

Nancy Gustafson and Mary Ellen Whitney Inducted Into 2025 Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame

National Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame recognizes achievements in summer and winter adaptive sports in the Competitor and Contributor categories

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, January 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nancy Gustafson, from Park City, Utah, and Mary Ellen "Mare" Whitney, from Wynantskill, New York, were both recently inducted into the National Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame. The Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame, hosted by Move United, recognizes outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to summer and winter adaptive sports.



Mary Ellen Whitney is inducted into the National Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame in the Winter Contributor Category by Move United CEO Glenn Merry.

Gustafson was inducted in the Winter Competition category, which recognizes an individual athlete who has, in their participation in national and international competition, distinguished themselves through outstanding performance and superior sportsmanship over the span of at least three years. Gustafson grew up in Pittsfield, MA. She started skiing at age 2 and started racing at age 6 at the Bousquet Ski Area. Gustafson attended the ski racing academy at Green Mountain Valley School in Vermont for four years (grades 10 to post graduate). Growing up, in addition to skiing also showed horses and played soccer from grade 8 through her sophomore year in college. She was also the first girl to play in boys Little League baseball in Pittsfield.

She would attend the University of New Hampshire, where she competed in NCAA Division 1 Ski Championships her freshman and sophomore years. It was at the 1985 NCAA Ski Championships her sophomore year that she struck a lift tower during practice, partially paralyzing her left arm and hand. She was 20 years old.

The following year, in 1986, Gustafson would win four gold at the World Disabled Championships in Sweden. She would also win 5 gold at the 1990 World Championships in Winter Park and 2 bronze at the 1996 World Championships in Lech, Austria.

As far as Paralympic achievements, Gustafson would take home a silver medal at the 1988 Paralympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria. The following Paralympics in Albertville France in 1992, she would earn 3 gold medals. And again at the 1994 Paralympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, she would get 4 more gold, bring the total number to 8 Paralympic medals (7 gold and 1 silver) in four disciplines (downhill, slalom, GS, and Super G) over three Paralympic Games. In the US and Canadian National Championships, she has a total of 33 gold, 6 silver, and 1 bronze medal.

Gustafson went on to graduate from Colorado State University's (CSU) College of Veterinary Medicine in 1999. In 2004, Gustafson was an Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine while simultaneously spending additional time studying medical oncology. Gustafson then received her Master of Science in Medical

Dosimetry from the University of Wisconsin LaCrosse. After a long career as a Veterinary Radiation Oncologist, she joined the Huntsman Cancer Hospital at the University of Utah in 2019 to treat humans. Gustafson met her husband in Park City, Utah and they were married in Nepal at the Tengboche monastery on their trek to Mount Everest Basecamp.



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Paralympic Medalist Nancy Gustafson

Beyond her Professional endeavors, she is now a Level III Certified Ski Instructor and regularly engages in both Alpine and Nordic Skiing, Cycling, Hiking, Rafting, and Pickleball as her Hobbies. Among her awards and honors include being named the 1989 Colorado Amateur Sports Athlete of the Year and the USOC Athlete of the Year 1989 and 1993. She was inducted into the University of New Hampshire Hall of Honor and will be inducted into the US Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame in April 2026.

“Growing up, my dreams and goals revolved around

winning Olympic, World Cup and World Ski Championships. But after the accident that paralyzed

my arm and hand, those dreams took a new shape. Instead I won Paralympic medals as well as Disabled National Championships and World Championships. But I surely never thought those dreams would lead me to the Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame, Gustafson said. "To be inducted this year is truly unimaginable and a tremendous honor. It is the culmination of decades of hard work, sacrifices, disappointments and accomplishments. And I am grateful beyond words."

Mary Ellen Whitney was inducted in the winter contributor category. This award recognizes an individual who has a minimum of five years of experience in adaptive sports as a coach, administrator, founder, event director or other leadership role. The inductee has made a significant contribution to the field, including innovative techniques, specialized equipment, program development, coaching, education, or administration/management.

In 1985, Whitney, an adaptive physical education teacher, began a skiing program for students with disabilities after recognizing that students with disabilities were often excluded from extracurricular activities. What began as a small ski program has grown into the nationally recognized nonprofit STRIDE, which has empowered athletes with disabilities through adaptive sport and recreation—offered at little or no cost to athletes and their families.

Her vision also sparked a lasting legacy for veterans. In 2005, she founded the Wounded Warfighters Snowfest, an annual event that has welcomed hundreds of veterans and families. In 2019, Whitney expanded STRIDE's mission with the creation of the SHARE Center in West Sand Lake, NY—a community hub featuring an adaptive fitness gym, wellness spaces, and STRIDE's headquarters.

In 2024, Whitney retired as Executive Director of STRIDE, but continues to serve actively as a board member and volunteer director of its snowsports programs. Through four decades of leadership, she cultivated a vibrant community where athletes, families, and volunteers discover their strengths. 40 years later, thousands of children, adults, and caregivers have been transformed through STRIDE's 20+ programs, from tent camping and sled hockey to swimming, tennis, golf, and more.

Beyond STRIDE, Whitney has served for over 25 years on the PSIA/AASI Eastern Division Adaptive Education Staff and Steering Committee, shaping the future of adaptive sports instruction nationwide. She also launched adaptive ski programs at seven resorts across the Northeast.

She's also received numerous local, state, and national awards, including a Newman's Own Award in 2009 and a National Leadership Award from the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition in 2014.

"Adaptive sport isn't about limitations — it's about possibility," Whitney said. "I've been blessed to spend my life helping people see what they can do, not what they can't. STRIDE is proof of what happens when a community comes together with that belief."

The Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame was created to honor individuals who have had an influential role in the field of adaptive sports as well as athletes who have excelled in it. To learn more about the Adaptive Sports Hall of Fame, including a list of past award recipients, visit moveunitedsport.org/sports/adaptive-sports-awards/.

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