

53 Santa Clara County high school seniors in contention for REACH Youth Scholarships

For Immediate Release

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SAN JOSE (April 25, 2007) – Five Santa Clara County high school seniors will be announced as winners of the San Jose Sports Authority's 2007 REACH Youth Scholarships at an awards breakfast Friday, May 11 at the San Jose Marriott.

The breakfast honors 53 students nominated by their schools for the REACH program, which stands for **R**ecognizing **E**xcellence, **A**dversity, **C**ourage and **H**ard Work. The nominees wrote essays in which they explained how their participation in high school sports helped them overcome adversity to excel in sports and academics. The difficulties faced by these young people included poverty, abuse, social and language problems faced by immigrants, physical disabilities and disease.

A total of \$9,000 in scholarships will be awarded at the breakfast, chaired by former San Francisco 49er Ronnie Lott, and one nominee will also win two tickets on any published Southwest Airlines operated, scheduled service.

This is the 11th year for the REACH Youth Scholarship Program, sponsored by Bridge Bank, and it brings to 60 the number of scholarship winners. Supporting sponsors of the event include Hewlett-Packard, San Jose Marriott, San Jose Sharks, San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau, Team San Jose, National Tennis Championships, Cal-Hi Sports Bay Area and Southwest Airlines.

The REACH Youth Scholarship Program is one of the ways the San Jose Sports Authority supports youth and amateur sports in our community. Visit our website at www.sjsa.org.

REACH Youth Scholarship Nominees

Andrew Hill High School

Jessica Gonzalez, soccer, track and field. Grew up in poverty and was victim of robbery while on soccer trip. Soccer all-league player, band member and class vice president.

Laura Juarez, volleyball, basketball, track and field. Underwent two knee surgeries due to sports injury, recovery complicated by insurance problems that limited physical therapy. Basketball MVP and all-league, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center volunteer.

Joshua Partida, basketball, cross-country, swimming. Struggled against lack of family support for college ambition. Most improved player in basketball and swimming, school club president.

Dominic Tate, baseball. Unsettled family life caused by substance abuse. Most improved baseball player.

Archbishop Mitty High School

Julie Galli, volleyball, soccer, track and field, cross-country. Born without left hand, missed year of sports because of knee surgery. 4.1 GPA, summer school tutor, teacher's aide, assistant at pediatrician's office.

Alexis Reilly, tennis. Diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma as a sophomore. Tennis captain, youth chair, sponsorship chair and co-captain of American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

Bellarmine College Preparatory

Eric Baum, football, basketball, cross-country, track and field. Forced to give up football after suffering heart injury on the field. Most improved and most valuable runner, pianist, volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club.

Stephen Powell, football, track and field. Lives on his own without parental support. Tutors younger students, top-ranked in CCS in shot put and discus.

Dane Rasmuson, lacrosse, roller hockey, ice hockey. Stroke as an infant caused permanent vision and other problems. Drummer, school volunteer.

Robert Valenti, wrestling, football. Overcame obesity through involvement in sports. Volunteer tutor, fashion model, taekwondo black belt, all-league football.

Jordan Vargas, football, track and field, baseball. Cut from several teams, ridiculed for his faith. Church mission trips, Soup kitchen and Special Olympics volunteer, all-league football player.

Downtown College Preparatory

Jairo Aguirre, soccer, basketball. Mother died when he was 11. Neighborhood volunteer, youth basketball coach.

Eastside College Preparatory

Noel Cruz, soccer, track and field. Has worked many jobs as child of a poor immigrant family. Three-year soccer captain, league MVP, volunteer tutor, academic award winner.

Laura Nunez-Aquilar, soccer, track and field. Works and lives in dangerous community. Soccer captain, track record-holder, volunteer tutor and youth coach, academic award winner.

Gilroy High School

Megan Marie Litle, cross-country, track and field. Learned value of work and determination in achieving success through sports. Community volunteer, league champion, CCS qualifier.

Russhelle Preeshl, volleyball, basketball, softball, field hockey. Suffered many sports injuries. Volunteer youth coach, scholar-athlete award winner.

Gunderson High School

Joseph Daneault, basketball, track and field. Moved across the country but quickly fit in new school. Student government, tolerance program, academic award winner.

Shuka Jahromifar, soccer. Immigrant and non-English speaker. School volunteer and scholastic award-winner, three-year team captain.

Tanya Martinez, basketball. Tempted by illicit drugs. Volunteer youth coach, academic award winner.

Gunn High School

Bernard Anthony, basketball, football. Overcame learning disability and removed from mother's care by the courts. Basketball award winner, Special Olympics volunteer.

James Lick High School

Gerardo Alvarez, soccer, badminton. From family of 12 headed by single mother, will be first to graduate from high school or go to college. Academic award winner, all-league and MVP player, volunteer youth referee and coach.

Odilio Lopez, soccer. Came to the United States alone as a 15-year-old, finished U.S. high school in three years. League MVP.

Leigh High School

Kyle Jury, baseball. Dealt with parents' divorce, grandfather battling cancer. Youth coach and American Cancer Society volunteer.

Brian Scott, basketball. Overcame physical and psychological trauma of a childhood dog attack. Blood donor.

Richelle Werner, basketball. Learned to chart own course in life rather than following someone else's path. Team MVP, community volunteer.

Leland High School

Joyce Chang, volleyball. Deaf in one ear and missing part of finger. All-league player, youth symphony, student government, tutor, California Junior Miss, academic award winner, debate.

Bethany Nollette, water polo, swimming. Surgery for Crohn's Disease interrupted high school academics and athletics. Church youth group, volunteer coach, academic award winner, sports MVP.

Megan Stiller, field hockey, swimming, lacrosse. Learning disability and spinal curvature. Athletic award winner, youth library volunteer, weekly baby-sitter.

Lynbrook High School

Brian Shi, badminton. Congenital deformity of his arms. Academic award winner, athletic award winner, library tutor, summer school teacher, YMCA volunteer.

Monta Vista High School

Jessica Lau, soccer, cross-country. Mother battling cancer. Student government, tutor, youth sports referee, American Cancer Society volunteer, Olympic development team, college soccer scholarship.

Darryl Tom, soccer, volleyball. Missed much school to travel and play soccer internationally. U.S. national team member, all-league.

Marcus Woo, football, basketball, track and field. Overcame small stature to excel in size-oriented sports. Community volunteer, co-MVP in two sports.

Notre Dame High School

Katie Harrington, volleyball, cross-country, soccer, track and field. Struggling with lack of improvement despite hard work. Academic award winner, recreation department worker, started youth nutrition and exercise camp.

Overfelt High School

Kathy Garcia, swimming. Lives apart from parents. First chair in band, dancer, conflict mediation manager.
Briana Sandoval, football, soccer, track and field, cross-country. Treatment for debilitating scars placed financial strain on single-parent family. Dance team, church volunteer, soccer MVP.
Mia Williams, cheerleader, cross-country, track and field. Parents divorced and disabled, in charge of raising three siblings. All-league athlete, student government, homeless volunteer.

Piedmont Hills High School

Eric Alfano, football. Severe learning disability and sports injuries. Athletic award winner, academic award winner, accepted into two colleges.
Robert Matthews, football, baseball. Learning disability and multiple sports injuries. Team MVP.
Maria Sok, soccer, water polo. Struggled with poor grades and destructive relationships.

Saint Francis High School

Julianne Grosso, field hockey, swimming. Pelvis shattered in automobile accident, ending athletic career. Part-time nanny, church leader, youth coach, camp counselor, academic award winner.

San Jose High Academy

Marilyn Aguayo-Franco, color guard, wrestling and basketball manager. Parents divorced and missed year of school due to family moves. Library volunteer, most improved in color guard.
Stephen Vargas, football, basketball, track and field. Parents divorced, grandfather died of cancer, season-ending sports injuries. Hospital volunteer, youth coach, all-league player.

Santa Clara High School

Jacqui Fountain, basketball. Overcame knee injury her sophomore year to become all-conference player. Team captain, yearbook editor, team fund-raiser.
Linda Oseso, track and field, basketball. Overcame social and academic barriers as immigrant from Kenya. Hospital volunteer, Santa Clara Youth Commission, basketball MVP, track all-league.

Santa Teresa High School

Nora Gutierrez, cross-country, track and field. Overcame parents' divorce and father absence from family. Dance team, church volunteer, library volunteer, athletic award winner.
Cory Suess, football, golf, soccer. Severe football injury interrupted academics. Academic award winner, camp counselor, community volunteer, all-league athlete, twice school's athlete of the year.
Lyla Youssef, swimming, water polo, soccer. Severe financial difficulties. Academic award winner, community volunteer.

Westmont High School

Kevin Blakeley, soccer, track and field, football, basketball. Childhood cancer left him blind in one eye. Community volunteer, youth coach, all-league football, MVP track.

Willow Glen High School

Aracely Esquerra, field hockey, soccer, track and field. Overcame emotional problems. Community volunteer, MVP and all-league in field hockey and soccer.
Jennifer Uribe, field hockey, badminton, track and field. Overcame discrimination as a girl and ethnic minority. Academic award winner, MVP field hockey, community volunteer.

Yerba Buena High School

Reggie Andal, football, basketball, baseball. Born with several heart diseases, which have required three surgeries while in high school and caused him to miss one year of sports. Athletic award winner.
Sergio Lopez, cross-country, track and field, soccer. Adjustment to new school. Youth tutor, church

volunteer, athletic award winner.

Ricardo Tiscareño, wrestling, football, swimming, soccer. Overcame family's economic difficulties. Junior Achievement officer, church volunteer, athletic award winner.