

Catch It!



**Congratulations to the
2024 Hall of Fame inductees!**



CLICK ON TITLE TO JUMP TO PAGE

- [Team USA](#)
- [2024 Hall of Fame Inductees](#)
- [2023 Coach of the Year](#)
- [2023 Volunteer of the Year](#)
- [2023 Choreography Award](#)
- [2024 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships](#)
- [USTA Helping Hands](#)
- [Recent Losses](#)



**UNITED STATES
TWIRLING ASSOCIATION**

Team USA Selected at US Trials



Team U.S.A. Selected at Prestigious U.S. Trials

After two days of intense competition, 21 of the nation's best sport baton twirlers have been selected to represent the United States of America and the United States Twirling Association (USTA) in the 2024 World Freestyle and Rhythmic Twirl Championship, which will be held August 4-11, in Helsingborg, Sweden.

The members of Team U.S.A. were selected from a group of 58 elite athletes during the prestigious U.S. Trials Baton Twirling Competition, hosted by USTA on March 22-23 in Shelbyville, Ind.

"It was thrilling to see the athleticism and artistry of these gifted and dedicated athletes as they competed for a spot on Team U.S.A. and the honor representing their country in the twirling equivalent of the Olympic Games," said USTA President Karen Cammer.

At the U.S. Trials, athletes competed in the Jr. or Sr. age

Team USA Selected at US Trials

division in the disciplines of Short Program, Men's and Women's Freestyle Solo, Freestyle Pair, and Freestyle Team. They were judged by a panel of Master Judges from the U.S., Canada, and France. Team U.S.A. is comprised of the top three athletes in Freestyle Solo, plus the 4th place finisher as an alternate, along with the top Jr. and Sr. Pair and the top Freestyle Team. In addition, all members of Team U.S.A. had to earn a minimum qualifying score.

Here are the 2024 U.S. Trials results.

(**Bold** denotes Team USA members.)

Junior Women:

- ▶ **Gold: Delilah Gallo, N.Y.**
- ▶ **Silver: Delaney Higgins, N.J.**
- ▶ **Bronze: Micah Beaudoin, N.Y.**
- ▶ **4th: Emily Anderson, Ga., Alternate**
- ▶ 5th: Julianna Nash, Calif.
- ▶ 6th: Shay Busza, Penn.

Senior Women:

- ▶ **Gold: Mikayla Schuller, Ohio**
- ▶ **Silver: Jaida Jobe, Calif.**
- ▶ **Bronze: Jenny Hannah, Tenn.**
- ▶ **4th: Erienne Hay, Ohio, Alternate**
- ▶ 5th: Carissa Wolfe
- ▶ 6th: Julia Arciola

Senior Men:

- ▶ **Gold: Bower Sarra, Ohio**
- ▶ **Silver: Colin Schuessler, Mo.**
- ▶ Bronze: Austin Arellanes, Calif.

Junior Pairs:

- ▶ **Gold: Delilah Gallo, N.Y. and Delaney Higgins, N.J.**
- ▶ Silver: Kansas Crawford, Calif. and Lavina Baird, Calif.
- ▶ Bronze: Grazi D'Acquisto, Calif. and Emma Sawin, Calif.
- ▶ 4th: Madison Randall and Hallie Boone, Ala.

Team USA Selected at US Trials

Senior Pair:

- ▶ **Katiana Welsheimer, Colo., and Kirsandra Welsheimer, Colo.**
- ▶ Silver: Julia Sawin, Calif., and Jaida Jobe, Calif.
- ▶ Bronze: Cadence Doods, Calif., and Josie D'Acquisito, Calif.
- ▶ 4th: Erienne Hay, Ohio, and Mikayla Schuller, Ohio
- ▶ 5th: Maggie Chrudimsky, Texas, and Mackenzie Marceaux
- ▶ 6th: Kourtlyn Brossard, La., and Kynadee Broussard, La.

Team

- ▶ **The Show Twirlers**
- ▶ Revolution
- ▶ The Dixie Diamonds 5 Stages

USTA congratulates all the athletes who competed in the 2024 U.S. Trials and wishes the best of luck to the members of Team U.S.A. as they “go for the gold” this summer!

The [2024 World Freestyle and Rhythmic Twirl Championship](#) will bring together the best sport baton twirlers from around the globe to compete for gold, silver, and bronze medals in the disciplines of Freestyle Solo, Rhythmic Twirl, Freestyle Pair, and Freestyle Team. The World Championship is sponsored and sanctioned by the International Baton Twirling Federation (IBTF).

SUPPORT THE TEAM U.S.A. BASKET RAFFLE

You can support Team U.S.A. as they “go for the gold” at the World Freestyle and Rhythmic Twirl Championships in August in Helsingborg, Sweden. Individuals, groups, councils, and other twirling supporters are encouraged to donate a basket (worth \$100 minimum) for the Team U.S.A. Basket Raffle. There will be two drawings, one during the Finals Show on Saturday and the other during the Team Retreat on Sunday during the National Championships. You can also purchase tickets at Nationals to try to win the basket of your choice! All proceeds will be used to provide meals and snacks for Team U.S.A. members during the World Championship. [Get more information here.](#)

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Congratulations to the 2024 Hall of Fame Inductees!



John Chamberlain



Ginnette Groome



Sandi Rios



Jackie Stewart



Dale White

Every five years, the United States Twirling Association recognizes twirling professionals who have made significant and lasting contributions to our organization and the sport of baton twirling, by inducting them into USTA's Hall of Fame during a celebration held during the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships. Hall of Fame inductees are nominated by USTA members and others in the twirling community, then selected by USTA's HOF selection committee and Board of Directors.

USTA is pleased to announce the 2024 Hall of Fame inductees. Collectively, they have dedicated decades of time and talent to USTA and the sport of baton twirling. They are former national and world champions; athletes and artists who have pushed the boundaries of baton twirling. They are coaches and choreographers who continue to advance our sport. They work tirelessly on behalf of athletes and parents, coaches and judges, and all USTA members to ensure that our educational and competitive programs and events are the best in the world.

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN – FLORIDA

John Chamberlain started competing in the sport of baton twirling when he was nine years old. He joined USTA in 1967 as a 14-year-old rising star and entered his first National Championships in Milwaukee, Wis. in 1968. He went on to win the Sr. Boys Solo Championship in 1976 when he was 20 years old.

Turning 21 a few weeks later should have ended his competitive career, because USTA's competitive age limit was 21. However, Chamberlain, along with other older athletes, launched a campaign to eliminate the age restriction so that athletes of all ages could continue to compete. They were successful in convincing the USTA Board of Directors to establish the adult division.

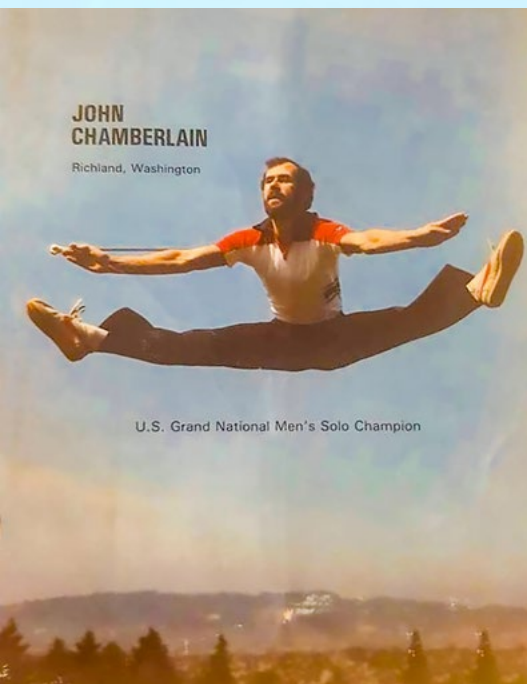
Chamberlain won adult championships the next four consecutive years in Men's Solo, 2-Baton, and Dance Twirl, now known as Artistic Twirl. In 1984, he and Linda Burch Chamberlain captured the Sr. Pairs national title.

In 1980, Chamberlain earned a spot on the first-ever USA WBTF World Team, and competed in the inaugural WBTF World Championship, which was held in Seattle, Wash. Chamberlain captured the Silver Medal in the Men's Division, in good company between the USA's Michael Cruz, who won the gold medal, and Glenn Bittenbender, who won the bronze.

"What a wonderful lifelong memory to be a member of the very first WBTF World Cup Champion Team from the U.S.!" he said.



1976 USTA Nationals – Senior Men's Solo



Cover of "Twirl Magazine"

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



Chamberlain with his parents at the first WBTF World Championship.

In 1971, when he was just 16, Chamberlain became a USTA Certified Coach and began a long career of coaching successful athletes. He and Shanon Barker established a large studio in Portland, Ore., where they trained state, regional, and national champions in all twirling disciplines.

As soon as he turned 18, Chamberlain became a USTA Certified Judge, and is now a USTA and WBTF Master Judge. He has served as a judge for many national championships and five WBTF World Championships.

In addition, Chamberlain has served on the U.S. Technical Committee, representing the Western Region. He was elected to the USTA Board of Directors, and has held that position for 32 years, serving as president and vice-president. He recently stepped down from the board because he has opted to continue serving USTA as Director of the Adjudicator Department.



Chamberlain with sons Corbin and Jeff

“I know firsthand the purpose and joy it brings to him to have given so much to a sport he loves more than almost anything else,” said Jeffrey Chamberlain, one of Chamberlain’s two sons. “During my younger years, I had the honor of tagging along with my mom and dad as they both served USTA in various roles. My dad said, ‘I owe so much to the sport of baton twirling that I will always try to give back more than it ever gave me.’”



Chamberlain, Motoaki Tsuchiya of Japan, and Ginnette Groome at the World Championships in Sweden.

***Congratulations to John Chamberlain,
2024 USTA Hall of Fame inductee.***

GINNETTE GROOME – NEW HAMPSHIRE

Ginnette Groome has fostered growth, innovation, and excellence in the sport of baton, especially in the area of multiple baton twirling events. Her ingenuity, creativity, and dedication to the worlds of twirling and juggling have helped develop 2-Baton, and particularly 3-Baton, into the highly competitive and complex international events that they are today.

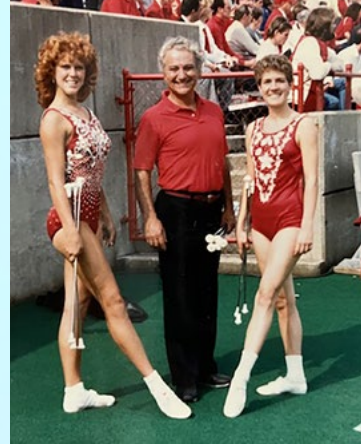
Groome began twirling at age seven, receiving training and encouragement from Gloria Smith, the Huntington Thunderers, and her solo coach, Chet Jones. She is a many-time New York State and Northeast Regional Grand Champion in Solo, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton, and won USTA's first Grand National 3-Baton Championship in 1976. The award presented to the Grand National 3-Baton Champion was named the Ginnette Groome 3-Baton Cup in her honor in 2016.

Groome began coaching when she was in high school and has coached across the county and around the world. Her students have become national and world champions in 1-, 2-, and 3-baton events. In fact, her students have won the Grand National 3-Baton title a majority of years since 1983.

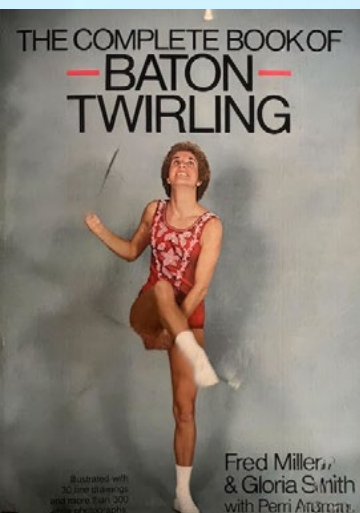
Alexandra Spenik is one of Groome's students and said

Groome often tells her athletes "Through our performances, in which we strive for excellent technique, combinations, form, and difficulty, we will help to educate others and grow multiple baton events." Spenik said Groome also encourages her athletes to remain involved in the sport.

"Ginnette has added to the growth of baton twirling by encouraging her athletes to continue in the sport into adulthood," Spenik said. "She works with athletes who continue to train well into their adult years, and who go on to give back to the sport through coaching



Groome (R) with Nick Michaelaires and Corrie Jordan at Indiana University Homecoming.



Groome on the cover of The Complete Book of Baton Twirling.

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



Groome and family

and judging, all with her support. In addition, she's always encouraged her twirlers to show the public that baton twirling is a highly competitive and difficult sport requiring great athleticism, through performances at community and charity events, festivals, operas, and Cirque Du Soleil."

Groome has served on USTA's Essentials Commission, helping to create the CAS program of Compulsories and Movement Technique. She has also served on the U.S. Technical Committee as the Northeast Representative for many years, directing the NER PreTrials.

More recently, she has worked with the WBTF and IBTF as a presenter, to educate coaches and judges on 2- and 3-Baton, via training webinars, creation of instructional videos, and writing text for manuals. Her passion for the correct technical development of multiple baton skills has helped to promote these events worldwide.

The year after her retirement from competition, she began judging at Nationals. In fact, from the age of eight, which was her first Nationals in Grand Rapids, Mich., she has never missed a national competition, participating either as an athlete or a judge. She was honored to be selected to represent the U.S. as a judge at the 2023 Nations Cup.

"Without Ginnette, so much about baton twirling and USTA would not be where it is today. She has and continues to lay the foundation for current and future twirlers, judges, and coaches through her continual efforts to educate about the development of multiple baton twirling," Spenik said.

***Congratulations to Ginnette Groome,
2024 USTA Hall of Fame inductee.***



Ginnette Groome 3-Baton Award

SANDI RIOS – CALIFORNIA

Sandi Rios grew up in Richmond, Calif., in the San Francisco Bay area. She started twirling when she was eight years old and remembers that her first baton had a blue ball and tip!

“I thought that was so cool!” Rios recalled. “I could hardly wait for my next lesson to learn new tricks and skills. My mom said I never put my baton down.”



Rios trained Jason and Monica Lee.

And so began a lifelong passion. Rios was a member of The Royal Family, a large twirling and drum corps organization, where she performed with teams, the twirling corps, and even the drum corps color guard. Her weekends were spent practicing, competing, or marching in parades. The Royal Family structure provided not only a competitive training program, but a community that embraced family participation through annual picnics, Christmas parties, end of the season awards banquets, and more.



Rios with athlete Marla Forcht.

Rios, who was one of five children, had very supportive parents, especially when it came to twirling. Her mother made sure Rios never missed a lesson, even though they drove 45 minutes each way for group practices, and an hour-and-a-half each way for private lessons with Jerry Alvarez. Rios' father was a coach at a local high school and took her to practice with him so she could use the gym. Growing up, she attended the Robert Olmstead Big Trees Twirling Camps, and had the opportunity to train with the top coaches and twirlers from across the country.

After Rios retired from competition, she turned her twirling talents to coaching. She has trained many USTA Grand

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

National Champions in Solo, Men's Solo, 2-Baton, Strut, Artistic Twirl and Pairs. She is the founder and coach of Syndication Baton Club. By the late 1970s, Syndication was setting new trends for dance twirl teams, pushing the event to new levels of performance through creativity, musicality, and staging. Syndication has represented the U.S. at the WBTF World Championships 25 times, winning gold medals in 1993, 1997, 2005, and 2014. Rios is the only U.S. coach to have trained WBTF gold medalists in Freestyle, Pairs, and Team. Today she is a sought-after coach internationally and has coached in six countries.



Rios and WBTF Gold Medalist
Bridgette Bartley.

Former Syndication twirler Kaitlynn Turnbull said Rios has had a lasting impact on many athletes. “Sandi is the best coach and mentor anyone could have,” Turnbull said. “She is the biggest advocate for the athletes and the betterment of the sport.”



Rios and Syndication.

Rios has also contributed to baton twirling as a volunteer, serving as president of the California Baton Council and Western Region Baton Council. In addition, she served on the

U.S. Technical Committee

and Coaches Commission, and the WBTF Executive Technical Committee. She is currently the USTA Director of Operations and the U.S. Technical Advisor.

She is responsible for some of USTA and WBTF's major innovations in recent years, including the WBTF Coaches Level I certification, the Coaches Level II manual, the Volunteer of the Year program, the Team event Transformation, the “New face of Strut” campaign, and the Reclaiming Gold program to support Team U.S.A. athletes.

***Congratulations to Sandi Rios,
2024 USTA Hall of Fame inductee.***

JACKIE STEWART – INDIANA

Jackie Stewart grew up on a farm outside Reynolds, Ind. with three sisters and a brother. She started twirling when she was eight years old and became a member of USTA when she competed at her first Nationals in 1960 in Elkhart, Ind. Her first teacher was Ardith Huge who became the national contest director for USTA. Her second teacher was Tudy Smith, the first female president of USTA and a 2008 Hall of Fame inductee. These two women encouraged her to continue her involvement in USTA after attending Purdue University and studying Radio & TV Broadcasting.



Stewart and her siblings.

Stewart became an active member of the Indiana Baton Council and the Mideast Region Council, where she learned about organizational leadership. She also became a certified judge with the encouragement of Ardith Huge. Next, she started a twirling program and encouraged her students to compete and work to reach their potential. Along the way she was mentored by Hall of Fame inductees Tom Veenendall, Ann Bittenbender, and Frances Whitley-Cook. She was also elected to the USTA Board of Directors.



Stewart and Intrepid

The 1980 World Championships in Seattle were a turning point for Stewart. She was inspired by the international influence and the focus on technique. She became a member of the USTA Judges Committee and Technical Committee.

She served as the U.S. Technical Advisor and judged the World Championships for 10 years. She was appointed to the World Baton Twirling Federation (WBTF) Judges Committee and in 1992, she was elected as the WBTF Judges' Chair, a position she still holds.

“As the WBTF Judges' Chair, Jackie has been instrumental in

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



WBTF officials.

the development of judges education programs and testing methods for WBTF's certification and licensing procedures," said Sandi Wiemers, WBTF President. "We want to honor and thank Jackie for her time, dedication, and contributions to the WBTF."

Stewart is also a member of the International Baton Twirling Federation (IBTF) Executive Technical Committee, which has been instrumental in the merger of the WBTF and WFNBTB with the goal of acceptance into Sport Accord and with it, international sport recognition.

Throughout her career, Stewart has coached many successful athletes who have gone on to become successful professionals in many fields. Some have stayed involved in USTA and have continued to give back to the organization that provided them with a healthy and safe competitive experience.

"Jackie demonstrates the work ethic and tenacity our athletes and Professional members aspire to," said USTA Board member Sherri Carter. "She has a heart of gold, the mentality of a member of the Mensa Society, and vision that has served USTA through the best and worst times. Her constant service to our sport is unprecedented."

After college, Stewart married Mike Stewart and they had three sons, Brad, Ryan, and Chris. Her sons married three fabulous women who have given Stewart six perfect grandchildren. Today Stewart lives in Spring Hill, Tenn., where every summer she hosts "Camp Nona Jackie" for her grandkids. At the end of camp week, they put on a performance for the neighborhood that has ranged from The Lion King to Annie to Wizard of Oz. It is absolutely her favorite week of the year.



Camp Nona Jackie presents Annie

***Congratulations to Jackie Stewart,
2024 Hall of Fame inductee.***

DALE WHITE – OHIO

“Through his coaching of countless national and international champions, to his teaching in the U.S. and abroad through the decades, Dale White has taken his passion and knowledge in every single area of the sport of baton twirling to unparalleled levels.”

That statement from former students, mentees, and friends sums up the deep respect and admiration the twirling world has for Dale White, a twirling icon who discovered his love for the sport early on.

“As a toddler, I would watch in awe the drum major of the high school band twirl at half-time shows,” White recalls. “I remember being spell-bound and mesmerized by the spinning object! I remember “studying” the movement of the stick and how fast it moved.”

White wanted to try twirling himself, so at a local county fair, he was determined to win a ring toss game so he could pick a wooden cane as his prize.

White as a young twirler.



White and his mother.

“I twirled that cane so much that my parents were afraid of me wrecking the living room,” he said. “Hence, my Dad signed me up for baton lesson so I would learn to control the cane and not break everything in sight.”

White trained first with Dick Patesel, then with Fred J. Miller. White wanted to become a member of the famed Miller’s Blackhawks, so he could wear a tall shako hat with a feather plume. When Miller said he had to become a champion twirler first, White went to work. He won the title of National Men’s Champion in 1968, and Grand National 2-Baton Champion

2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

in 1970. He also became the Drum Major for Miller's Blackhawks.

The Miller organization had a strong tradition of the older students sharing their expertise with younger students, so that's how White began coaching, something he truly excels at. Over the years, he has trained more state, regional, national, and international champions and competitors than anyone. Those champions include the very first WBTF Sr. Women's World Champion, Pam Harris, and the very last WBTF Sr. Women's World Champion, Savannah Miller. (Future world champions will be IBTF World Champs.)



White (second from right) with WBTF Gold Medalists Mark Nash, Bridgette Bartley Riddle, and fellow Hall of Fame Inductee, Sandi Rios.

White has served USTA, WBTF, and IBTF in nearly every capacity possible. He is a past member of the USTA Board of Directors and the U.S. Technical Committee, and currently serves as USTA's Director of Professional Development, as the WBTF Judges Representative for the U.S., and as a member of the IBTF Technical Committee.



In addition, White has devoted countless hours supporting the growth and development of coaches and judges, through the development of manuals, workshops, webinars, and more.

"As a trend setter, he changed how we choreograph. As an educator, he changes how we think. As a mentor, he inspires us to grow. As a friend, he encourages all. As an ambassador, he reaches across activities and around cultures to bring the world together in a beautiful way."

***Congratulations to Dale White,
2024 Hall of Fame inductee.***

Patti Wojtowicz, Coach of the Year

At the 2023 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships in Kissimmee, Fla., Patti Wojtowicz was honored as USTA's 2023 Coach of the Year. Wojtowicz is a USTA Certified Coach, a Level III Judge, and founder of Illumination Twirling, based in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. Here, she shares her twirling story, some of the secrets to her success, and her advice for other twirling coaches.



Patti Wojtowicz

Tell us when, how, and why you got involved in the sport of baton twirling as an athlete.

Baton twirling has been an incredibly rewarding part of my life. From the moment I saw a twirling group in a local parade, I was hooked. Even though I was only four-and-a-half years old, I begged my mother for lessons, and she obliged. I started twirling at a dance studio in Niagara Falls and went to my first competition at age six. As an athlete, I have wonderful memories of performing as a soloist, as a high school feature twirler, and as a member of the Twin-Ton-Ettes Twirling Corps.

When, how, and why did you transition to coaching?

I have always loved teaching. I began offering twirling classes in our basement while still in junior high school. I also taught baton for my dance studio. After college, I started a recreational twirling program at the YMCA and joined the staff of the Ridgewood High School Marching Band. I found working with athletes both enjoyable and rewarding, which led me to grow and develop my program. When I joined USTA, I was fortunate to have an incredible mentor in Karen Cammer. The confidence she instilled in me allowed me to develop Illumination into a competitive twirling program.

What are the highlights of your coaching career so far?

One of many highlights is my experience as a staff member of the Ridgewood High School Marching Band for the last 45 years. As twirling disappeared from the activity in my area, we

2023 COACH OF THE YEAR

adapted to change, met new creative challenges, and developed a program of excellence. Ridgewood twirlers remain a strong and valued component of the color guard and band. As a marching band enthusiast, it is thrilling and rewarding to see my students go on to twirl for their college bands.

I am proud to have assumed a leadership role in the sport. As president of the New Jersey Baton Council, I have been blessed with enduring friendships and wish to thank my NJ baton family for their love and support over the years. As a team, we have promoted baton twirling and created numerous opportunities for our athletes to learn, grow and have fun as we support them in their twirling endeavors.

I am fortunate and grateful that I was able to share my passion for baton twirling with my daughter Catherine and will treasure those memories forever.

It is very gratifying to see my students continue in the sport as coaches, judges, and twirling parents. As a coach and teacher, nothing makes me happier than hearing about my students' accomplishments as they become adults.



Wojtowicz receives her award
from Coaches Department Director
Jackie Stewart.

What is your coaching philosophy?

I believe that sport is fundamentally a vehicle to develop lifelong skills in athletes so they can be effective and meaningful contributors to society. My goal is to create a safe, structured, positive environment, incorporating an athlete-centered approach that respects the uniqueness of each individual. As a coach, I strive to foster independence, flexibility, and self-motivation while teaching proper technique and skill development. I look to create opportunities for enjoyment and fun that motivate my twirlers to achieve their goals.

What advice do you have for other coaches?

Model integrity, honesty, and fairness. Take advantage of the numerous opportunities for continued growth and learning. Collaborate with other coaches, parents, and members of the twirling community.

2023 COACH OF THE YEAR

I am honored to have been chosen as the USTA Coach of the Year and thank my talented colleagues for their support and continued dedication to our athletes.

Congratulations to 2023 Coach of the Year Patti Wojtowicz!

The USTA Coach of the Year:

- ▶ Understands the sport
- ▶ Leads by example
- ▶ Continues to develop coaching knowledge
- ▶ Shares their knowledge within the sport
- ▶ Is a positive motivator
- ▶ Respects and values the athlete
- ▶ Is an effective communicator
- ▶ Gives back to the community
- ▶ Shows strong character and integrity while following the coaching philosophies of the USTA

The 2024 honoree will be presented at the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships in Dayton, OH. This esteemed coach will receive a \$250 cash award, an exclusive interview for publication in USTA's News Views, and an opportunity to share coaching expertise in the coaches networking program.

The criteria for selection of the USTA Coach of the Year is as follows:

- ▶ Coach must be a current member of USTA
- ▶ Coach must be a USTA certified coach
- ▶ Coach should be involved with USTA State, and Regional Baton Councils
- ▶ Coach should display a strong rapport with athletes
- ▶ Coach should be involved in community service
- ▶ Coach should exhibit knowledge of twirling through an understanding of the rules and the USTA coaching philosophy
- ▶ Coach should have developed excellent relationships with other coaches by being cooperative, considerate, and representing USTA in the highest regard

Each council may submit one official nomination by filling out the application form and providing details about how the candidate fulfills each of the listed criteria.

Each nomination will be reviewed by a member of the USTA Board of Directors, a Technical

Department Member, a Judges Department Member, and a member of USTA's Leadership Team.

The top three ranked nominees will be reviewed by the USTA Coaches department for a final decision.

[Click here for application.](#) Applications must be received by MAY 31, 2024

Scott MacDonald, Volunteer of the Year

Twirling dad Scott MacDonald believes his daughters, Alyssa and Kylie, have gained a lot through their participation in the sport of baton twirling.

“Being a team player, making you a stronger person, striving to fulfill your goals, pushing yourself, overcoming obstacles,” MacDonald said.

Alyssa, his oldest daughter, started twirling some 25 years ago, when she was just four or five years old. She started with the Sparklers, moved to the Clarkettes to make travel and competing easier, then went back to the Sparklers again.

Kylie, his younger daughter, followed in her sister’s footsteps, starting twirling at age three or four, and continuing through her first year of college this past year. Along the way, MacDonald became a volunteer for USTA.

“I was looking for something to do and fell into the registration table,” he said. “I enjoyed it. I like things that keep me busy.”

So, for a quarter of a century, MacDonald has been a familiar face at the registration table at the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships.

“I get to meet everybody. I see every athlete that comes through for the most part.” MacDonald said. “You get to meet a lot of interesting people and I’ve made some lifelong friends.”

Given his 25-year volunteer career with USTA, it’s no wonder that MacDonald was named the 2023 Volunteer of the Year at the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships held in Kissimmee, Fla.



Scott MacDonald (L) is honored as Volunteer of the Year.

2023 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

“I was shocked,” he said. “I don’t like to be put on the spot. I was thanking my lucky stars I didn’t have to say anything.”

MacDonald is certainly deserving of the recognition, after 25 years of spending his vacation time at state, regional, national, and international twirling events. A diesel mechanic in “real life,” MacDonald encourages other “baton parents” to volunteer their time to support the sport their children love.

“I find it fulfilling. I feel rewarded,” MacDonald said. “I feel good when I can help out. If you’re thinking about volunteering, do it.

“An organization like USTA can’t run without volunteers,” he said. “If you want it to be there in the future, somebody’s got to step up.”

***Congratulations to Scott MacDonald,
2023 Volunteer of the Year.***

CALL FOR VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS

The USTA Volunteer of the Year:

- Exhibits extraordinary voluntary service and commitment to the mission of the United States Twirling Association.
- Contributes time, expertise, skill, and/or resources for the benefit of the United States Twirling Association at a local, state, regional, and/or national level.

The 2024 honoree will be presented at the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships in Fairborn, Ohio. This esteemed volunteer will receive a \$250 cash award and an exclusive interview for publication in USTA's News and Views.

The criteria for the selection of the USTA Volunteer of the Year is as follows:

- ▶ Represents USTA in the highest regard.
- ▶ Actively volunteers at a local, state, regional, and/or national level.
- ▶ Completes tasks or projects according to timelines and shows up when scheduled or requested.
- ▶ Demonstrates exceptional integrity, character, commitment, creativity, and cooperation.
- ▶ Displays a strong rapport and relationships with all members and athletes.
- ▶ Exhibits compassion and caring toward all members, and consistently has positive interactions with others.
- ▶ Expresses a positive mindset and supportive attitude, especially during times of challenges.
- ▶ Inspires others to engage in volunteer activities.
- ▶ Takes initiative to go above and beyond to make a positive impact and outstanding contribution.

Individual members of USTA may submit one official nomination by filling out the application form and providing details about how the candidate fulfills each of the listed criteria.

Each state and regional council may submit one official nomination by filling out the application form and providing details about how the candidate fulfills each of the listed criteria.

[Get the application form here.](#)

Each nomination will be reviewed by a member of USTA's Leadership Team – Director of Communications, Director of Media and Technology, Board of Directors, and Member Services Manager.

Three members of the Board of Directors will review the top five ranked nominees for final selection.

Applications must be received by MAY 31, 2024.

Please submit application to Sandi Rios, USTA Director of Operations at: srios@ustwirling.com.

2023 CHOREOGRAPHY AWARD

Glenn Bittenbender and The Sundancers win coveted Choreography Award

At the 2023 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships, Glenn Bittenbender and The Sundancers “Voila” Sr. Small Dance Twirl Team received the 2023 Choreography Award. Bittenbender, the son of USTA Hall of Fame member Ann Bittenbender, is a former USTA Grand National Champion, World Baton Twirling Federation World medalist, a USTA Certified Coach, and a gifted



Ann and Glenn Bittenbender.

choreographer who has worked with individuals and groups across the country and around the world. Here, he shares the story of last year's winning program, some of the secrets to his success, and his advice for other twirling coaches and choreographers.

Tell us about the process you go through when you are choreographing a new program.

When starting the choreography for a new team, I first need to decide what athletes will be used for the program. I evaluate their talents to determine what age level and skill level they will fit into. As a coach, I want to lean towards their strengths and more than likely they will be stronger with either the baton or their body. Once I determine what type of athlete I am working with, I search for music that is age appropriate and will highlight their skills.

What was the music, theme, and your inspiration for the 2023 winning program?

The music was a huge inspiration for the 2023 routine. I have been working with the athletes from the Sundancers for a little over three years. I know the twirlers very well. I know their strengths and weaknesses, so I was always searching for the appropriate music for them. As soon as I heard “Voila” by Barbara

2023 CHOREOGRAPHY AWARD

Pravi, I knew it was perfect for them. Even though the words were in French, the emotion and passion was something they could express. The flow of the music would grab the audience. The character of the music would build and descend throughout the piece to create multiple levels of intensity. The music took me in various directions that allowed me to be extremely creative with the design of the choreography.

What advice do you have for other choreographers? How can they improve their skills?

The most important advice I could give to other choreographers would be to select a piece of music that is appropriate to your athletes' abilities. Be sure the music has a beginning, middle, and an end so the program is a complete package. It is important to choreograph for your athletes' skill level and avoid the temptation to design above that level. Every element, note, and movement should have a meaning and a purpose. Take ample time to detail and clean the techniques as well as the choreography.

Additional thoughts.

I would like to thank USTA for the platform that allows me to share the gifts and talents that I was so fortunate to have learned through the years. Being that my mother was always a huge inspiration to me, it was such an honor to win the Ann Bittenbender Legacy Cup.

A big thank you to the seven "Voila" girls who believed in me 100% and brought my vision to life. And a giant "Thank you!" to Sundancers Director Lynette Starkey for allowing me the freedom to be me and express myself without limitations.

Congratulations to Glenn Bittenbender and The Sundancers!

USTA National and Festival of the Future judges select the recipient of the Choreography Award each year at the U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships. Watch for the announcement of the 2024 Choreography Award at the 65th Anniversary U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships July 9-14, in Fairborn, Ohio.

2024 U.S. NATIONAL BATON TWIRLING CHAMPIONSHIPS



July 9-14, 2024

Nutter Center and McLin Gym

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY, FAIRBORN, OHIO



**UNITED STATES
TWIRLING ASSOCIATION**

2024 U.S. NATIONAL BATON TWIRLING CHAMPIONSHIPS & FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE



CATEGORY	EVENT	LOCATION
TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2024		
PreTrials	Compulsories, Short Program, Freestyle, Pairs, Teams	Nutter Center
WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2024		
IBTF Qualifier	Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, Artistic Twirl, Artistic Pairs — <i>Note: All team group events will qualify on July 14</i>	Nutter Center
THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2024		
U.S. National Championships Athlete of the Year Strut Collegiate Event	Opening Ceremony Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced Nationals - Advanced Level Preliminary Round	Nutter Center
Hall of Fame Induction	7 p.m. Hall of Fame dinner and induction ceremony	Barry Room - Nutter Center
FRIDAY, JULY 12, 2024		
U.S. National Championships	2-Baton, 3-Baton, Artistic Twirl, Artistic Twirl Pairs	Nutter Center
Festival of the Future	2-Baton, 3-Baton, Artistic Twirl, Artistic Twirl Pairs	Mclin Gym
SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2024		
U.S. National Championships	Solo, Duet, Collegiate Finals, Finals Show Grand Champions Celebration	Nutter Center
Festival of the Future	Foundation Events, Strut, Solo, Duet	Mclin Gym
SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2024		
U.S. National Championships IBTF Team & Group Qualifier	Trios, Twirl Teamss, Artistic Groups, Dance Twirl Teams, Artistic Teams, Parade Corps, Entertainment Corps, Traditional Corps, Exhibition Corps	Nutter Center
Festival of the Future	Trios, Teams, Corps, Artistic Groups	Mclin Gym
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – SUBJECT TO CHANGE		

WE ARE PROUD TO BE CELEBRATING OUR 65TH (BLUE SAPPHIRE)
ANNIVERSARY IN FAIRBORN, OHIO!

USTA HELPING HANDS



USTA wants to encourage kids and adults to engage in volunteerism and perform community service by recognizing those who extend a helping hand and make a difference in their area. If you or your twirling group have done volunteer work or a community service project this year, submit a Helping Hands application by May 31 and you could be recognized at Nationals, in USTA publications, and on USTA's social media!



USTA Board member Sherri Carter, (R) with 2023 USTA Helping Hands individual award recipient Kacey Schultz (center), and group award recipient Paige Campbell, Valley Baton Club (L).

Here are some examples of what different individuals and groups have done and are doing!

At the 2023 U.S. National Championships in Kissimmee, Fla., athlete Kacey Schultz was recognized as the individual Helping Hands award recipient, for her volunteer efforts working with the Special Olympics track meet in her state.

Valley Baton Club, under the direction of Paige Campbell, was recognized as the club Helping Hands award recipient, for their group's efforts to collect food for the Silicon Valley Second Harvest Food Bank, and for collecting 75 coats for the One Warm Coat campaign. VBC athletes also pick up trash in the parks they train in.

Volunteer efforts can also be connected to the sport of baton



Valley Baton Club with some of the food and personal items they collected for the Silicon Valley Second Harvest Food Bank.

USTA HELPING HANDS

twirling. For example, USTA Coach Judy Welsheimer is a huge advocate of getting children involved and helping them discover the many opportunities baton twirling offers.

“Most people are still unaware of the sport and are amazed when they see how intricate, dynamic, and athletic baton twirling is,” Welsheimer said. “My goal as a professional is to try to get twirling in as many places as possible and to give all children an opportunity to participate.”

Welsheimer, mother of Team U.S.A. members Kirsandra and Katiana Welsheimer, has coached in many afterschool rec programs, day care and home school enrichment classes, athletic clubs, sports camps, and summer rec programs for Native American Youth.



“I have our twirlers perform in many summer and winter parades, fairs, community, and children’s events, as well as charity events and fundraisers - any opportunity to showcase twirling!”



Welsheimer believes that any child who is interested in twirling should have the opportunity to participate in the sport. She has worked with students

with disabilities and at-risk students. She believes baton twirling can be physical therapy.

“I encourage all students to participate at the level they are comfortable with,” she said. “I think another attribute that sets the twirling community apart from other sports is the all-inclusiveness. Athletes from every ethnicity and background are accepted and given a chance to excel and succeed in a program that develops life skills and lifelong relationships.”

**Get more information about the
USTA Helping Hands program here.**

Twirling community mourns the loss of legendary California coach; up-and-coming Florida and Colorado coaches

IRENE MAZZINI

On Friday, March 8, the California twirling community and USTA lost legendary coach Irene Mazzini, when she passed peacefully in her hometown of Redding, California.

Mazzini's deep love for baton twirling started in high school, and she established the Buckeye Cuties in Redding shortly after that time. For 60 years, Mazzini and her athletes dazzled audiences at local parades and festivals with the Annual Redding Rodeo Parade being her all-time favorite.

The Buckeye Cuties host competitions with full themes and even at times, live animals in the picture area!

Athletes always felt Mazzini's passion for the sport through her spunky personality and willingness to go above and beyond.

Mazzini was a valued, dedicated member of the California Baton Council, keeping traditions strong within the membership. She will be greatly missed.

Contributed by Paige Campell.



RECENT LOSSES

CURT BURROWS

On March 1, 2024, Florida athlete and coach Curt Burrows, age 30, passed suddenly of complications from COVID-19. His loss was a devastating blow to USTA, the Florida twirling community, and the South Florida Dynamics, a group he joined when he was just nine years old.

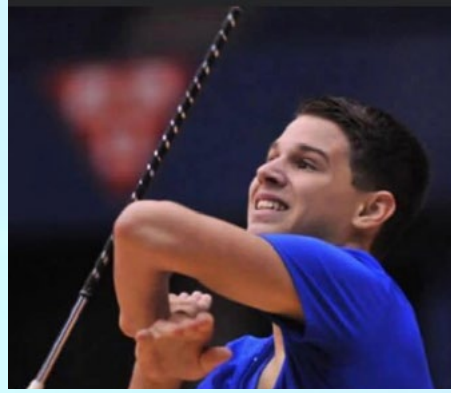
“He first performed in the corps,” said Jeanne Chwalik, longtime director of the South Florida Dynamics. “He was a little shy at first, but at the age of 10, he competed in his first national solo contest. It took much coaxing to get him to go on the floor. But in the end, he won National Boys Solo!” Later in his career, Burrows won the gold medal in 3-Baton at the International Cup.

Burrows became a fixture on SFD teams, which became known across the U.S. and in international circles, representing the U.S.A. in competitions in six countries. He was often paired with teammate Lindsay Finkel.

“You were my baton boyfriend, my friend, my teammate, my brother,” Finkel said during Burrows’ Celebration of Life. “I love you, Curt, and I can’t believe you are gone. You have truly made an impact on so many lives here today and all over the world.”

To celebrate Burrows and honor his legacy, SFD and the Florida Baton Council established the Curt Burrows Memorial Plaque, which will be awarded annually at the Florida State Championships to the Outstanding Team of the Day. The 2024 recipient was The Sundancers.

Contributed by Jeanne Chwalik and Lindsey Finkel.



Curt with Team and Jeanne



The Curt Burrows Memorial Plaque is presented to The Sundancers.

RECENT LOSSES

MADELAINE SCHMIDT

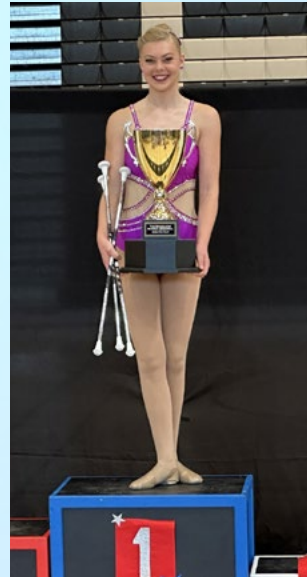
On April 10, 2023, at the age of 24, Madelaine “Maddie” Schmidt passed away suddenly of bacterial meningitis. Schmidt was an athlete, a feature twirler at Northern Arizona University, a beloved coach with Colorado Twirls, an up-and-coming judge, and a high school special education teacher.

Last year, the Colorado Baton Council established the Madelaine Schmidt 3-Baton Grand Champion traveling trophy and scholarship in Schmidt’s honor. The council received more than \$5,000 in scholarship donations, so the council will present a \$500 scholarship to the Colorado 3-Baton Grand Champion for 10 years. Athlete Makaela Anderson won the award in 2023 and 2024.

At the same time, the Central Region Baton Council established the Madelaine Schmidt Award, which is presented at the Central Region Championships to an athlete who demonstrates the same qualities Schmidt did: good sportsmanship, kindness, being a friend to



Madelaine Schmidt



Makaela Anderson



Chelsea Jackson (center) with members of Colorado Twirls at the 2023 Central Region Championships.

everyone, and always living life to the fullest. Athletes participating in regionals nominate fellow athletes for the award. In 2023, the inaugural Madelaine Schmidt award was presented to Chelsea Jackson.

Contributed by Colorado and Central Region Baton Councils.



United States Twirling Association

Phone: 321-206-3242

Fax: 509-275-3242

Website: www.ustwirling.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Honorary Board

John Kirkendall/MI

Fred Miller/OH (deceased)

Bobbie Mae (deceased)

George Walbridge (deceased)

Nick Michalares/IN (deceased)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

President/Karen Cammer/NY

Vice President/John Chamberlain/FL

Secretary/Thomas Breuckman/OR

Jonathan Burkin/OH

Sheri Carter/TX

Jason Lee/Washington DC

Jennifer Marcus Schwartz/FL

USTA DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

Director of Operations/Sandi Rios/CA

Adjudicator Management/John Chamberlain/FL

Coaches/Jackie Stewart/TN

Communications/Anna Osborn Dolan/CO

Judges Training & Certification/Alyse Windsor/AL

Media & Technology/Monica Lee/CA

Member Services/Linda Boss/NY

Professional Development/Dale White/OH

Technical/Sandi Rios/CA

USTA BENEFACTOR FOUNDATION

Coordinator/Niki Riley

Catch It! eZine Editor / Anna Osborn Dolan

Graphic Designer / Steve Cross



Check out news, photos and videos
on USTA's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube platforms.