

Five Santa Clara County students awarded REACH Scholarships

For Immediate Release

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SAN JOSE (May 11, 2007) – Five Santa Clara County high school seniors were awarded REACH Youth Scholarships at the program's annual breakfast today, which honored 53 local students who overcame adversity to excel in both academics and athletics. The breakfast was hosted and underwritten for the fourth consecutive year by the San Jose Marriott.

NFL Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott, honorary chair, and women's soccer star Brandi Chastain gave out \$9,000 in scholarship awards on behalf of presenting sponsor Bridge Bank, with support from Hewlett-Packard, San Jose Sharks, San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau, Team San Jose, National Tennis Championships, Cal-Hi Sports Bay Area, Southwest Airlines, San Jose Giants and Mike and Christy Akatiff. REACH is an acronym for **R**ecognizing **E**xcellence, **A**dversity, **C**ourage and **H**ard work, in its 11th year as a program of the San Jose Sports Authority.

"The nominees and winners we recognized today are an inspired and inspiring group of young students who excelled under circumstances that would challenge any adult," said Patricia Ernstrom, executive director of the San Jose Sports Authority. "As a supporter of youth sports in our community, the Sports Authority is proud to honor their achievements."

Teachers, counselors and coaches from each high school in Santa Clara County were asked to nominate students who they felt matched the scholarship criteria. Students submitted essays detailing how they were able to overcome adversity and the role that sports played in helping them do so. A panel of local community leaders reviewed the essays, interviewed candidates and selected the six scholarship recipients, who received scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,500 (list of recipients follows).

For event photographs and further information, please call the San Jose Sports Authority.

Scholarship Award Winners

Bernard Anthony – Gunn High School (\$2,500)

Bernard and his four siblings were removed from his mother's custody when he was 4 years old. He and his two younger sisters were adopted and raised by a woman in his extended family. He developed his love of sports from his older brothers, Shawn, who plays basketball in Special Olympics and Jesse, who coached Bernard in basketball. He was supported in his athletic development by his adoptive great-grandmother, BB, who spent hours in the gym watching him play even as Alzheimer's slowly claimed her. Bernard was diagnosed with a learning disability in elementary school. Using the hard work and persistence he learned from playing basketball, Bernard remained in regular school classes. He also continued to play high school and AAU basketball and has been named his team's most valuable player and defensive player of the year.

Mia Williams – Overfelt High School (\$2,000)

Mia's family life has always been difficult. Her parents divorced when she was 2 years old and she was forced to grow up quickly to care for her three younger siblings because of her mother's learning disability. She began changing their diapers when she was 4. There have been significant family crises that Mia had to deal with including parental neglect and physical abuse. But beginning as a sophomore, she began running track at school. The sport has given her a place in her life where she can get away from problems at home and an incentive to raise her grades. She was honored with her team's Tough as Nails Award for being reliable and encouraging to teammates.

Julianne Grosso – St. Francis High School (\$1,500)

Julianne took up field hockey her freshman year and became engrossed in the sport and the camaraderie of her team. She was good enough to be put on the varsity as a sophomore, and after a junior season as a back-up to the senior goalie, was preparing for a leadership role on a very strong team. Just before summer, she was involved in a traffic accident in which her pelvis was shattered in seven places. Surgery kept her in the hospital for two weeks, and she was still in a wheelchair when field hockey practice began last fall. She

attended all practices, either in a wheelchair or on crutches, though she was able to return to the team only on senior night to swing her stick before the start of the game. She hopes to be able to resume playing field hockey in college.

Julie Galli – Archbishop Mitty High School (\$1,500)

Julie was born with only one hand, but she has played volleyball, soccer, basketball, run cross-country and track, and learned to play the guitar. She visited the library to research techniques that would allow her to serve and set in volleyball with one hand. She competed on Mitty's freshman and junior varsity soccer teams, but the summer before her junior year, she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee in a club championship soccer game. Surgery and rehabilitation cause her to miss a year of sports, and she returned to compete her senior year in cross-country and track.

Bethany Nolette – Leland High School (\$1,500)

Bethany was an aquatic athlete, competing in both swimming and water polo, but she began to miss an increasing amount of class and practice time because of debilitating abdominal pain. She was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, an incurable intestinal illness, at the end of her sophomore year. For three months she was on a special liquid diet that required her to insert a feeding tube through her nose to her stomach every time she ate. Surgery followed to removed 18 inches of small intestine, and that put her disease into remission. She was able to return to sports quicker than her doctors had forecast and qualified for the Central Coast Section Championships.

2007 REACH Youth Scholarship nominees:

Jessica Gonzalez, Andrew Hill High School
Laura Juarez, Andrew Hill High School
Joshua Partida, Andrew Hill High School
Dominic Tate, Andrew Hill High School
Julie Galli, Archbishop Mitty High School
Alexis Reilly, Archbishop Mitty High School
Eric Baum, Bellarmine College Preparatory
Stephen Powell, Bellarmine College Preparatory
Dane Rasmuson, Bellarmine College Preparatory
Robert Valenti, Bellarmine College Preparatory
Jordan Vargas, Bellarmine College Preparatory
Jairo Aguirre, Downtown College Preparatory
Noel Cruz, Eastside College Preparatory
Laura Nunez-Aquilar, Eastside College Preparatory
Megan Marie Litle, Gilroy High School
Russhelle Preeshl, Gilroy High School
Joseph Daneault, Gunderson High School
Shuka Jahromifar, Gunderson High School
Tanya Martinez, Gunderson High School
Bernard Anthony, Gunn High School
Gerardo Alvarez, James Lick High School
Odilio Lopez, James Lick High School
Kyle Jury, Leigh High School
Brian Scott, Leigh High School
Richelle Werner, Leigh High School
Joyce Chang, Leland High School
Bethany Nollette, Leland High School
Megan Stiller, Leland High School
Brian Shi, Lynbrook High School
Jessica Lau, Monta Vista High School
Darryl Tom, Monta Vista High School
Marcus Woo, Monta Vista High School
Katie Harrington, Notre Dame Vista High School
Kathy Garcia, Overfelt High School
Briana Sandoval, Overfelt High School
Mia Williams, Overfelt High School
Eric Alfano, Piedmont Hills High School
Robert Mathews, Piedmont Hills High School

Maria Sok, *Piedmont Hills High School*
Julianne Grosso, *Saint Francis High School*
Marilyn Aguayo-Franco, *San Jose High Academy*
Stephen Vargas, *San Jose High Academy*
Jacqui Fountain, *Santa Clara High School*
Linda Oseso, *Santa Clara High School*
Nora Gutierrez, *Santa Teresa High School*
Cory Suess, *Santa Teresa High School*
Lyla Youssef, *Santa Teresa High School*
Kevin Blakley, *Westmont High School*
Aracely Esquerria, *Willow Glen High School*
Jennifer Uribe, *Willow Glen High School*
Reggie Andal, *Yerba Buena High School*
Sergio Lopez, *Yerba Buena High School*
Ricardo Tiscareño, *Yerba Buena High School*