

Bringing Snow Sports Back to the Winter State Games

For three days in February, Marquette, Mich. had the feel of an Olympic Village as it hosted the Winter Meijer State Games. The cold and snowy setting of this rustic upper peninsula town made it the perfect location for the new annual event.

Meijer has partnered with the [Michigan Sports Alliance](#) as a proud sponsor of this multisport, Olympic-style event, that welcomes athletes regardless of age or ability, since its launch of summer events in 2010. The Alliance launched the Winter Games in 2010 in Grand Rapids, but inconsistent snow fall meant only non-traditional winter games like basketball and karate could continue each year. The introduction of Winter Games in Marquette this year meant the return of more traditional outdoor winter sports.

Marquette hosted events including skiing, skating, luge and ice hockey, while other Winter Games events were held in Grand Rapids and other locations throughout the state. The event celebrates Michiganders' ongoing passion for outdoor recreation throughout the year.

The Winter Games took place Feb. 25-27 and began with a Parade of Athletes and the lighting of the cauldron. Michigan Olympians Gary Morgan and John Kusku took part in the dramatic opening ceremonies which featured skiers snaking down Marquette Mountain while carrying red torches. More than 1,000 people gathered at night with temperatures hovering in the single digits to watch the ceremony. Marquette Meijer Store Director John Spaulding even got to share his remarks as part of the opening ceremonies.

"The town was alive with this event," said John, who did a lot of legwork to help organize the activities.

John couldn't have been more excited about the assignment because the Winter Games bring together his passions: Meijer and winter outdoor sports. He's known for being [an active member of his community](#) and [enthusiastic winter sports fan](#).

He moved from Northern Lower Michigan, where he managed our Traverse City and Acme Township stores for 15 years, to open the Marquette store in 2018. As empty-nesters, John and his wife welcomed the opportunity to live in a region where they could embrace their love of snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling and year-round cycling.

John predicts the Winter Games' new home in Michigan's winter wonderland will quickly grow the attendance of the annual event - and introduce people to the Upper Peninsula as a winter destination.

"I'm thrilled to work for a company that helps enrich our communities, and I can say that's not just a catchphrase. It's what we do. That's why I've been at Meijer for 44 years," he said.

By all accounts the inaugural Marquette-hosted Winter State Games was a big success, and John is already making plans to compete in next year's event.

Additional assets available online: [Photos](#) ⁽¹⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/Bringing-Snow-Sports-Back-to-the-Winter-State-Games>