American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, Inc. (AAASP) Announces Nominees for the 2026 ASPIRE Awards

Event to Take Place Sunday, September 27 at Locust Grove Event Center

Atlanta, August 20, 2026– The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, Inc. (AAASP) is pleased to announce that more than 78 individuals and organizations have been nominated for **2026 ASPIRE Awards**, representing 23 categories that highlight outstanding contributions in support of student athletes with qualifying disabilities. The **Adapted Sports Programs in Recreation and Education (ASPIRE) Awards** recognize the exemplary efforts of individuals and organizations that have been instrumental in advancing AAASP's mission to expand access to adapted sports programming nationwide.

The Eighth Annual ASPIRE Awards Celebration will take place on Sunday, September 27th at the Locust Grove Event Center, 280 Mose Brown Road, Locust Grove, Georgia. The event will be emceed by actor, writer and television personality **Patrick Cusick**, and will feature keynote remarks from special guest, **Tasha Schuh**, Speaker, Author, and Resilience Coach. During the ceremony, AAASP will honor these 78 nominees and name the ASPIRE award recipients for 2026.

Nominees for this year's ASPIRE Awards are listed below, and continued on next three pages*:

Adapted Track & Field Athlete of the Year	
Jenna Proctor	Calhoun High School, Gordon County Schools
Laila Kindness	Warner Robins High School, Houston County School District
Ben Vondrak	Wesleyan School (Private), Peachtree Corners, GA

Coach of the Year Award – JV	
Charles "Drew" Freeman	Muscogee Lions
Harlon Matthews	Georgia Storm
Ryan Johnson	Clarke Classic City Dawgs

Coach of the Year Award – Varsity	
Rachel Sprayberry	West Georgia Wolverines
Jaqueline Randall	Houston County Sharks
Kristen Harter	Peach County Rolling Trojans

Community-Based Award	
Lakeshore Foundation	Lakeshore Lakers / Lakeshore Foundation, Birmingham, AL
Adaptive Sports Northwest (ASNW)	Portland, OR
Tulalip Orcas Special Olympics	Snohomish County, WA

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Education-Based Award	
Houston County School District	Houston County Sharks
Muscogee County School District	Muscogee Lions
Clarke County School District	Clarke Classic City Dawgs

Eli Wolff Advocacy Award	
Jacob Couch	Kyle Pease Foundation
Dr. Taka Hines	Atlanta Public Schools
Tanya Anderson	Georgia High School Association
Central Georgia Car Scene	Peach County Schools
Dr. Alan Long	BSN Sports
Robert Hicks	Clarke County School District

Gail Hendrick Champion of Support Award	
Jamie Schneller	Houston County School District
Samuel Gonzalez	Clayton County Public Schools
Russell Bentley	Houston County School District
Virginia and Curtis Tabron	Houston County School District
Kerry Whaley	Troup County Parks and Recreation
Greg Sullivan	Atlanta Public Schools

High School Senior Athlete Award	
Blakelea Speer	West Georgia Wolverines
Randall Montanez Aguirre	Gwinnett Heat
Caleb Merriken	Muscogee Lions
Caden Nelson	Houston County Sharks
Anthony Cuti	Houston County Sharks

Leslie Sweatman Official of the Year Award	
Ted Childs	Official
Aron Young	Official
Sherry Richards	Official

Media Hero Award	
Score Atlanta / Georgia High School Daily	Atlanta, GA
Elaine Krivsky	Houston County Sharks media
GPB Sports	Atlanta, GA

Most Improved JV Athlete	
Halyn Duncan	Clarke Classic City Dawgs
Hunter Culverson	Muscogee Lions
Mickelson McGraw	Muscogee Lions
Eli Harper	Houston County Sharks

Most Improved Varsity Athlete	
Ruby Stachowski	Houston County Sharks
Jeremiah Rhodes	Peach County Rolling Trojans
Jose Aguirre	Clayton Eagles

The Dr. Ralph Swearngin Spirit of AAASP Sportsmanship Award	
Jaden Screen	Houston County Sharks
Jace Tolliver	Peach County Rolling Trojans
Reid Peteet	Clarke Classic City Dawgs
Caleb Merriken	Muscogee Lions

Vaughn-Storms Founders' Award	
DeKalb County School District	DeKalb County School District
Kyle Pease Foundation	Atlanta, Georgia

Varsity Scholar Athlete	
Jenna Proctor	Calhoun High School, Gordon County Schools
Jeremiah Rhodes	Peach County Rolling Trojans
Anthony Cuti	Houston County Sharks

Wheelchair Basketball Athlete of the Year Award – JV	
Ja'Corian Carter	Georgia Storm
Marissa Miller	Georgia Storm
Cullen Minter	Muscogee Lions
Paul Hart	Muscogee Lions

Wheelchair Basketball Athlete of the Year Award – Varsity	
Michael Martins	Clayton Eagles
Anthony Cuti	Houston County Sharks
Caleb Watters	Peach County Rolling Trojans

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Wheelchair Football Athlete of the Year Award – JV	
Paul Hart	Muscogee Lions
Caleb Merriken	Muscogee Lions
Lane Rogers	Clarke Classic City Dawgs
Cullen Minter	Muscogee Lions
William Hannah	Georgia Storm
Piper Barronton	Houston County Sharks

Wheelchair Football Athlete of the Year Award – Varsity	
Gary Woodruff	Clayton Eagles
Caden Nelson	Houston County Sharks
Jordan Parks	West Georgia Wolverines

Wheelchair Handball Athlete of the Year Award - JV	
Natalynn Wakeland	Houston County Sharks
Lane Rogers	Clarke Classic City Dawgs
Paul Hart	Muscogee Lions
Ja'Corian Carter	Georgia Storm
Maggie McGraw	Muscogee Lions

Wheelchair Handball Athlete of the Award -Varsity	
AJ Burns	Peach County Rolling Trojans
Marisol Madrigal	Gwinnett Heat
Xavier Bullock	Clayton Eagles

Please note: *The ASPIRE Awards nomination listing reflects nominees who met all eligibility requirements and fulfilled the nomination criteria outlined on the website. Nominees were placed in the award category appropriate to their qualifications and nomination.*

Thank you to the following 2026 AAASP ASPIRE Awards Sponsors: the Georgia Department of Education, the State of Georgia, the Georgia High School Association (GHSA), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Northside Hospital, Stout Creative, Varsity Brands and the AAASP Board of Directors.

Plan to join us for the event at Locust Grove Event Center – at 4:00 pm – to celebrate the nominees and winners with us! Tickets are only $50 and includes a catered dinner at the event! Learn more at: https://adaptedsports.org/2026-aspire-awards/ and RSVP for the event at: 2026 ASPIRE Awards - AdaptED Sports

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. AAASP 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 qualifying disabilities attending elementary, middle, and high school. For more information, please visit our website at http://adaptedsports.org or join our conversations on Twitter at: @AdaptedSports.

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