2020 USA CLIMBING COMMUNITY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Athletes of the Year

Lauren Bair
Lauren Bair had an impressive year of competition with a win in the Junior Category at the 2020 Bouldering Youth National Championships, as well as a win at the 2020 Combined Invitational Championships in Plano, Texas. She went on to receive a podium finish and the highest placement for a US female athlete at the 2020 IFSC Pan-American Continental Qualifying Event in Los Angeles in February. But her contributions go beyond competition. Lauren’s nominators say “Lauren is one of the most outspoken and passionate women I’ve ever seen and has worked tirelessly to educate the community regarding social movements. She’s not afraid to start the uncomfortable conversations that need to happen for change to happen!”

Ben Hanna
After a top 3 finish at the 2020 Bouldering Open National Championships, Ben Hanna earned a spot on USA Climbing’s 2020 Bouldering National Team. According to Ben’s nominators, “Ben is extremely dedicated to improvement and his goals, is a valued and involved member of the community, and is extremely humble in his achievements in climbing. He has inspired so many people with how hard he worked to make the bouldering team this year, after not reaching his goals in the previous season. He’s the definition of “respecting the hustle” and a success story after a year of being the underdog!”

Ben Mayforth
Ben Mayforth has represented USA Climbing on the highest levels with impressive results, including a 2nd place finish at the 2019 IFSC Paraclimbing World Championship. According to Ben’s nominators, “Although Ben is an amazing climber, his contributions to the sport are greater than his individual performances. Ben organizes the Mid-Atlantic Adaptive Climbing Club and is proactive with scheduling climbing meetups and making sure that we are all informed about local competitions, with or without adaptive categories. When we gather, he is sure to greet every climber and makes sure that new climbers are introduced to the group and that everyone has a belay partner. He often sacrifices his own climbing time during these meetups to facilitate climbs needing special equipment and extra belayers. He has brought many people to the paraclimbing community and we are grateful for his selfless leadership in helping grow the sport.”
Teammate of the Year

Emma Grace Lehmann

Emma Grace Lehmann is a youth competitor that won the Female Youth A Sport Championship at the 2019 Sport & Speed Youth National Championships. Emma Grace's nominator writes, “Emma Grace is an incredible teammate that goes above and beyond to help those around her. After becoming a national champion, Emma Grace came back to her team as a coach in our on-boarding program to help encourage new climbers to develop a love for the sport of climbing. She has never once let her success get in the way of the others on her team. She allows her actions to say everything that needs to be said for her in her own accomplishments and saves her words to support others.”

Coach of the Year

Ray Ferlazzo

Ray Ferlazzo served as a coach at Gravity Vault Chatham. One of Ray’s nominators wrote, “Ray is an incredibly enthusiastic coach who brings the team together as a community, individually helps each climber succeed, and cares about the team not only as climbers, but as people. He lifts us up as a team and as individuals. Ray has encouraged more kids to join the climbing community by welcoming new teammates and creating a cohesive, friendly team environment.” Another nominator added, “Ray plays a huge part in introducing many people into the climbing community, myself included, through both his coaching and his caring nature. For example, Ray has helped introduce me to multiple crags that he knew well, while I had never been to any of them. These weren’t team days or anything that was affiliated with Gravity Vault, rather these moments where Ray went out of his way to offer an opportunity to the people he was coaching. Ray has proved time and time again that he truly cares are the teams he coaches, because he goes the extra mile to help us become more involved in the climbing community.”
**Team of the Year**

**Team Texas**

Not only has Team Texas been a consistent contender for national championships, but they have also created a community of climbers that goes beyond performance. According to one nomination, “This team embodies the meaning of a family. Good, bad or ugly this team gets through the seasons together. Team Texas continues to grow and become one of the best teams in the nation. But rock climbing is only a medium of what defines Team Texas. From cleaning the streets of the local communities, to serving food pantries, supporting local dog shelters, supporting all human beings regardless of skin color, gender, religion...the list goes on and will continue to go on. 2020 has been a hard year with the Covid-19 pandemic and the climbing community has been hit hard. But through it all the kids of Team Texas are becoming more resilient, flexible, imaginative, stronger, caring all with the support of the great families and coaches.”

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**Event of the Year**

**Pan-American Championships – Sender One LAX**

The Pan-American Championships hosted by Sender One LAX served as the final opportunity for Pan-American climbers to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. This international event was a great preview for the 2028 Olympic Games hosted in Los Angeles, and Sender One LAX provided an ideal location to host international competitors. As a host, Sender One LAX continued to display their ability to run high-caliber events and go above and beyond their hosting duties. The staff was incredibly dedicated to ensuring a flawless event and the ownership was ready and willing to provide whatever it was needed. As long-time supporters of USA Climbing, Sender One continues to set a standard for how to run an event that showcases American climbing to the world.
**Gym of the Year**

**Bend Rock Gym**

Bend Rock Gym consistently hosts local and championship events. Not a year goes by that BRG doesn’t host at least one championship, and they will often host two, including stepping up on short notice when hosting at another gym fell through for logistical reasons. Everyone with BRG is ready to step up when they’re needed. From the setting team to the front desk workers, BRG is a family that is always looking out for others. General Manager Rich Breuner is a key piece of the puzzle in creating a strong and caring culture. At championship events, Rich often functions as another RC, rolling up his sleeves and jumping in to do just about anything to keep the event running smoothly so everyone has a good experience, from climbers to volunteers.

**Routesetter of the Year**

**Joey Jannsen**

Joey is an integral part of both setting and organizing championship events in Region 12. He displays a love of setting and competition, always bringing new levels of creativity to his routesetting, and bringing up an awesome team of setters under him as well. His creativity and artistry in stacking volumes, color-coding problems by age category for easy navigation, makes every event memorable for competitors and spectators. He also keeps the level of difficulty high, helping prepare kids for the higher level of difficulty at Nationals, while still providing something that most kids will do well on, while still being interesting.
Volunteers of the Year

Matt Ornes
Matt Ornes has spent countless hours of hard work being the new chair of the Rules committee and on the Competition Task Force. With USA Climbing adapting IFSC rules, the undertaking for writing the new rules was massive and Matt led the charge. Finding ways to adjust the rules in a way that will allow American climbers to train and compete at the same level as their international counterparts. Matt has the ability to receive valuable input from athletes and find creative solutions to problems in a way that makes everybody happy. In addition, Matt has served as a Regional Coordinator, competition belayer, and is always willing to take on new challenges. One nominator wrote that “we often joke that Matt does everything and is everywhere. If something needs to get done, Matt is always willing to jump right in and take care of it. He also has the ability to make people feel included and is happy to teach those that want to get involved.”

Tab Stephens
Tab Stephens has selflessly devoted much of his personal time and resources to improve the organization as well as his region. Tab has served as a Regional Coordinator, Certified Judge, and as the Chair of USA Climbing’s Realignment Task Force. As one can imagine, realigning USA Climbing’s regions to ensure that there is fair competition and opportunity is a huge task and very time consuming. But his dedication does not end there. According to one nominator, “Tab has an amazing ability to organizing the volunteers to their best abilities. He makes sure comps are run smoothly and fixes problems without hesitations. He also took all parent complaints or concerns seriously - and addressed all problems to the best of his abilities.” Another nominator adds “He always ensures that everyone feels like they are not only listened to, but they know he will act upon their concerns and follow through. I don’t know of any other region or division that hosts regional and divisional championships at the same level of nationals. It is an amazing opportunity for our kids to prepare and by the time they get to nationals they have already been through it twice! The kids put their hearts and souls into climbing and Tab reflects that same energy back.”
Chris Danielson
If you have been around USA Climbing for a number of years, you likely know Chris Danielson. Chris has been a mastermind of routesetting development in the United States for more than two decades, serving as the Routesetting Program Coordinator, a member of the Routesetting Committee, and helping design the routesetting certification process. In addition, Chris has been a pioneer for American Routesetters in setting internationally. One of the first to set at international competitions, Chris is able to add an American style of setting to IFSC competitions, while learning the nuances of international setting to bring back to American climbers. Known for his thorough and detailed communication style, Chris has changed the USA Climbing community for the better.

Patti Rube
The growth and development within USA Climbing over the last eight years has been nothing short of amazing. Much of that growth and development was led by Patti Rube during her eight years serving on USA Climbing’s Board of Directors, including two years as President. Patti’s commitment to moving the sport forward is inspiring and an impressive fete, especially when you consider she gave her time on top of a full-time job and slew of family commitments. Patti’s vision for the organization and commitment to process, policy, and organization has allowed for immense growth, including becoming the recognized Olympic National Governing Body for Sport Climbing in the United States. Her commitment to USA Climbing continues as she will chair the inaugural USA Climbing Foundation Board.

Claudiu Vidulescu
As a longtime USA Climbing Youth National Team Head Coach, Claudiu Vidulescu has been integral in the development and performance of youth climbers for more than a decade. When you ask USA Climbing coaches who they look up to for climbing tactics and developing athletes, Claudiu is one of the first coaches you will hear about. Locally, Claudiu has helped build the Stone Summit Climbing Team into one of the most successful teams in the United States, producing national and international talent and collecting numerous team national championships. Ensuring that he is also developing the next generation of USA Climbing Coaches as he works, Claudiu has been an important part of the USA Climbing community and has helped push our sport forward in the United States.