – New Baltimore, MI
- Youth Female: Chloe Barnes – Field Hockey – Pinckney, MI
- Youth Male: Andrew von Matt – Ice Hockey – Gladwin, MI

Don Passenger named 2022 Volunteer of the Year

Don Passenger is currently a co-director of both the Summer Games track & field and 5K events. Passenger was nominated for this award by a participant at the 5K race event. According to the nomination, a young runner was hesitant to run the course by himself. Passenger - going above and beyond his duties as race director – decided to physically run the race with the young athlete. He was by his side the entire time and made sure he finished. Passenger's passion, enthusiasm, and humor made the race enjoyable for all. Passenger has always rallied around the State Games events wanting them to be a welcoming place for all athletes of all ages and abilities to compete.

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2022 Meijer State Games of Michigan - Athletes of the Year - Bios

Tamara Steil, 68, Grandville, MI – While Steil's swimming and athletic resume is impressive, she competes because it is simply fun. She swam and dove for Western Michigan University, picked up running post-grad, and found great competition at the age of 52 in the Michigan Senior Olympics where she did swimming, track and field, and triathlon. In her first National Senior Games, she medaled in every event she competed in. Since then, she has broken the National Senior Games record for the 100 and 200 breaststroke, continues to compete at every National Senior Games, medaled at the USMS Swim Nationals, competed in the FINA World Swimming Championships in Budapest, and competed in the ITU World Triathlon Championship in 2019. Her success obviously transfers to the Meijer State Games of Michigan where she routinely wins gold medals. Winning medals and breaking records are not what drives Steil though; being active and competing with friends brings her so much joy and allows her to appreciate every competition, whether she wins or not. She wants to encourage others to stay active and healthy. Sports makes Steil feel like a kid again, and she plans to keep competing as long as possible.

Matthew Tesch, 53, New Baltimore, MI – Tesch has always had a love for track and field, but in high school and beyond, he mainly stuck to sprinting events. He then had a son who found a love for throwing discus. This came as a blessing in disguise, as Tesch had triple fusion surgery at the young age of 39. He could no longer participate in the events he used to but was able to pick up discus with his son as his coach. Side by side, he has developed a passion for discus as well as shot put and javelin. In the 2022 Summer Games, he was able to PR in all three events and earn a gold medal in javelin and silver medals in discus and shotput. This performance solidified his confidence and gives him a new goal to do better than last year. Tesch is grateful to be back on the track while being able to do this with his son, and looks forward to the 2023 Games.

Chloe Barnes, 15, Pinckney, MI – A lesson Barnes has learned already in her young life is that winning and being the best does not always mean earning medals and trophies. Sometimes, it means just stepping out onto the field, playing, and giving it your all. Barnes has chronic bone issues in her legs that cause her a lot of physical pain and mental anguish. A few days prior to the 2022 Summer Games field hockey tournament, she was not sure she would even be able to participate. Ultimately, she persevered and played despite everything she was going through. Barnes managed to find the energy and stamina to play in the tournament and rally her team. Her determination coupled with her positive attitude and energy was felt by her teammates and made the tournament a great experience for her whole team. Barnes is grateful each day she gets to play field hockey, and proud she was able to finish her fifth field hockey season.



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A sophomore at Dexter High School, Barnes represents all the qualities of an Athlete of the Year with her grit, determination, and love for the game.

Andrew von Matt, 15, Gladwin, MI – Being a team player comes naturally to von Matt, a sophomore at Gladwin High School. Nominated by his District 5 15U hockey coaches, he routinely went above and above for his teammates and displayed tremendous amounts of respect for all of those around him. Von Matt does the little things, like picking up the pucks at the end of practice and shaking referees' hands. He also makes notable impacts, as he stepped up to play defense when a teammate broke his arm although he made the team as a forward. He played the position the rest of the tournament and performed extremely well. The District 5 team made it to the gold medal game where it went to overtime and sudden death. Von Matt was on the ice and created a perfect situation where his team got the goal and won due to his assist. He helped his team win the gold medal due to his team player mentality, sportsmanship, and dedication to the game. Outside of hockey, he plays soccer, runs track, and kicks for the JV football team. Some of his favorite athletes include Usain Bolt, Wayne Gretzky, and Serena Williams because they have one thing in common: they do not give up, and neither does von Matt.

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About the Meijer State Games of Michigan: The Meijer State Games of Michigan hosts Olympic-style, multi-sport events that welcome 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 90,000+ athletes. The Meijer State Games of Michigan has also contributed over \$35 million in estimated economic impact to cities throughout Michigan.