

Hershey's Track and Field Games

A Partnership of Winners

Hershey's Track & Field Games is the longest-running youth sports program of its kind in North America. The program, founded in 1975 by Dr. Donald P. Cohen, originated in Charleston, West Virginia. Since then, the games have grown from a single community event to an athletic competition that draws participants throughout the United States and Canada.

The program provides opportunities for recreation to youth throughout the country while emphasizing sportsmanship among peers. Each year more than 400,000 youth participate in the games, which include the 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1600 meter dash and the 4x100 meter team relay. The games also include field events such as the standing long jump and a softball throw competition. To date, more than 10 million youth competitors from the United States and Canada have participated in the games.



The Girls Age 9-10 4x100 relay team from Ypsilanti celebrate their third place finish.



The Michigan team gathers for a group photo at the Hershey's Track and Field North American Finals.



Kyle Redwine, of Rochester Hills, competing in the Boys Age 13-14 200 Meter Dash.

Each year, Michigan Recreation and Park Association agency members have the opportunity to host local Hershey's Track and Field Games in their respective communities. Agency participation provides all interested youth with the chance to compete and the opportunity to qualify for the Hershey's Track and Field State Finals. In 2008, 41 communities throughout Michigan hosted Hershey's Track and Field events.

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association hosts the Hershey's Track and Field Games State Finals each year. The 2009 finals will be held at Holt High School on Friday, July 10. The state finals will provide competitive opportunities for athletes of all abilities, and qualifying participants will earn the privilege of representing Michigan at the Hershey's North American Finals.

Hershey's North American Finals

Last year, nine Michigan youth travelled with Hershey State Chairman **Denny Troshak** to Hershey, Pennsylvania to compete at the Hershey's Track and Field North American Finals. Travelling from Ypsilanti, Rochester Hills and West Bloomfield,

the competitors spent July 31 through August 1 taking in all the event had to offer. In total, 560 youth athletes attended the North American Finals. The athletes enjoyed a nearby waterpark, participated in an opening ceremony, listened and learned from famous track and field athletes, socialized with peers and celebrated their qualifying achievements at a banquet reception.

But on race day, the Michigan delegation was all business. Kyle Redwine, of Rochester Hills, was the first to compete, finishing second in the Boys Age 13-14 200 meter dash. Ypsilanti relay team participants Princess Hall, Jada Nelson, Amber Shelby and Jada Weatherspoon placed third in the Girls Age 9-10 4x100 meter relay. West Bloomfield relay participants Nathan Tremonti, Bobby Hickson, Garrett Winter and Cameron Fish were the final Michigan competitors of the day, taking sixth place in the Boys Age 9-10 4x100 meter relay.

The 2009 Hershey's Track and Field Games

Volunteers are a crucial component of the Hershey's State Finals. Holt High School is just minutes from the State Capitol in Lansing, making for a fun visit to mid-Michigan. Lunch is provided to all volunteers at the event. Volunteers may sign up to help for the entire Hershey's State Final event, or for partial shifts throughout the day. More than 60 volunteers donated their time and energy to make last year's event possible for youth athletes in Michigan, and just as many helping hands are needed for the 2009 event.

To learn more about the Hershey's Track and Field Games program, to find a local event near you or to register your agency to host a regional meet, contact Hershey State Chairman Denny Troshak at (248) 451-1900 or call MRPA Headquarters at (517) 485-9888. ●



More information can be found by visiting
www.mrpaonline.org or
www.hersheystrackandfield.com.