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**PLEASANT GROVE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE UTAH VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Heather Gneiting of Pleasant Grove High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Utah Volleyball Player of the Year. Gneiting is the third Gatorade Utah Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pleasant Grove High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Gneiting as Utah's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Gneiting joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert HS, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public HS, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View HS, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas HS, Fla.).

The 6-foot-4 senior middle blocker recorded 319 kills, 101 blocks and 62 service aces this past season, leading the Vikings (26-5) to the Class 6A state final. The MVP for the West at the 2017-18 Under Armour All-America game, Gneiting was named Miss Volleyball by the Deseret News. She was also selected to the national ALL-USA First Team and earned First Team All-American honors from FloVolleyball.

A devoted member of her church community, Gneiting has volunteered locally as a mentor for special needs students. "Heather Gneiting is one of the best middles to ever come out of this state," said Corrie Vigil, head coach at Syracuse High. "She's competitive and versatile, and dominant at her position. I was impressed with her court awareness and ability to make adjustments during the match."

Gneiting has maintained a 3.81 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Brigham Young University this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Gneiting joins recent Gatorade Utah Volleyball Players of the Year Dani Barton (2016-17, Brighton High School), Jaiden Farr (2015-16, Morgan High School), Alexsa Parker (2014-15, Snow Canyon High School), Jessie Jorgensen (2013-14, Timpview High School), McKenzie Willey (2012-13, Lone Peak High School), Ciara Parker (2011-12, Snow Canyon High School), Ashley Garfield (2010-11, Morgan High School), Danica Mendivil (2009-10, Pleasant Grove High School), Brooke McAlister (2008-09, Pleasant Grove High School) and Chelsey Garfield (2007-08, Morgan High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Gneiting will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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