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**MONTANANAN NAMED NATIONAL CONGRESS OF STATE GAMES
ATHLETES OF THE YEAR**

The National Congress of State Games has selected its male and female Athletes of the Year for 2011, continuing a tradition that began in 1994. Cecil Pegram of Billings, Montana was selected as the Male Athlete of the Year. Pegram, Female Athlete of the Year Whitnee Johnson, of Columbia, Missouri and Youth Athlete of the Year Justin Liedke of Papillion, Nebraska will be honored at the National Congress of State Games Athlete of the Year Banquet, September 28 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma during the NCSG Annual Symposium.

Pegram has been participating in the State Games since 2000. He has earned 8 Gold, 13 Silver and 10 Bronze medals in the 5K Road Race, Biathlon, Ballroom Dance, Duathlon, Triathlon, Half Marathon and Cycling events.

The Big Sky State Games has been a family affair for Pegram. He and his daughters Helen and Kara have run, biked and competed in the biathlon and the triathlon at the State Games. In 2010, he competed in every State Games event he could including Biathlon, 5k Road Race, Cycling Road Race, Cycling Time Trial, Ballroom Dance, Duathlon and Track and Field. This past year Pegram had to overcome an injury that kept him from running in the Big Sky State Games, but he was able to cycle. On Saturday he participated in the 40 mile Cycling Road Race earning a Silver medal. He went on to fight the winds in the Cycling Time Trial Saturday evening where he was a Bronze medalist. Since Cecil could not run, he volunteered for the 5K Friday night, serving as a road guard and cheerleader, and on Sunday helped with the Triathlon/Duathlon.

Pegram has been running and cycling for over 22 years. He routinely is a top age group finisher in races throughout the region. Pegram finds exercise and participating in events a great way to catch up with his family and they can do it together. He considers participating in the Boston Marathon three times with his daughters as a real highlight.

Pegram not only participates in sports, he also helps others by volunteering for numerous events. He was in charge of the Yellowstone Valley Cycling Club's tours for numerous years coordinating rides through Yellowstone Park or 100 mile adventures from Billings to Hardin or Billings to Columbus. He also volunteers for the Montana's Women's Run, Montana Velo Bella Tour and has been an officer in the Yellowstone Rimrunners. Pegram's passion for health, fitness and people has made a dramatic impact in the lives of his children and those who have been privileged to know him and compete along side him.

Pegram believes in the importance of family and in sports keeping families together in a healthy way. Sports, and in particular the Big Sky State Games, have given the Pegram family memories and quality time that can never be taken away.

The National Congress of State Games is a collection of State Games organizations from coast-to-coast including the Big Sky State Games, with the mission of providing amateur athletes of all ages and abilities the opportunity to compete on a statewide stage, to practice good sportsmanship, and to develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. The NCSG is a member of the United States Olympic Committee's Multi-Sport Organizations Council. Annually as many as a half-million amateur athletes compete in State Games in more than 100 different sports.

The Big Sky State Games has provided thousands of Montanans the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of events and programs since 1986. The 26th annual event included 37 sports. Finals were held July 15, 16 and 17 in Billings. In addition to Pegram, this year's Big Sky State Games Athletes of the Year were Lisa Minnehan (Road Race), and the Youth Athlete of the Year went to Keegan Kampschorer of Billings (Swimming).

Major sponsors of the Big Sky State Games are First Interstate Bank, Kampgrounds of America and Montana Cycling and Ski. Wendy's sponsors Opening Ceremonies.