

Welcome to the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Wayne County Challenge end of season celebration. I'm Brian Schleeper, race director of the IU East Run with the Wolves 5K. Today we're here to honor the overall and age group winners from the 2022 season and to recognize everyone who completed all eight races of the series. While we're here today to look back on the 2022 season we also want to mention that the schedule for 2023 is set and there are schedule cards available which you're encouraged to take and share.

We are once again offering the Carpe Viam special which allows you to enter all eight series races at once, at a discounted rate. This year the program is available for \$140, a savings of \$20 over the course of the year on pre-registration rates and \$60 off day of registration prices. In 2023 we're again offering a Youth Carpe Viam package for \$100 for anyone fifteen or under. We hope this will encourage more youth to participate in our events. Signing up for the Carpe Viam program ensures that you get a shirt or other swag from each race. Online registration for both Carpe Viam specials is now open by going to the WCC website, [wcchallenge.org](http://wcchallenge.org).

One new addition in 2022 was the expansion of our age group categories to include the 75-79 and 80+ groups to reflect the growing number of participants in these divisions. We will be recognizing the winners of the male and female winners of these groups so will be giving away the most awards ever in our history today.

The 19th season of the Wayne County Challenge was another excellent year with 16 first time winners, nearly half of the people who'll be recognized. We also had the continuation of some impressive streaks.

Now I'd like to recognize the remaining race directors for all their hard work:

Melissa Soper - Girls Inc. 5K: benefitting Girls Incorporated

Rick Duncan – Fireworks 5K: benefitting the Richmond American Legion Post 65

Paula Wilson & Amanda NOCTON – Heartbreak Hill 5K: benefitting Hagerstown High School Athletics

Beth Newton – Flying Eagles 5K: benefitting the Western Wayne Elementary PTO

Sean Andreas– Fall Foliage 5K/10K: benefitting Cope Environmental Center

Mike Day -Turkey Chase 7K: benefitting the Centerville High School Athletic Dept.

Keith Clemons-Rosemary Weigel Frostbite 5K: benefitting the Richmond Parks Dept.

Additionally I want to recognize the other members of the Wayne County Challenge committee. Keith Morey is an at large member of the group and part of the timing team Keith also just stepped down as our secretary. And Ashley Stephen who is our lead Timer.

Finally, I'd like to thank our series sponsor Whitewater Valley Rehabilitation. We're incredibly grateful for their support of the WCC and our mission to help people become more active through our events and appreciate having them on board again in 2023.

Now let's move to on the awards. The mission of the Wayne County Challenge is to promote community health through amateur distance running. Our scoring system is designed to encourage and reward the participation of all types and ages of runners and recognizes both participation and competitive achievement. The 36 overall and age group winners and nearly almost recipients of the "Elite 8" award for completion of each event are examples of this mission.

Winners please come up when your name is called, we'll start with the overall awards first. This also seems like a good time to issue a blanket apology for mispronouncing anyone's name, I'm going to read off a lot of people so apologize in advance for butchering any names.

The third place overall female is Addison Talbot. Addison began participating in WCC events in 2017, at the age of 8, and won her age group that year and the next. In 2021 she improved to a third place overall female finish. She took that spot again in 2022 after running all eight races for the first time. She finished first or second in her division six times, was the third overall female at the Turkey Chase 7K and second place female at the Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to four time winner and repeat third place overall female Addison Talbot.

The second place overall female is Britni Gettinger. Once again Britni completed all eight races, for the ninth straight year dating back to 2013. Over the course of her WCC career she has three age group titles, three third place overall finishes, one second place overall finish and in 2021 was the overall female champion. In 2022 she had six age group wins, a third place overall finish at the Flying Eagle 5K and second place overall at the Turkey Chase 7K. Britni finished in a tie for the overall female title, the first time that's happened in our history, and was edged out by the tiebreaker of fastest overall race. Congratulations to nine time winner and second place overall female Britni Gettinger.

The overall female champion is Candi Walton. Candi ran her first WCC race in 2019 when she completed three races, winning her age group in one of them. She returned in 2022 and participated in all eight. She had five age group wins, was third place overall female at the season opening Girls Inc. 5K, was the women's winner at the Flying Eagle 5K and was the second female and eighth overall in the Fall Foliage 10K. As I just mentioned, there was a tie for the overall women's title which was broken based on Candi having the fastest overall time which she ran at the season opening Girls Inc. 5K. Congratulations to first time winner and overall female champion Candi Walton.

The third place overall male finisher is Brian Green. In 2022 Brian ran all eight races for the ninth straight year. He finished second in his division at the Run With the Wolves 5K, took the top spot at six races and was the third overall male at the Flying Eagle 5K. Brian also finished as third place overall male in 2017, was second overall in 2019 and has three age group titles. Congratulations to six time award winner Brian Green.

The second place overall male finisher is John Wesler. John began running WCC races in 2016 when he completed three. In 2017 he did all eight and won his age group. In 2022 he once again did all eight taking the top spot in his division four times, finishing as third overall male at the Turkey Chase 7K and second at both the Heartbreak Hill 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. He volunteered at the remaining race, the Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to two time winner and second place overall male John Wesler

The 2022 overall male winner is Scott Meinardi. Scott is no stranger to the stage as he has five age group titles over three different divisions and a second place overall male finish in 2021. In 2022 he ran all eight races for the fifth time taking two division wins, finishing as third overall male at the Girls Inc. 5K, Fall Foliage 5K and Frostbite 5K. He was the second overall male at the Flying Eagle 5K and Turkey Chase 7K and male winner of the Heartbreak Hill 5K. Congratulations to the 2022 overall men's champion, Scott Meinardi.

Now we'll move on to the age group winners. There are several categories where there was no winner because no one completed at least five races, a requirement to win an age group award.

The winner of the female nine and under age group is Naima Diarra. Naima ran six races in 2021 and was the runner up in this division. She did five in 2022, finishing second in the group at the Frostbite 5K and taking the top spot at the other four. Congratulations to first time winner Naima Diarra.

The winner of the male nine and under age group is Zeke Andreas. Zeke began his WCC career in 2017 when he did the Fall Foliage 5K, at the age of three. In 2019 he did all eight races and won this division. In 2022 he did five races, finishing second in the group at the Frostbite 5K and taking the top spot at the other four. Congratulations to two time age group winner Zeke Andreas.

The winner of the female 10-12 age group is Kelsey Dare. Kelsey ran four races in 2021, winning her age group in one of them. In 2022 she ran seven, taking the top spot at six of them and finishing as the third overall female at the season ending Frostbite 5K. Congratulations to first time age group champion Kelsey Dare.

The winner of the male 10-12 age group is Kenny Li. Kenny ran his first WCC race at the 2021 Frostbite 5K where he won his age group. In 2022 he completed five races, finishing second in the division once and taking the top spot at the other four. Congratulations to first time winner Kenny Li.

There is no winner of the female 13-15 age group.

The winner of the male 13-15 age group is Carson Abney. This was Carson's first year participating in the WCC and he ran seven races. He finished in the top four of the division at each, taking four group wins. Congratulations to first time winner Carson Abney.

The winner of the female 16-18 age group is Halle Osborne. Halle ran her first WCC race at the 2021 Run With the Wolves 5K where she won her age group. In 2022 she ran six races and took age group wins at the Flying Eagle 5K, Fall Foliage 5K and Frostbite 5K. Congratulations to first time age group champion Halle Osborne.

The winner of the male 16-18 age group is Caleb Gilland. Like Halle, Caleb ran his first WCC race at the 2021 Run With the Wolves 5K where he won his age group. In 2022 he ran five races, finishing in the top three of the group at each, including two division wins. Congratulations to first time age group winner Caleb Gilland.

There is no winner of the female 19-24 age group.

The winner of the male 19-24 age group is Joshua Cook. Joshua ran four races in 2021 and did six in 2022. He finished in the top four at each and took the group win at the Flying Eagle 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. Congratulations to first time age group winner Joshua Cook.

The winner of the female 25-29 age group is Hannah Rose. In 2021 Hannah did seven races and was runner up in this age group. In 2022 she did all eight finishing in the top four at every one and was the age group winner at four. Congratulations to first time age group champion Hannah Rose.

The winner of the male 25-29 age group is Dylan Cope. Dylan has run fourteen WCC races dating back to 2014 and has been the overall winner of ten of them. He was a perfect four for four in 2021 and won all five races he ran in 2022, including the Fall Foliage 10K. He had enough points to finish as sixth overall male, running only five races. Congratulations to first time winner Dylan Cope.

The winner of the female 30-34 age group is Megan Lamb. This was Megan's first season running WCC races and she did all eight. She finished in the top three of her division in each, including division wins at the Flying Eagle 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. Congratulations to first time winner Megan Lamb.

The winner of the male 30-34 age group is John Waltz. John won this division in 2021 when he ran seven races. In 2022 he did all eight with age group wins at the Girls Inc. 5K and Heartbreak Hill 5K. Congratulations to repeat age group champion John Waltz.

The winner of the female 35-39 age group is Abby Burkhardt. Abby won this group in 2021 when she ran all eight races. She repeated both feats in 2022 led by two age group wins at the Flying Eagle 5K and Turkey Chase 7K. Congratulations to repeat winner Abby Burkhardt.

The winner of the male 35-39 age group is Marshall Ma. Marshall ran his first WCC race in 2013. He returned in 2022 running all eight, finishing in the top four of the group at each. He had two division wins at the Heartbreak Hill 5K and Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to first time age group winner Marshall Ma.

The winner of the female 40-44 age group is Amber Hall. Amber did five races in 2021 and came back to do all eight in 2022. She placed in the top four of the age group in every one with a division victory at the Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to first time winner Amber Hall.

The winner of the 40-44 male age group is Andy Shepherd. This is Andy's third age group title after taking the 30-34 division in 2013 and 2015. In 2022 he did all eight races for the fifth time and finished in the top three at every one. He had division wins at the Girls Inc. 5K, Heartbreak Hill 5K, Flying Eagle 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. Congratulations to three time age group champion Andy Shepherd.

The winner of the female 45-49 age group is Angela Wilmot. This is Angela's third straight title in this division after taking it in 2019 and 2021. In 2022 she ran all eight races finishing in the top five of each, highlighted by a division win at the Girls Inc. 5K. Congratulations to three time age group champion Angela Wilmot

The winner of the male 45-49 age group is Dave Snow. This is Dave's eighth age group title spanning three different divisions. In 2022 he did all eight races, for the 12th straight year, and finished in the top three of the group at all eight, including wins at the Run With the Wolves 5K and Flying Eagle 5K. Congratulations to eight time age group champion Dave Snow.

The winner of the female 50-54 age group is Lisa Raatz. Lisa began running WCC races in 2018 and did all eight for the first time in 2022. She had two third place group finishes and was runner up at the Heartbreak Hill 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. Congratulations to first time age group champion Lisa Raatz.

The winner of the male 50-54 age group is Jesse Jaynes. In 2022 Jesse ran all 8 races for the seventh time. This is his fourth age group title after taking the 40-44 group three times. He finished second in the group at the Run With the Wolves 5K and took the top spot at the other seven. Jesse earned enough points to finish as the fifth overall male. Congratulations to four time age group champion Jesse Jaynes.

The winner of the female 55-59 age group is Missy Moore. This is Missy's third age group title, each in a different division, in addition to finishing as second overall female in 2021. In 2022 she ran all eight races for the fourth time and was a perfect eight for eight in the division. She earned enough points to finish tied for fourth place overall female. Congratulations to four time winner and three time age group champion Missy Moore.

The winner of the male 55-59 age group is Jerry Bradley. This is Jerry's third straight age group win after taking the 50-54 division in 2019 and this group in 2021. In 2022 he did all eight races with division wins at the Heartbreak Hill 5K and Fall Foliage 5K. Congratulation to three time age group winner Jerry Bradley.

The winner of the female 60-64 age group is Sabrena Bartram. The theme for Sabrena is eight. In 2022 Sabrena ran all eight races, for the eighth time, and won her eighth age group title. She has now won four different age groups and has seven straight age group wins. In 2022 she finished in the top three of her group in each race with six division wins. Congratulations to eight time age group champion Sabrena Bartram.

The winner of the male 60-64 age group is Ray Blevins. This is Ray's second straight win of this category as he also ran all eight races once again. He finished in the top five of the division at each race, including five runner up finishes. Congratulations to repeat age group winner Ray Blevins.

The winner of the female 65-69 award is Annette Rodefeld. Annette began her WCC career in 2021 when she ran seven races and finished third in her division. In 2022 she did all eight, taking second at the Fireworks 5K and the top spot at the other seven. She earned enough points to finish as the fifth place overall female. Congratulations to first time age group champion Annette Rodefeld.

The winner of the male 65-69 age group is Seth Black. In 2022 Seth ran all eight races for the seventh time and took his first age group title after finishing second in 2021 by only 13 points. He had six top three finishes including a division win at the Turkey Chase 7K. Congratulations to first time age group champion Seth Black.

The winner of the female 70-74 age group is Geri Schick. This is Geri's fourth straight age group title as she did all eight races for the fifth straight season. She won her division at all eight races and finished tied for fourth place overall female. Congratulations to four time defending age group champion Geri Schick.

The winner of the male 70-74 age group is Gary Girten. In 2021 Gary ran all eight races, winning his division at every one on his way to his first division title and finished as the fourth place overall male. In 2022 he did seven races, once again taking the top spot in each. Congratulations to two time age group winner Gary Girten.

There is no winner in the female or male 75-79 age group.

The winner of the new female 80 and over age group is Pat Bowers. This was the first year for this group and is the fourth different age group she has won. Pat has now taken fourteen straight age group titles dating back to 2008. The last race Pat didn't win her division was the 2012 Frostbite 5K. In 2022 she did all eight races, for the eighth time, and won all eight times. Again. Congratulations to fourteen time age group winner Pat Bowers.

The winner of the new male 80 and over age group is Gene Black. It's not easy following Pat but Gene more than holds his own. Gene began running WCC races in our very first year, 2003. He won his age group that year and the next seven years. He added two more titles along the way before winning again in 2021. In 2022 he did every race, for the sixth time, and won his age group in all eight. He now has age group titles in five different divisions. Congratulations to twelve time age group winner Gene Black.

Let's congratulate all of our age group and overall winners one more time.

Our next award goes to the most improved runner. This honor goes to the individual who shows the highest degree of race improvement over the course of the season. This year's winner will be taking this award in his very first season participating in WCC events. He had quite an impressive debut running six of the eight races. The 2022 most improved runner is Dylan Halcomb. Dylan finished in the top three of his age group in five of the six races he did, in his sixth event he was in the top ten men in the Fall Foliage 10K. He dropped his time from his first race at the Fireworks 5K to the season ending Frostbite 5K, where he won his age group....his second category win of the season, by almost four minutes. He finished fourth overall in the 30-34 age group, despite missing two races, so I suspect we'll be seeing him up here again in the future. Congratulations to the 2022 Most Improved runner Dylan Halcomb.

We've just given out 37 awards to the overall and age group winners, along with the most improved runner, from the 2022 season. We commend and congratulate each of these individuals for their achievements and appreciate their support of the WCC and our member organizations.

Now we'll give out our final award of the day. We are happy to continue a tradition we started last year recognizing the Spirit of the Wayne County Challenge Award. This honor goes to an individual who may not finish in the top ten overall or win their age division but still embodies what the Wayne County Challenge stands for, as stated in our mission statement.."to promote community and national health through amateur distance running...and to encourage and reward the participation of all types and ages of runners." Many of us don't end up on the podium or win any races. But that's not what the WCC is about. This award is designed to recognize those who keep showing up race after race, year after year as part of this community striving to better themselves.

This year's winner is a little different because over the years he has been a very accomplished runner and racked up some age group wins, including several in 2022. He has also been participating in WCC events since our very first year in 2003, when he won his age group in our inaugural season. He took his second division title in 2021. But he also had some challenges in 2022 but continued to participate in WCC events even when he wasn't quite 100%. Last season he participated in seven of the eight events and won his division in three of them and finished third overall in his category. He missed the Flying Eagle 5K in September because of a broken hip. He came back to complete the final three races of the year and even took second place in his category in the Turkey Chase 7K. This year's winner of the Spirit of the WCC award is Gary Rodefeld.

There's no award for this particular honor but we do like to recognize the holder of the longest race streak. For the 16th season in a row Judy Pierce ran every race, continuing her streak which began with the 2006 season. This means Judy has completed 127 races straight. In addition to being the longest current race streak, it's the longest streak ever for the WCC. Congratulations Judy, please stand to be recognized.

Before we celebrate the forty seven people who make up the Elite 8, we wanted to take a moment to recognize someone we lost in 2022 that has been a key member of the WCC community since our beginning. Dale Bolser ran our very first race, the 2003 Girls Inc. 5K. He went on to do all NINE races that inaugural season and finished as the third overall male our first year. He proceeded to run in every race the first five years and did so a total of eleven times over his career. He won his age group in our second year, 2004, as well as the next three seasons and added a fifth age group title in 2009. So clearly Dale was a talented runner. But those of you who knew Dale know that his age group wins and podium finishes weren't his real gift. It was his spirit, enthusiasm and love of running and this community. Unfortunately, in 2011 Dale was diagnosed with cancer. It may have slowed his race times and prevented him from making every race but it didn't take away his positive attitude, encouraging presence and determination. He continued participating in races when he was able and contributed much more to this community through those actions than in his early wins and fast times. Last year Dale succumbed to that cancer and passed away. In 2019 Dale submitted some thoughts on his reasons for continuing to be active and participate in our events. We shared those at this event that year and many of you were there to hear them, in his words. To honor his impact we wanted to share a few of those words that seem as relevant now as they were three years ago. "The WCC is about people.....who choose to 'challenge' themselves to live a healthy lifestyle through running. People, striving to be healthy & helping others to become healthier too. Each of us can make a difference. Not only in our own lives but in the lives of others as well. The WCC is about people.....helping other people. And these people.....are WHY I run." Please join me in a moment of silence to honor Dale.



We'll now present certificates and jackets to the runners who completed all 8 races this season. We appreciate the dedication and support these individuals have shown to the WCC and the organizations that put on and benefit from each race. Congratulations to each of you. Please come forward when your name is called to receive your awards and please remain so we can take a group photograph.

Thank you again for attending today's event and your support of the Wayne County Challenge and its member organizations. We look forward to our 20th year and the season opening Girls Inc. 5K, Saturday May 13. Remember online registration the Carpe Viam program is now open on the WCC website [wcchallenge.org](http://wcchallenge.org)