

2023 NCAA WOMEN'S FINAL FOUR

PRESS RELEASE



NCAA names Women's Final Four Dallas 2023 Legends and Legacy Community Award recipients



DALLAS – The NCAA has named five individuals in the Dallas area as its 2023 Legends and Legacy Community Award recipients. The award recognizes local community builders who commit their time, resources and influence to improve and invest in their local communities.

The NCAA Legends and Legacy Community Award, formerly known as the Legacy Award, acknowledges and celebrates the determination of living legends who are making a difference in and around their city. The honorees exemplify selflessness, strive for excellence, and render extraordinary and valuable service within their local community. Candidates earning the award have had a major impact on athletics, gender equity, government, health and safety, higher education and/or social justice in their communities and field of work.

“Having the opportunity to celebrate these five wonderful individuals for their dedication and commitment in the Dallas area is one of the many highlights during Women’s Final Four week,” said Felicia Martin, senior vice president of inclusion, education and community engagement. “This NCAA Legends and Legacy Award puts a spotlight on each honoree for their local achievements and also informs others of the goodwill happening in Dallas. It is our pleasure to recognize them for their outstanding efforts, civic engagement and devotion to their city.”

The annual Legends and Legacy Award is one of the community programs held in conjunction with the NCAA Women’s Final Four. Honorees will be recognized during this year’s Women’s Final Four week, will receive a commemorative plaque and will get basketball court recognition during a Women’s Final Four game. The Women’s Final Four will be March 31 and April 2 at American Airlines Center.

The NCAA inclusion, education and community engagement division uses the March

Madness platform to elevate the importance of inclusion as a core value of the Association. Recognizing that basketball is an environment for diverse engagement, broad representation and elite competition, the award focuses on bridging communities and businesses in conjunction with the Final Four experience. The NCAA also named Legends and Legacy Award recipients earlier in [Houston](#), site of the 2023 Men's Final Four.

The Dallas 2023 NCAA Women's Final Four Legends and Legacy Community Award honorees:

Opal Lee

Considered by many to be the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," Lee is known for leading community walks to bring more attention to Juneteenth, which is now a federal holiday. A teacher for 15 years in Fort Worth, Texas, Lee was regarded by many as one of the best in her field. Her list of community activism is also lengthy. She was a founding member of Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity, which helps economically disadvantaged individuals find housing. She was also a board member and a volunteer with the local Habitat for Humanity. Lee helped establish the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society, which is dedicated to the preservation of history of Fort Worth's Black populace. She also has served on the Historic & Cultural Landmarks Commission and with the Ethel Ransom Humanitarian & Cultural Club. In addition, she was a precinct chair for Fort Worth's District 8 for over 30 years. Lee has been an active member of her church, Baker Chapel AME, where she has been a missionary, teacher and deaconess. While raising her family and teaching, she worked evenings at what is now Lockheed Martin. She later transitioned from teacher to counselor with the Fort Worth school district, where she worked until her retirement. A portrait of her now hangs in the Senate chamber of the Texas Capitol.

Nancy Lieberman

One of the most accomplished basketball athletes to ever play the game, Lieberman is also heralded for her community giving. Lieberman, a Hall of Famer and Olympic medalist who won two national championships titles at Old Dominion, founded Nancy Lieberman Charities, which works to improve the lives of underserved youth in the areas of education, health and wellness, and career/life preparedness. The charity, which has served over 5 million children across the country, creates impactful programs that foster inclusive attitudes around race/gender equality, social justice and civic engagement. The charity has provided educational college scholarships and offers lecture programs. Its youth basketball camps and clinics have served more than 200,000 boys and girls in Dallas. Lieberman's Dream Court program has built 117 basketball courts, which serve as safe areas for children to play, interact with peers, learn life lessons and have fun. Lieberman has supported other initiatives and efforts as a board member for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, the NBA Retired Players Association, the 2013 NCAA Final Four Organizing Committee and the 2014 Super Bowl Steering Committee. She is also a role model for women and men who want to coach and play professional basketball.

Nick Marino Jr.

Marino is one of Dallas' community leaders who is making a difference in the world by helping to end hunger. Marino has created and launched programs that have centered around meal packing services for people in need. Marino left the corporate world to work for the startup, TangoTab, which along with Tango Charities, has fed over 5 million locally and around the world. Under his organizational direction, Guinness World Records have been set for most people making sandwiches simultaneously and most sandwiches made in an hour. Marino has also been honored for his service and his outstanding passion for helping people, which includes being named a Top Texan Under 30 recipient, a 30 Under 30 Future Business Leader of Dallas, and a recipient of the University of North Texas Alumni Community Service Award. He has also received excellence awards for his entrepreneurial success with brand and mobile app creations. Additionally, he co-founded Revolving Mind Media, which led to the launch of Revolving Mind Investments and Revolving Mind Events. He has spoken throughout the country, sharing his business and community knowledge, noting his three main mantras: "Don't just think outside the box, think as if there is no box at all," "Be better than yesterday," and "Live with purpose."

Byron Sanders

Sanders is an advocate for education, economic development and creating equitable communities. He is president and CEO of Big Thought, which explores innovative ways to narrow opportunity gaps to empower youth to build their creative muscle, develop social and emotional skills, and create their authentic voice. Through Sanders' leadership, Big Thought pushes the boundaries of what education can be — now and in the future — through a range of learning experiences within school walls and beyond. The organization has become a national model in arts education, out-of-school-time systems, summer learning and juvenile justice interventions. It is also one of six community partnerships helping scale national best practices in social and emotional learning. Sanders has been honored by many organizations, including the Dallas Business Journal, and he earned the Presidential Leadership Scholar Award, which is a program led by the presidential centers of U.S. Presidents George W. Bush, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Lyndon B. Johnson. He is also a board member for numerous local organizations that benefit the Dallas community, and he is a member of The University of Tulsa board of trustees.

Acheil Tac

Tac, who came to the U.S. from Sudan with her family when she was in middle school, is a former basketball student-athlete at the University of North Texas. Today, she gives back to her community and beyond through her voice. She uses her experiences and voice to change lives, mentor, educate and encourage people in the Dallas area and nationally. She has been invited numerous times to speak to athletes about making positive choices, and she has been a speaker for the One Spirit Women's Round Table, discussing the impact women have had within the sports industry. Tac also has used her literary skills to reach athletics communities, having authored "The Reality Behind the Glamour of College Athletics," following an injury she suffered and as she contemplated what her next steps might be. Tac provides her guidance by speaking to student-athletes about what it means to be an athlete, by sharing best practices on how they can identify themselves as more than an athlete, by addressing issues that might impact student-athlete well-being and by stating how athletes can prepare themselves for college and life's challenges. She is the founder of a podcast called "The Athlete's Advocate," which is dedicated to unique stories of athletes who advocate for others and promote career opportunities. Tac, who played basketball professionally in Europe, also has captained the South Sudan national team.

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