



## Virginia Amateur Sports, INC

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### Virginia Commonwealth Games Announce 2018 Athletes of the Year

Virginia Amateur Sports, Inc (VAS) organizers of the Virginia Commonwealth Games at Liberty University annual athletes of the year have been selected: Talasjah Westhersby of Danville was named Youth – Female Athlete of the Year, Zachary Coldsnow of Yorktown was named Youth – Male Athlete of the Year, Erika Pierce of Charlottesville was named Adult – Female Athlete of the Year, and Austin Lewis of Stoney Creek was named Adult – Male Athlete of the Year. These athletes were selected from the nominees in their category.

Talasjah was a gold medalist in Track & Field in the 2018 Games. Talasjah is the highest achieving athlete at her school, six time State Champion and honor student. She exhibited leadership, commitment and perseverance both on and off the track. Outside of her track commitment Talasjah volunteers within her community. She was awarded Graduate of Distinction her senior year. Graduate of Distinction recognizes student accomplishments in five categories: academic achievement, attendance, citizenship, community service and participation in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. Students must accumulate points in each of the five areas in order to qualify.

Zachary played on the East team for All Star Baseball in the 2018 VA Commonwealth Games. He is described as a hard nosed player that works intensely and strives for excellence. Despite being sick with Mono from March until the end of May, Zach worked hard to get back into baseball peak performance for the Commonwealth Games. Unfortunately, prior to coming to the games, he pulled his hamstring. He did not let this sideline him! He gritted thru the injury to perform and have fun while playing a sport he loves. Zach is a 4 sport athlete (football, indoor and outdoor track and baseball) at TABB High. Zach was the 3A VHSL indoor and outdoor Track & Field Shot Put State Champion in 2018. He was honored to be team captain for his football, track, and baseball teams. He is actively involved in many community and school activities. He selflessly gives of his time to help others throughout the community. He is a team player and is always looking to lend a hand, ear, or just a smile. He performs well off the field as well. In the classroom, he maintains a 4.4 GPA.

Erika received 6 medals in the 2018 Games, in Track & Field. Erika is a mom of two girls, a teacher, and the USATF American Record holder in three events for Masters Track and Field. She does not believe that she isn't capable of still competing at high levels in her sport. She enjoys competing with other masters athletes and has established many enduring friendships based on a shared love of the sport of track and field.

Austin earned a gold medal, with his team (DC Titans) in the 18U division of USSSA Baseball in the 2018 Games. Austin has been with DC Titans organization for the last three years. He attended and graduated from Sussex High School. He comes from a typical all-American baseball/softball family that will cheer you on at the ball park while pushing you to be the best you can be. He has overcome different life punches as the family was struck hard by a house fire a few years back. He did not let that stop him he still played baseball from Dixie to Babe Ruth and travel. He is currently attending Longwood University. During the tournament at 2018 Games he pitched two games total of 6 innings. Out of those innings he had 7 strikeouts, 6 Hits, 3 walks, and 1 run scored off him out of both games. This was the last game for his baseball career under travel ball. During the tournament he was on fire with his batting with eleven at bats he had 3 doubles, 2 singles, 3 RBI's, 2 walks, 2 K and two ground outs at second and third. After going 5 for 9 his total batting average of the tournament was .556. Knowing that maybe this was his last weekend playing this summer he finished this year as someone that should be proud of himself. Playing showcase baseball at the beginning of the season to end a season with two team tournament wins was amazing.

These athletes were nominated to represent Virginia in the running for National Congress of State Games Athletes of the Year and those winners were announced and awards presented in early October. Talasjah, Zach, Erika and Austin will also be honored by leading the Parade of Athletes at the Opening Ceremonies for the 2019 State Games of America, to be held at Liberty University on August 2nd.

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About the Virginia Commonwealth Games at Liberty University: Modeled after the Olympics, the Virginia Commonwealth Games welcomes athletes regardless of age or skill level. The Games embody the values of participation, sportsmanship and healthy living amongst residents of Virginia and surrounding eligible states. The rights holder for the event is **Virginia Amateur Sports (VAS)**. VAS has been organizing the event for 29 years and it is truly a grassroots effort that relies on the dedication of thousands of volunteers and support from local sponsors and organizations across the Commonwealth. VAS is a member of the National Congress of State Games. As the host state for State Games of America, all Virginia residents are automatically eligible to participate.

About the National Congress of State Games: The National Congress of State Games (NCSG) is a membership organization comprised of 34 Summer State Games and 9 Winter State Games organizations and a member of the United States Olympic Committee's Multi Sports Organizational Council. The mission of the NCSG is to support State Games member organizations in the promotion of health, fitness and character building through Olympic – style competitions and physical activities.

The NCSG is also the rights holder of the State Games of America, an Olympic-style event featuring competition between State Games medal winners (gold, silver, bronze) from across the nation.

For more information on the Games, including images for download, visit: [www.CommonwealthGames.org/news](http://www.CommonwealthGames.org/news)

Member of the National Congress of State Games—learn more at [www.stategames.org](http://www.stategames.org)



*Talasjah*



*Zach*



*Erika*



*Austin*