

Welcome to the 15th annual Wayne County Challenge end of season celebration. I'm Brian Schleeper, race director of the Girls Inc. 5K and IU East Run with the Wolves 5K. Tonight we'll give out awards for overall and age group performances and to another large group of people who completed all eight races of the series. While we're here tonight to recognize accomplishments from 2017 I also want to mention that the schedule for 2018 is set and there were schedule cards on your tables which you're encouraged to take. We hope you'll take advantage of the Carpe Viam special which allows you to enter all eight series races at once, at a discounted rate. This year the program is available again for \$130, a savings of \$30 over the course of the year on pre-registration rates and \$70 off day of registration prices. Signing up for Carpe Viam also insures that you get a shirt or other swag from each race. Online registration for the Carpe Viam special and season opening Girls Inc. 5K are now open by going to the WCC website, wcchallenge.org.

2017 was another excellent season for the Wayne County Challenge. One third of the people receiving awards tonight will be doing so for the first time. We also had a record breaking age group performance in the women's division. And we had 89 people complete all 8 races.

While we're here to give out awards and recognize some talented athletes I would also like to acknowledge the impact participation in WCC events has on our community. Wayne County Challenge races are put on by nonprofit organizations who benefit from the funds raised at each event. This year's races raised approximately \$38,000 for the eight member organizations. These groups use these funds to give kids a positive place to grow, put on the annual Fireworks display, support high school and college athletic programs, environmental education and our local parks. Participation at races not only improves the health and well being of those running and walking, it also gives back to our community. So we would like to thank all of you for supporting the WCC and these organizations.

Now i'd like to have the remaining race directors stand and be recognized for all their hard work:

Rick Duncan – Fireworks 5K – benefiting the Richmond American Legion Post 65
(NOT HERE)

Paula Head & Amanda Allen – Heartbreak Hill 5K – benefiting Hagerstown High School Athletics

Beth Newton – Flying Eagles 5K – benefiting the Western Wayne Elementary PTO

Keith Morey – Fall Foliage 5K/10K – benefiting Cope Environmental Center **(NOT HERE)**

Mike Day -Turkey Chase 7K-benefiting the Centerville High School Athletic Department

Ashley Miller-Rosemary Weigel Frostbite 5K – benefiting the Richmond Parks Dept.

Additionally I want to acknowledge the other members of the Wayne County Challenge committee: Pat Bowers – Treasurer, Nicole Andreas-at large member and Ashley Stephens, chair.

While all these folks do a fantastic job of putting on quality events for each of you, we are a volunteer run group and are always looking for more help. Maybe you're a spouse or family member of someone who runs our races or maybe just someone interested in giving back to the series. We're always in need of additional help with race set up, timing and the always popular other duties as assigned. Plus you do get volunteer points for helping with one race, as some of tonight's award winners did, so maybe you're injured and have to miss a race. If you'd like to help out feel free to contact any of the race directors or committee members.

Finally i'd like to thank a few of our sponsors. Tonight's event is supported by First Bank Richmond and West End Bank. Reid Hospital provided financial support for the timing team and equipment for the 2017 season as well as hosting tonight's dinner. And once again Whitewater Valley Rehabilitation will be our Premier Series Sponsor. We're incredibly grateful for their support of the WCC and our mission to help people become more active through our events. Please join me in thanking these sponsors who help make the series possible.

Before we get to our overall and age group award winners I want to announce the “Runner’s Choice” award winners as voted upon by all of you.

Best Swag-Rosemary Weigle Frostbite 5K

Most Challenging Course-Hagerstown Heartbreak Hill 5K

Easiest Course-Girls Inc. 5K

Worst Weather-Turkey Chase 7K

Most Fun Course-Fireworks 5K

Best PR Course-Flying Eagle 5K

Best Awards-Fall Foliage 5K/10K

Best Overall Race-Rosemary Weigle Frostbite 5K

Thanks again to everyone who voted.

Now let's move to the awards. Winners please come up when your name is called, we'll start with the overall awards first.

The third place overall female is Annette Hamm. Annette began running WCC races in 2016 and ran all eight events, finishing second in her age group. In 2017 she did all eight again and actually finished tied for second overall but lost out on a tiebreaker, which was fastest overall race time, after finishing 14 seconds behind our next award winner, at the Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to first time winner Annette.

The second place overall female is Brittni Gettinger. Brittni has run all 8 races since she started with the WCC in 2013, five seasons straight. She finished third overall in 2015 and 2016 and moved up a spot this year, because of her 14 second margin....see every second does count. Congratulations Brittni.

This year's overall female winner is Chelsea Halderman. Chelsea has only missed two races in five years and ran all eight races for the third straight time. She took the overall title for the third straight year, tying her for second most in the women's division, as she finished in the top three overall in every race. Congratulations to Chelsea.

The third place overall male finisher is Brian Green. Brian has missed only one race since starting with the WCC in 2012 and did all eight for the fifth straight year. In 2016 he won his age group and in 2017 he made it to the overall podium as he won his division in each race. Congratulations Brian.

The second place overall male finisher is Ron Ross. This is Ron's fourth time finishing in the top three overall, taking the top spot in 2014 and second the next two years. Once again Ron finishes in the runner up position after doing all eight races for the fourth straight season. Congratulations to Ron Ross.

The 2017 overall male winner is Jason Newport. Jason has been running WCC races since our first season in 2003. This is his third straight overall title and sixth total. This is the most ever in the men's division and ties him with Pam Mertz for most overall championships in WCC history. He ran all eight races for the fifth time and won six of the eight events. Congratulations to our overall male winner for a record sixth time Jason Newport.

Now we'll move on to the age group winners.

The winner of the female nine and under age group is Addison Talbot. This was Addison's first year participating in WCC races and she competed in seven of the eight. She had a perfect season winning her division in all seven. Congratulations to first time winner Addison Talbot.

The winner of the male nine and under age group is Kevin Muckridge. Kevin ran seven races in his first year with the WCC and finished first or second in his division in all seven. Congratulations to first time age group winner Kevin Muckridge.

The winner of the female 10-12 age group is Gwenyth Falcone. Gwenyth won the 9 and under division in 2016, her first season, by winning her age group in all six races she ran. She did seven races in 2017, taking first five times and second the other two. Congratulations to two time age group winner Gwenyth Falcone.

The winner of the male 10-12 age group is Brayden Lee. Brayden ran all eight races, placing in the top four in the division in each race. Congratulations to first time winner Brayden Lee.

The winner of the female 13-15 age group is Ella Parker. Ella ran all eight races for the fourth year in a row, and had four age group wins in 2017. Congratulations to first time winner Ella Parker.

The winner of the male 13-15 age group is Jonathan McLane. Jonathan ran all eight races in 2016 and finished second in his division. He ran all eight again in 2017 and took the top spot by placing first or second in every race. Congratulations to first time winner Jonathan McLane.

The winner of the female 16-18 age group is Jenna Shelley. Jenna has run every race for five straight years. She won the 10-12 division in 2013, the 13-15 group in 2015 and 2016 and now wins her third different division title. Congratulations to four time winner Jenna Shelley

The winner of the male 16-18 age group is Josiah Seals. Josiah ran all 8 races in 2016 and won his first age group title. He repeated both feats in 2017 as he held onto his crown. Congratulations to two time winner and defending champion Josiah Seals.

The winner of the female 19-24 age group is Ashley Toschlog. Ashley ran six of the eight races but earned enough points to finish as fourth overall woman. She was the second overall finisher at the Girls Inc. and Heartbreak Hill 5K's and took the top spot at the Fall Foliage 10K and Frostbite 5K. Congratulations to first time winner Ashley Toschlog.

There was no winner of the male 19-24 age group because no one ran the required five races in this division.

The winner of the female 25-29 age group is Mariah Seals. Mariah has run every race for seven straight years and won the 19-24 division four times. She moved up to a new age group in 2017 but kept on winning. Congratulations to five time winner Mariah Seals.

The winner of the male 25-29 age group is Logan Seals. Logan completed all eight races for the eighth time. He won the 19-24 age group three times and this is his third title in the 25-29 group. Congratulations to six time age group champion Logan Seals.

The winner of the female 30-34 age group is Aubrey Hickey. Aubrey ran all eight races in 2017 for the first time as she won the division six times and finished second the other two. She wins this category for the second straight year. Congratulations to two time winner Aubrey Hickey.

The winner of the male 30-34 age group is John Wesler. John started his WCC career by running three races in 2016. In 2017 he did all eight and had two age group wins and finished third overall at the Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to first time winner John Wesler.

The winner of the female 35-39 age group is Daisey Logue. This is Daisy's second straight title in this division. She ran seven races, finishing first twice and second the other five times. Congratulations to repeat winner Daisy Logue.

The winner of the male 35-39 age group is Scott Meinardi. Scott earned his fifth age group title by only ten points, the closest men's category. He won the 25-29 group three times, the 30-34 group once and now the 35-39 division. He also ran all eight races for the third time. Congratulations to five time age group winner Scott Meinardi.

The winner of the female 40-44 age group is Leslie Rogers. This is Leslie's fifth age group title, covering three different divisions, as she placed in the top three of her age group at every race. She also ran all eight races for the second time. Congratulations to five time winner Leslie Rogers.

The winner of the 40-44 male age group is Dave Snow. After winning the 35-39 age group four years in a row Dave moved up a group but kept on winning. He also completed all eight races for the eighth straight year. Congratulations to five time winner Dave Snow.

The winner of the female 45-49 age group is Kathy Shelley. Kathy won her age group in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016. In her "off" year of 2015 she was third overall female. 2017 was Kathy's sixth straight year of doing all eight races. Congratulations to five time age group winner Kathy Shelley.

The winner of the male 45-49 age group is Todd Moistner. Todd ran all eight races for the second time and finished in the top four of his division in each race. Congratulations to first time winner Todd Moistner.

The winner of the female 50-54 age group is Linda Fischer. Linda ran all eight races for the fifth straight year as she took her second age group title after also winning in 2014. Congratulations to two time winner Linda Fischer.

The winner of the male 50-54 age group is John Lukow. John began running WCC races in 2016 and did all eight. He repeated the feat in 2017 as he took his first age group title. Congratulations to first time winner John Lukow.

The winner of the female 55-59 age group is Sabrena Bartram. Sabrena ran all eight races for the fourth time and took her fourth age group title. She finished in the top spot five times and second the other three. Congratulations to four time winner Sabrena Bartram.

The winner of the male 55-59 age group is Gregg Duke. Gregg ran all eight races for the second time and won his division at all 8. He earned enough points to tie for third place overall male but lost out on a tiebreaker. Congratulations to first time winner Gregg Duke.

The winner of the female 60-64 age group is Anne Liebert. Anne ran all eight races in 2015 and won her age group. She did both once again in 2017 as she placed in the top three in her division at each race. Congratulations to repeat winner Anne Liebert.

The winner of the male 60-64 age group is Richard Chew. Richard has been running WCC races since our first year in 2003. He has run all eight three times including 2013 when he was third overall male. In 2017 he took his first age group crown by taking first in each of the seven races he ran. Congratulations to first time age group winner Richard Chew.

The winner of the female 65-69 award is Ellen Johnson. This was Ellen's fifth year of doing all eight races and fifth age group title. She placed first or second in her division in every race. Congratulations to five time winner Ellen Johnson.

The winner of the male 65-69 age group is Jim Robertson. This is Jim's third straight age group win as he ran seven races, winning his division in all seven. Congratulations to three time winner Jim Robertson.

The winner of the male 70 and over age group is Dennis Mann. This is Dennis's fourth age group title, over two different divisions. He ran six races in 2017 placing in the top three in every one. Congratulations to four time winner Dennis Mann.

You may have noticed I skipped over the female 70 and over age group. That's because the winner of this division now has more age group titles than anyone in WCC history, man or woman. This is not only Pat Bowers's tenth age group win, it's her tenth STRAIGHT age group win. Pat began her streak in 2008 and preceded to win the 65-69 division five years in a row. She has now won the 70 and over group five years straight. During this stretch Pat has run 60 races and finished first in her division in 58 of those. The last time Pat was beat by someone in her age group was at the 2012 Frostbite 5K. Congratulations to ten time defending age group champion Pat Bowers.

Let's congratulate all of our age group and overall winners one more time. You may have noticed that many of the winners who were just up here ran all eight races. Almost 75% of the age group and overall champions completed each event this year. The mission of the WCC is in part *to encourage and reward the participation of all types and ages of runners*. In a moment we will give out awards to the 89 individuals who participated in all 8 races, many of whom will be making their second trip to the stage.

But first we do have one more individual award to give out to our most improved runner. This award goes to the individual who shows the highest degree of race improvement over the course of the season. This year's winner improved his time by over 16 minutes throughout the course of the season. He ran all eight races and dropped his time from the season opening Girls Inc. 5K to the Fall Foliage 5K by 16:01. People don't generally run slower at Girls Inc., voted easiest course, and faster at the Fall Foliage, one of the tougher courses. But that's exactly what this year's winner did. Congratulations to the 2017 Wayne County Challenge most improved runner James Browning.

There's no award for this particular honor but we do like to recognize the holder of the longest race streak. For the 12th season in a row Judy Pierce ran every race, continuing her streak which began with the 2006 season. This means Judy has completed 96 races straight. Not only is this the longest current race streak, it's now the longest streak ever for the WCC as she passed previous record holder Kevin Shelley, who ran the first 95 races in the series. Congratulations Judy and thank you for your commitment and dedication to the WCC. Please stand to be recognized.

We'll now present certificates and shirts to the runners who completed all 8 races this season. We appreciate the support these 89 have shown to the WCC and the organizations that put on and benefit from each race. Congratulations to each of you. Please come forward when your name is called to receive your awards and please remain on the stage so we can take a group photograph of all of you.

Thank you again for attending tonight's event and your support of the Wayne County Challenge and it's member organizations. We look forward to our 16th year and the season opening Girls Inc. 5K, Saturday May 12. Remember online registration for this race and the Carpe Viam program is now open on the WCC website wcchallenge.org