

Hundreds of Athletes with Disabilities from Across the US Compete at The Hartford Nationals in Grand Rapids, July 11-17

Paralympic gold medalist and wheelchair basketball player Matt Scott to surprise local athletes with custom-fit adaptive sports equipment

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, UNITED STATES, July 1, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Hartford Nationals conducted by Move United, the largest and longest-running national sport championship event for athletes with a physical disability, visual impairment, and/or intellectual disability, will take place in Grand Rapids, July 11-17. A first for the city and only the second time in Michigan, the competition is hosted locally by the West Michigan Sports Commission (WMSC) and Mary Free Bed Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports.



An athlete competes in track at The Hartford Nationals conducted by Move United in 2025

New to the competition lineup this year is boccia. Other contested sports include archery, para powerlifting, paratriathlon, shooting, swimming, track and field, and wheelchair and para standing tennis.

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Athletes competing must have qualified through one of more than 35 sanctioned competitions that took place across the country throughout the Move United member network, a national governing body, or High School Athletic Association sanctioned event. In 2024, 397 athletes with disabilities and over 150 coaches from 34 states and the District of Columbia participated, with those numbers expected to increase this year.

“This national competition has been a stepping stone for many athletes to progress and

compete at an international level, including the Paralympic Games,” said Move United CEO Glenn Merry. “In fact, 62 percent of the athletes that represented Team USA at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris either competed at this event or participated in another Move United program or event.”

During the event, The Hartford –joined by Paralympic gold medalist and wheelchair basketball player Matt Scott—will surprise a group of 4 athletes with custom-fit adaptive sports equipment. In addition, one athlete, nominated by their peers, will receive The Hartford’s Human Achievement Award. This honor recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the adaptive sports movement and serves as a role model to others. The award includes a \$2,500 grant to support the recipient’s training and travel as they pursue their athletic goals.

“The Hartford Nationals is more than a competition—it’s a celebration of resilience, excellence, and community,” said The Hartford’s Chief Marketing and Customer Officer, Claire Burns. “We continue our mission to increase participation in adaptive sports by making competitions, local events, and equipment more accessible to youth and adult athletes. Through our long-standing partnership with Move United, we are proud to help remove barriers, creating more opportunities for athletes of all abilities to experience the transformative power, and sense of belonging, that sport can bring.”

In addition to the competitions taking place, clinics and educational sessions will include sports such as sitting volleyball, adaptive judo, para pickleball, wheelchair softball, and tennis. Paralympic Gold Medalist Daniel Romanchuk and Susannah Scaroni will also lead a track clinic and Tatyana McFadden, one of Team USA’s most decorated summer Paralympic athletes of all time, will participate in activities throughout the week. Other Paralympic athletes, such as Rudy Garcia-Tolson, Amanda McGrory, and Bobby Body will serve as announcers during competition.

The local organizing committee is spearheaded by the West Michigan Sports Commission, who competed through a nationwide bid process to host the event in 2025 and 2026, with support from Mary Free Bed Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports. Local venues hosting competition events throughout the week include Calvin University’s Gainey Athletic Facility (track & field), Calvin University’s Venema Aquatic Center (swimming), Mary Free Bed YMCA (archery and para powerlifting), Millennium Park (paratriathlon), MSA Woodland (boccia, shooting, opening and closing ceremonies), and MVP Athletic Club (tennis).

“It’s an honor for the region and state to host The Hartford Nationals in Michigan, and we are excited to showcase our many athletic venues, including our state-of-the-art Mary Free Bed YMCA, as competition sites for this prestigious event,” said Mike Guswiler, president of the West Michigan Sports Commission. “Our organization is no stranger to Olympic-style sporting events, regularly hosting the Meijer State Games of Michigan plus the USA Masters Games, State Games of America and Transplant Games of America in the past. We are thrilled to partner with Mary Free Bed Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports to now host this multi-sport event that allows

hundreds of athletes with disabilities to compete on a national stage.”

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