



**PRESS RELEASE**  
*For Immediate Release*

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## **WEST MICHIGAN SPORTS COMMISSION PROMOTES STAFF**

***Katy Tigchelaar Promoted to Vice President of Operations, Julie Shields to Director of State Games of Michigan***

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Aug. 15, 2023 – The [West Michigan Sports Commission](#) (WMSC) announced two staff promotions this week – Katy Tigchelaar to Vice President of Operations from Director of Marketing and Events, and Julie Shields to Director of the State Games of Michigan from Event Coordinator.

### **Katy Tigchelaar Promoted to Vice President of Operations**

In her new role, Katy Tigchelaar provides a strategic approach to growing the impact of the WMSC's sales, marketing and event departments. In this newly created position, she works with the WMSC's national sales manager, marketing manager and event coordinator to develop and drive a comprehensive sales, services and marketing strategy for greater results and growth of the WMSC's sports tourism efforts.

"Katy has been instrumental in the growth of the West Michigan Sports Commission over her twelve years with us," said Mike Guswiler, president of the WMSC. "Her knowledge of our local sports landscape coupled with her experience on a national level has contributed to this organization greatly. I am excited for Katy and for what she will do to advance the WMSC moving forward in this new role."

An Ontario native, Tigchelaar first joined the WMSC in 2009 as an intern while studying K-12 physical education at Calvin University, then earning her master's degree in sports management at Western Michigan University. Tigchelaar returned to the organization for a full-time/permanent position in 2011 as event coordinator, subsequently being promoted over the years to event manager and director of marketing and events.

Outside of work, Tigchelaar is vice chair of the non-profit [Michigan Sports Commission](#), the newly branded nonprofit that evolved from Pure Michigan Sports, a statewide coalition promoting the state for sports tourism, where she was a co-chair. She also serves on the board of the [Sports Events & Tourism Association](#) (Sports ETA), the national member association for sports tourism organizations, and the advisory council for the Ferris State University Sports Communications program. Locally, she is a member of the board of the South Hill Neighborhood Association and advisory council for Fans of Valley Field, a grassroots baseball field organization.

"We have a great team at the WMSC, and I feel privileged to be selected to help guide our marketing, sales and events divisions," said Tigchelaar. "I look forward to continuing our partnerships in the community while making new ones as we strive to elevate the brand of Grand Rapids through sports tourism."

### **Julie Shields Promoted to Director of State Games of Michigan**

A Berkley, Michigan, native, Julie Shields now leads operations of the WMSC's signature event – the [Meijer State Games of Michigan](#), a multi-sport, Olympic style event promoting health and wellness for all ages and abilities through sport.

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"In her five years with the State Games, Julie has shown great leadership and a keen sense for developing relationships with our many sport directors," said Guswiler. "Her multi-tasking and organizational skills lend themselves well to this important and signature event of the West Michigan Sports Commission. She is the ideal person to bring into the role of leading the State Games of Michigan."

A graduate of Northwood University with a bachelor's degree in sports management, Shields was first introduced to the WMSC in 2015 as an intern with the Meijer State Games of Michigan. After working in Anchorage for a few years, including with a professional ice hockey team, she returned to Michigan and rejoined the WMSC as event coordinator for the State Games of Michigan – a position she held for five years until this promotion. She built relationships with local sport directors and helped grow the State Games event under the previous director, Eric Engelbarts II, who departed earlier this year to take a position as executive director of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance in State College, Pennsylvania.

Shields also was event coordinator with the [National Congress of State Games](#) from 2018 to 2022, the membership organization for all State Games programs across the country. She assisted with the 2019 and 2022 [State Games of America](#) and helped execute its annual national symposium.

"I am very excited for this new opportunity to lead the Meijer State Games of Michigan, and I look forward to continuing the success it has enjoyed these past 14 years while looking for new avenues of opportunity," said Shields. "I greatly appreciate the vote of trust from Mike Guswiler and the WMSC board for promoting me to this new role, and I am eager to take on 2024."

***About the West Michigan Sports Commission (WMSC)***

*The non-profit [West Michigan Sports Commission](#) (WMSC) identifies, secures and hosts youth and amateur sporting events to positively impact the economy and quality of life in the region. Since its inception in 2007, the WMSC has booked 1,095 events attracting more than 1.9 million athletes and visitors, generating more than \$557 million in direct visitor spending. Visit [westmisports.com](http://westmisports.com) or on social media at [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).*

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