



A-Board Newsletter

From your Communications Chair - Dylan Hammon

SPORTS COMMISSION UPDATE:

Happy Holiday Season A-Board! As we close the book on 2025, your favorite GCSC staff members have been hard at work right up to the finish line, and we couldn't be more proud of how the year wrapped up.

The Greater Cleveland Sports Commission finished the year strong by hosting the 3rd annual Pickle in the Land event from December 11-14 at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland. Over 700 athletes from 16 states competed in this year's tournament, making it another tremendous success and a fantastic way to cap off an incredible year of events. Be sure to check out the recap video [HERE](#).

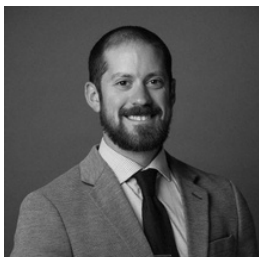
Some highlights from our other completed events are noted below:

- USA Hockey Rivalry Series - USA and Canada women's hockey teams competed at Rocket Arena in 1 of 4 series matchups this year
- Freezefest - **219** boys and girls volleyball teams had an estimated **\$2.1M** in direct economic impact

Now, we turn our attention to 2026, with the 26th Greater Cleveland Sports Awards right around the corner! In the meantime, be sure to visit our website for event information and follow us on social media to stay up to date on all announcements surrounding [Sports Awards](#).

Thank you all for an amazing 2025. We're incredibly grateful for your continued support and look forward to an exciting, fun, engaging and productive 2026!

Lastly, we're excited about our new executive committee appointments and new members class - check them out in the Announcements section!



Matt Sajna
msajna@clevelandsports.org



Rachael Stentz-Baugher
rachaelsb@clevelandsports.org

This edition:
Chair Send-off
Chair and Vice Chair Updates
Engagement Committee Update
Awareness Committee Update
Upcoming Dates
Announcements
2025 In Review

Thanks for *your Leadership!*



CHEERS TO 11 YEARS!

Dear GCSC Associate Board Members, Staff, and Friends,

After 11 years of serving the Associate Board, my time unfortunately has come to an end but I leave knowing the board is in one of the strongest positions we have seen in awhile. We have strong leadership in place and two large new member classes over the past couple years who will bring new energy and ideas to the table.

It's hard to capture what this experience has meant to me. This organization has been a constant in my life for over a decade... a place where passion met purpose, where friendships became family, and where I felt part of something bigger than myself. What started as a seat at the table grew into some of the most meaningful work I have ever been a part of.

I look back on the events we've brought to Cleveland, the young athletes we've inspired, and the moments where this city shined on a national stage—and I'm overwhelmed with pride. But even more than the milestones, it's the people I'll remember. Its the fundraisers, the bike builds, the youth sports camps, the equipment drives and the golf outing. Who can forget the license plate program and dare I say it....the Boxing event (bring it BACK!). Its the relationships that were built that will continue to find ways to inspire and do good work.

To the associate board: thank you for your trust and the countless ways you've pushed me, supported me, and made me better. I urge you to not wait, get involved and build those relationships.

To the staff: you are the heartbeat of everything great about this organization. Your dedication and grit are unmatched.

Even as I head out, my love for this organization—and my belief in its future—remains stronger than ever. I'll continue supporting however I am called, proud of everything we've built and everything still to come. My phone line is always open for anyone who needs anything.

Thank you for giving me 11 years I will never forget. It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life.

With heartfelt appreciation,

John Banks



A Word From Our Leaders...



ANGELA ALMASY
CHAIR

As we close out 2025, I hope you all are as proud as I am of our Associate Board. From our mentorship engagements and Board-to-Boards to our contributions to Sports Awards and surpassing our Mitchell's fundraising goal, we have clearly demonstrated our passion and commitment to the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission.

At our last meeting, we welcomed 11 new members to the A-Board. Having completed orientation and their first meeting, this group is ready to bring fresh energy and ideas to help us build on our momentum. If you haven't had the chance to connect with them, I encourage you to reach out and make some connections.

I also want to thank GCSC's Monica Gustin for sharing updates on the 2030 Special Olympics USA Games. This transformative event will leave a lasting impact on our region, and it was inspiring to learn more about the work ahead.

Looking to 2026, I'm excited to officially step into the Chair role. The Executive Committee is already exploring ways to enhance the A-Board experience and expand our Awareness and Engagement initiatives. As always, we welcome your ideas to help strengthen our reach and impact.

Wishing you a restful holiday season – I look forward to seeing everyone in January at Rocket Arena!

I can't believe this year is nearly over! Time truly flies when you're having fun, which perfectly describes this past year with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone for their contributions—from Matt and RSB's strong leadership to the engagement of our members through meetings, events, fundraisers, and support of intern professional development. 2025 was a year of trying new things, learning along the way, and setting a strong foundation for years to come.

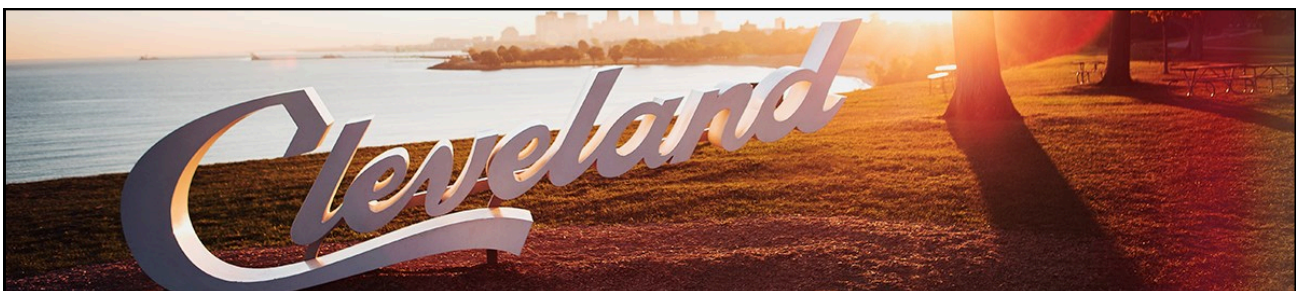
As I step into the Vice Chair role, I'm excited to build on the professional development program Angela has thoughtfully crafted over the past two years and continue fostering meaningful interactions between the A-Board and the Board. I'm also looking forward to welcoming our 11 new members and integrating them into our A-Board family. With nearly half of the A-Board turning over in the past two years, we have a great opportunity to expand our networks, build new relationships, gain fresh perspectives, and try new ideas together. We're eager to hear from each of you on how we can make this experience the best it can be.

I hope everyone enjoys the holiday season and joins us at our Q1 meeting on January 15 refreshed and ready to go. Please help spread the word about Sports Awards on February 5 at Rocket Arena—we want to make this year's attendance the highest yet and showcase the A-Board's impact.

Don't hesitate to reach me at ariel.mcnaair@ey.com with questions or ideas.



ARIEL MCNAIR
VICE CHAIR





PAIGE RABATIN
prrabatin@bmdllc.com



PRADEEP GIRI
pradeep.giri@gmail.com

ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone for a year of dedication and impact. Through your active involvement, we strengthened member engagement and supported impactful programs from baseball to golf and pickleball in service of the Sports Commission's mission.

This past weekend members of the GCSC A-Board participated in a Youth Pickleball Clinic held in conjunction with Pickle in the Land at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland. Approximately, 8 A-Board members assisted clinic set up, taping courts and preparing participant giveaways on Friday, December 12. The day of the clinic, 3 A-Board members served as group leaders leading participants from various Cleveland Recreation Centers through both yoga and pickleball skills stations. Over 50 kids from our local recreation centers participated in the event and came away with a new pickleball paddle and enhanced pickleball skills.

We are excited for an action-packed 2026 beginning with a Youth Wrestling Clinic to be held in conjunction with the NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships at Rocket Arena. We are also planning for additional programming around the NCAA Division I Women's Bowling Championships and NCAA Division III Baseball Championships. Stay tuned for more information!

We look forward to working with all A-Board members in 2026 and Happy Holidays from the Community Engagement Team!

AWARENESS COMMITTEE UPDATE



CHRIS PECK
cpeck@sequoiafinancial.com



JIM HOFBAUER
James.Hofbauer@UHhospitals.org

We want to sincerely thank everyone for their dedication and hard work over the past year—what a year it has been. Together, we achieved tremendous success, marked by meaningful engagement, strong momentum, and impactful fundraising that continues to support the mission of the Sports Commission.

Mitchell's Ice Cream Campaign:

- Our sales goal for this event was \$12k, and I'm pleased to announce that we have exceeded our goal with total sales coming to \$12,050 (through 12/11)! \$3,000 will directly benefit the Sports Commission.
- Associate Board participation wrapped up with 47/50 contributing to the campaign. Special recognition goes to our 11 new members—every single one of whom participated!

2026 Greater Cleveland Sports Awards:

- I'm pleased to announce that we are on our way to exceed our fundraising goal, having already received commitments totaling over \$42k (as of 12/17)!
- MASSIVE thank you to everyone on the Awareness Committee and GCSC staff. We're excited for this year's event to be one of the most successful in our history!!

As we look ahead to the 2026 calendar year, we are excited to collaborate with members to explore new and innovative ways to generate revenue and further our reach. We will host monthly meetings to brainstorm, implement, and execute initiatives that energize our community around the mission of the Sports Commission. We encourage you to join us and help make a meaningful difference for the community we serve.

Until then, we wish you and your loved ones a very happy and healthy holiday season!

Member Updates & General Announcements

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

- January 10-11, 17 -19 | JVA Rock 'N Rumble
- January 15 | 4pm - 6pm: Q1 A-Board Meeting [Rocket Arena - 1 Center Court]
- January 31-February 1 | AAU Cleveland Open Grand Prix
- **February 5th | 26th Greater Cleveland Sports Awards**
- February 14-16 | Nike North Coast Cup
- March 4-9 | USA Fencing March North American Cup
- March 14-15 | Nike Shamrock Showdown
- March 19-21 | NCAA DI Wrestling Championships
- May 7 | 4pm - 6pm: Q2 A-Board Meeting [TBC]
- August 13 | 4pm - 6pm: Q3 A-Board Meeting [TBC]
- November 5 | 4pm - 6pm: Q4 A-Board Meeting [TBC]

Announcements

- Save the date for our 2026 A-Board Meetings!
 - January 15th
 - May 7th
 - August 13th
 - November 5th
- We are still looking for locations to host our quarterly meetings, so if you have any ideas, reach out to the Executive Committee!
- Bookmark the path to the A-Board google drive: [GCSC A-Board Google Drive](#)

Celebrate Good Times!

Shouting out to all the exciting news and events occurring in the lives of our A-Board members! We encourage you to share what you're celebrating in life so we can celebrate YOU throughout the year!

Birthdays

- 10/1 | Kayleigh Cook
 - 10/13 | NoahToumert
 - 10/23 | Joe Banks
 - 11/5 | Matt Schaefer
 - 11/16 | Pradeep Giri
 - 11/20 | Robert Guy
 - 11/21 | Ryan Virtue
 - 12/15 | J.R. Klunk
 - 12/29 | Nicolette Cregan
-

Join us in thanking and congratulating the A-Board members rolling off and moving into the Executive Committee!



MATT SCHAEFER
FORMER AWARENESS
COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



MIKE VURAICH
FORMER ENGAGEMENT
COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



DYLAN HAMMON
INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE CHAIR



JIM HOFBAUER
INCOMING AWARENESS
COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



PRADEEP GIRI
INCOMING ENGAGEMENT
COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



Join us in welcoming our newest A-Board members!



JC COLLINS
CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY



KAYLEIGH COOK
KEYBANK



NICOLETTE CREGAN
CALFEE, HALTER & GRISWOLD



JARED DALY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



MADDIE FLYNN
CMT CONSULTING



JULIE NOVARIO CALKINS
JUNAID FAMILY FOUNDATION



DAN ROWBOTTOM
JP MORGAN PRIVATE BANK



JAKOB SIEGFRIED
WICKENS HERZER PANZA



TRACY TAYLOR
MAI CAPITAL



NYLA WALKER
CAPITAL ONE



BAILEY WELLS
CLEVELAND GUARDIANS

2025 in Review:



Q1: GREATER CLEVELAND SPORTS AWARDS SILENT AUCTION



Q2: YES BASEBALL CLINIC
DIII BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



Q3: TENNIS IN THE LAND VOLUNTEERING



Q4: BOARD TO BOARD
W/ DAN WHALEN



»» Thank you for reading! ««