



THE DRAKE GROUP EDUCATION FUND

Realizing The Promise
Of College Athletics

2024

Drake Hero Award

SALLY ROBERTS

Honoring an extraordinary individual who has helped advance the collegiate sports reform movement through persistent actions over time. The individual, through hard work and persistent effort, has created a significant impact within the world of sports reform and, in doing so, has enhanced the integrity of intercollegiate athletics.

Sally Roberts, an athlete, Army veteran, chief executive officer, and founder of *Wrestle Like A Girl*, is the driving force of high school and college women's wrestling in the United States. Her vision is to see every girl and woman in the world be afforded the opportunity to wrestle. She considers sport as a major vehicle for social change that will enable women to realize and exercise their power – an essential task of the 21st century.

As an athlete, Roberts was a two-time World bronze medal winner, World Cup Champion, and three-time U.S. National Champion wrestler. Prior to joining the Army in 2009, serving with the 320th Psychological Operations Company, she earned her BA in Psychology and MA in sport and performance psychology. While deployed on an intelligence mission in Afghanistan in 2012, she encountered a group of girls in a small rural village who had never seen a female soldier. As they gathered around her, it was the moment she conceived of *Wrestle Like A Girl* – sharing her passion for wrestling so young girls could experience the competency and strength to rise up to life's challenges each and every day.

Roberts founded *Wrestle Like A Girl* in 2016, conducting girls' wrestling clinics and programs throughout the USA before realizing that women's access to sport and the resources required to support their participation required policy change. She expanded the mission of *Wrestle Like A Girl* to become the preeminent non-profit organization advocating for the addition of girls' wrestling programs by state high school athletic associations and developing women's wrestling at the collegiate level. There are now 45 states with high school girls' wrestling championships.

In 2020, she led the effort to have women's wrestling recognized by the NCAA as an emerging sport, and, in 2024 *Wrestle Like A Girl* raised \$290,000 to sponsor and televise the national collegiate women's wrestling championship. This year the NCAA has recommended that the membership approve the first NCAA women's national collegiate wrestling championship to occur in 2026 – the result of Sally Roberts' heroic efforts and leadership.