



NAYS YOUTH SPORTS ADVOCATE

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YOUTH SPORTS CONGRESS: Fantastic sessions, speakers and networking opportunities

18th annual event features keynotes by NHL Hall of Fame player Pat LaFontaine and College Football Hall of Fame coach Lou Holtz

An outstanding line-up of sessions is once again on tap for this year's 18th annual Youth Sports Congress, the signature event of the National Alliance for Youth Sports.

The Congress, open to anyone interested in youth sports, will take place Nov. 13-16 in Orlando, Fla., in conjunction with the Athletic Business Show at the Orange County Convention Center. Significant savings are available now through early bird registration that is under way.

This year's Congress begins with a must-see motivational keynote on perseverance by Pat LaFontaine, one of the greatest NHL players of all-time and a Hockey Hall of Fame inductee.

LaFontaine's keynote kicks off a special evening that includes recognizing the winners of the prestigious Excellence in Youth Sports Award as well as honoring the NAYS Volunteer Coach of the Year and the NAYS Parent of the Year. A fun-filled reception follows the awards ceremony.

LaFontaine, a long-time youth sports advocate, is the Vice President of Hockey Development for the NHL. He played for the New York Islanders, Buffalo Sabres and New York Rangers during his illustrious 15-year career. In 2017 he



Pat LaFontaine



Lou Holtz



was named one of the 100 Greatest NHL Players in history.

Here's a quick glimpse at the Congress schedule:

THURSDAY – NOV. 14

Legendary football coach Lou Holtz delivers the first of two can't-miss Athletic Business keynotes. His session, Game Plan for Success, will focus on overcoming seemingly impossible

challenges by setting your own goals and working to achieve them. Among his many accomplishments, Holtz is the only coach in the history of college football to take six different teams to a bowl game. The author of three New York Times best-selling books, his Three Rules for Living a Good Life: A Game Plan for After Graduation, was released earlier this year.

Prior to Holtz's keynote, this first full day of the Congress begins with a panel session on Youth Sports Development. Clay Walker, executive director of the National Fitness Foundation, will moderate the session that will include representatives from an array of youth sports organizations.

Tami Matheny, owner of Refuse2LoseCoaching and author of The Confident Athlete and The Confidence Journal, follows with a session focused on building one's confidence and helping instill it in others. A session on building mental skills wraps up the afternoon, led by Dr. Daniel Wann, a professor of psychology at Murray State University; and Dr. Julie Partridge, a professor of sport and exercise psychology at Southern Illinois University.

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City of Reynoldsburg (Ohio)
Raising the bar > See inside for details...



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Recreation agencies earning Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation

Recreation agencies across the country and on U.S. military bases worldwide are earning the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation which recognizes those who have met a high standard in administering youth sports programming.

Created by the National Alliance for Youth Sports earlier this year, the designation has been earned by more than 80 organizations. Applying for it is easy, and free.

“The City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department’s Athletics Division applied for the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider Designation in an effort to determine if our policies and procedures are on par with those from the best organizations across the country,” said Jason Simpson, Athletic Program Director.

“Applying for the designation is a thorough, complete process that takes a look at every aspect of youth athletics programming within an organization and provides validation for the efforts of the recreation professionals involved in putting those programs together.”

Today’s youth sports climate overflows with programming, making it challenging for organizations to stand out among the crowd, and difficult for parents to gauge which ones can deliver high-quality experiences for young athletes.

“Parents typically have lots of questions and valid concerns when deciding where to enroll their child,” says John Engh, executive director of NAYS. “We have taken the guesswork out of this important time in a young person’s life. When parents see that a program has the Quality Program Provider designation they

will know that we have already asked all the tough questions that they may not have even considered or perhaps were afraid of bringing up.”

Organizations must have the Quality Program Provider designation in order to be eligible for the Excellence in Youth Sports Awards, which honor specific initiatives, projects, campaigns or special elements of a



“Parents have many choices when it comes to youth sports, so the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation is an important promotional tool to allow our city to set ourselves apart from the rest.”

– Rance Gaede, Recreation Supervisor. City of Tamarac (Fla.)

youth sports program that shows the organization has gone above and beyond in providing a high-quality experience for its participants.

“Our department recognizes that we have to actively demonstrate that we are providing the very best youth sports programs that meet all the needs of children in our community,” says Rance Gaede, recreation supervisor for the City of Tamarac (Fla.). “Parents have many choices when it comes to youth sports, so the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation is an important promotional tool to allow our city to set ourselves apart from the rest.”

A youth sports program earns the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation if it fulfills all the components associated with these five key requirements:

- Written Policies and Procedures
- Volunteer Screening
- Coach Training
- Parent Education
- Accountability

Within each of these five areas are important details that can sabotage experiences and ruin young lives that organizations must prove they address in order to earn the designation, such as if written policies exist regarding playing time; if concussion awareness information is disseminated to coaches; if volunteers are

subject to background checks and social security number verification; if the organization has a system for receiving and responding to complaints; if the organization solicits feedback to evaluate programs; and more.

“We applied for the Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation so we can streamline our programs to fit the national model that NAYS provides,” said Brad Heacox, athletic coordinator for Collierville (Tenn.) Parks and Recreation. “To us, this designation means that we are trying to move our programs in the right direction to provide the best possible experience for our participants. We want to provide youth sports programs where others can take some of the things we do to help make certain aspects of their programs better, and vice-versa.” ■

Apply today! Visit nays.org/quality for details.



City of Reynoldsburg (Ohio) continues raising the bar

The City of Reynoldsburg Parks and Recreation Department in Ohio is one of many organizations nationwide using a new background check system aimed at keeping young athletes safe and unwanted individuals from infiltrating programs.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) teamed up with Verified Volunteers to give its member organizations a quick, easy and efficient way to provide background checks for their volunteer coaches.

“We wanted to be able to provide background checks for all of our head coaches and assistant coaches,” said Chris Skidmore, Recreation Superintendent at Reynoldsburg. “We do background checks using Verified Volunteers on every coach no matter how many sports they coach with us each year. Verified Volunteers is an outstanding product that has streamlined things and made them more efficient for us.”

Adds Donna Bauman, Parks & Recreation Director at Reynoldsburg: “In addition to that, for the administrative side, the process of entering individual paper forms



was time consuming and costly from a staff perspective. It was someone’s job to enter those in manually, one by one, and with hundreds, probably upwards of thousands of volunteers, it was very costly from a budget standpoint.”

The upgrades in the screening process have been noticed by those stepping forward to volunteer, too.

“Making a good first impression with the coaches is really important,” Bauman said. “Being able to introduce the screening process in a convenient way is a good

start to that volunteer relationship. Their time is valuable, and we wanted to try to make things as efficient as possible. Volunteers have told us how much it has helped them get the information they need in a timely manner. Before, our volunteers would have to make time to come into the office and fill out paperwork. Now, they do not have to fill out paper forms. It really has been a grand slam home run for us.”

Having been with the city for more than 12 years, Bauman is thrilled with the changes as her staff continues to focus their efforts on providing high-quality, new and cost-friendly programming that keeps kids coming back season after season to participate in healthy activities.

“We feel that we are offering a lot of different recreation programs at a cost-effective rate,” Skidmore said. “This allows families to participate in sports without breaking the bank and they can try out many different programs. Most young kids like to try three, maybe four different sports before deciding to specialize as they get older.” ■

Start Smart Basketball delivers memorable experiences at Queen Anne’s (Md.) County

The Queen Anne’s County (Md.) Park and Recreation department is always on the lookout for ways to enhance its strong youth sports programming line-up, and the recent addition of the Start Smart Basketball program has done exactly that.

“The Start Smart program is a great start for parents, whether they want to get involved in coaching in the future or they just want to coach their own child effectively,” said Recreation Specialist Stacy

Voorhees. “The fact that it has examples of some performance cues written right into the program is hugely beneficial to parents.”

Start Smart Basketball is a developmentally appropriate introductory program for children 3 to 5 years old. The program prepares children for organized basketball in a fun, non-threatening environment.



“The feedback from parents was very positive,” Voorhees said. “They really enjoyed the program and could see the growth in their children as they moved through the program.”

Besides helping prepare kids for organized basketball without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt, the program helps kids engage in social interaction. ■

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FRIDAY – NOV. 15

A session examining the impact technology has on learning and development begins the day, led by John Kriger, adjunct faculty at the Rutgers Center for Alcohol Studies, and School of Social Work Office of Continuing Education. He's also the author of *Turned On & Tuned Out, A Guide to Understanding and Managing Tech Dependence*.

Steven Smith, co-founder and president of Guardian Defense, will present a session on planning and responding when terror strikes; and Katie Scott, Senior Special Projects Coordinator for the National Athletic Trainers Association, will deliver a presentation on the

best practices for handling emergency situations in youth sports.

The day also features another outstanding Athletic Business keynote from Bonnie St. John, a Paralympic skiing medalist, Rhodes Scholar, Fortune 500 Business Consultant and best-selling author. Her session, *Normal is Overrated – Aim Higher!*, encourages audiences to strive for extraordinary results.

SATURDAY – NOV. 16

The Congress wraps up with an interactive roundtable on youth sports, exploring the benchmark standards that programs should be focused on. ■

What's NEW on the NAYS Blog at NAYS.ORG

► **Just shut your mouth and play!**

Long-time youth sports official encourages young athletes, and their coaches and parents, to silence the trash talking and complaining about calls

► **Developing physical literacy in children**

A community sports program's role for making it happen

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Would you like the outstanding work you, your staff or someone in your community is doing to be featured on NAYS.ORG?

We want to hear from you to be able to share your efforts with others. Send your story ideas to Greg Bach at gbach@nays.org