

SAN JOSE SPORTS AUTHORITY NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

SAN JOSE (May 9, 2008) – Seven Santa Clara County high school seniors will be announced as winners of the San Jose Sports Authority's 2008 REACH Youth Scholarships, presented by Bridge Bank, at an awards breakfast Friday, May 16 at the San Jose Marriott.

The breakfast honors 36 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, physical disabilities, and disease.

A total of \$10,000 in scholarships will be awarded at the breakfast, chaired by former San Francisco 49er Ronnie Lott, and one nominee will also win two tickets from Southwest Airlines.

This marks the 12th year of the REACH Youth Scholarship Program, and brings to 67 the total number of scholarship winners. In addition to presenting sponsor Bridge Bank, supporting sponsors of the event include Hewlett-Packard, San Jose Marriott, San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau, Team San Jose, National Tennis Championships, Cal-Hi Sports Bay Area, San Jose Giants, Corporate Printing Resource, Inc. and Southwest Airlines.

About the San Jose Sports Authority

The San Jose Sports Authority is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the City of San Jose's economic development, visibility and civic pride through sports. Serving as the City's sports commission since its inception in 1991, the Sports Authority has provided leadership and support to attract or host nearly 200 sporting events in San Jose and the South Bay. The Sports Authority also supports and operates community, youth and amateur sports programs, including the San Jose Sports Hall of Fame, The First Tee of San Jose, and the REACH Youth Scholarship Program. To learn more, visit www.sjsa.org.

REACH Youth Scholarship Nominees

ARCHBISHOP MITTY HIGH SCHOOL

Ashley Seymour, cross country & track. Ashley's commitment to athletics helped her to cope with the death of her mother. A foot injury placed her on the sidelines as a senior and opened the door to pursue volunteerism.

EASTSIDE COLLEGE PREPARATORY

Miriam Magana, soccer and volleyball. Miriam overcame a back injury to earn all-league honors and works to help support her family.

Fremont High School

Braden Langlais, baseball. Sports helped Braden to have fun and stay focused on his life. It built up his confidence and helped him to keep the mood light when around his friends who struggled with depression.

Jose Ortiz, soccer. Sports helped Jose build self-confidence, remain focused on his dream to attend college and lead his team to a league championship.

GILROY HIGH SCHOOL

Amy Huang, tennis and badminton. Amy's parents emigrated from China to create a better life for her family; she excelled as a student-athlete to make them proud.

Kristina Schmidt, cross country and track & field. A new-found passion for cross country helped Kristina build self-confidence and leadership skills as her team's co-captain.

Natalie Toews, tennis, soccer and badminton. Natalie successfully balanced sports, work and school with humility and an uplifting attitude.

Kevin Grove, soccer, baseball and football. Kevin managed pressure to succeed and emerged as a team leader and strong academic performer.

Octavio Duran Jr. football. Octavio overcame financial hardships in a single parent household and continued to maintain a focus on academics, volunteer work and sports.

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL

Luz Aceves, track & field and cross country. Luz discovered a love for sports which gave her purpose and a reason to excel in school despite cultural and economical hardships.

Selina Stasi, basketball, softball and speed skating. Selina's introduction to speed skating changed her life giving her a support system, determination, drive and hope for the future.

GUNN HIGH SCHOOL

Jane Chang, cross country and track & field. Jane's inner drive and passion developed through sports helped her to overcome challenges and pursue her dreams.

Gabriela Hopkins, soccer. Sports helped Gabriela feel part of a team and created balance for her to overcome the challenges she faced by her family.

Dezmon Hunter, football, cross country and track & field. Sports provided a support system to help Dezmon work through his parents' divorce.

LELAND HIGH SCHOOL

Vasiliki Fkias, cross country, soccer and track & field. Vasiliki worked hard to rehab after ACL surgery and returned as an inspiration to her teammates competing in the 100m & 300m hurdles.

Nathaniel Polussa, track & field and cross country. Nathaniel persevered through a variety of injuries and after a recommitment to academics, he is now college-bound.

MONTA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL

Matthew Whitehill, baseball and football. Matthew balanced family responsibilities, academics, role in school government in addition to his leadership on the baseball field.

Mountain View High School

Mark Good, football, basketball and baseball. Participation in sports put Mark on the right path and helped him overcome issues off the playing field.

Katherine Johnson, soccer, volleyball and track & field. Katherine remained strong through her father's stroke and life challenges to become a 4.0 student and accomplished athlete.

Melinda McDonald, tennis, soccer and track & field. Sports helped Melinda develop the traits to push through set backs in life. Melinda faced a battle with cancer during high school and insisted on playing tennis during treatment.

Tania Morimoto, soccer, cross country and track & field. Running kept Tania motivated in school, built her character and made her realize she doesn't have limits.

Melissa Nilles, marching band and swimming. Melissa succeeded in all she did while managing the effects of exercise induced asthma.

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Erica Haedrich, basketball and softball. From her brother's participation in Special Olympics to overcoming injuries, Erica has learned life lessons and excelled as a student-athlete.

OVERFELT HIGH SCHOOL

Hilda Garcia, swimming. Despite economic challenges, Hilda remains focused on being a successful student-athlete, team player and role model for her siblings and community.

Palo Alto High School

Robert Miller, football, wrestling, cross country, and track & field. Sports gave him confidence and helps him to put life's challenges in perspective.

Pioneer High School

Tyler Chase, football, track & field and weight lifting. Sports helped Tyler gain self confidence, leadership skills and helped him maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Heather Goodman, volleyball, basketball and lacrosse. Sports provided a release from life away from the court; she led her volleyball team as a captain and all-league player.

John Kim, football and basketball. John's "never give up" attitude earned him a spot on the football team inspiring those who had doubted him.

Presentation High School

Sarah Schatzman, volleyball. Sarah regained her strength to play volleyball after being diagnosed with a brain abnormality she was determined not to have an illness define her.

Kelly Sisney, volleyball and swimming. Sports taught Kelly hard work, dedication, sacrifice and team support. It helped her gain control of her Type I Diabetes and an ongoing desire to help find a cure.

SANTA TERESA HIGH SCHOOL

Gary Ellis, baseball. Baseball helped Gary cope with his emotions and gave him the drive to heal from his major knee injury against all odds.

Mary Blake, volleyball, water polo, volleyball, track & field and cross country. Mary was named her team's most inspirational player and team captain after battling Leukemia.

Saratoga High School

Andrew Capek, basketball, football, volleyball and track & field. An accomplished athlete, Andrew persevered over hyperthyroidism to become a better person and team leader.

WESTMONT HIGH SCHOOL

Trevor Vlay, football and track & field. Trevor's active lifestyle and the desire to return to competitive sports gave him the motivation to recover from a severe blood clot in his brain and the physical limitations that followed.

WILLOW GLEN HIGH SCHOOL

Mohamed Abdalla, cross country and track & field. After immigrating from Somalia, and the subsequent difficulty of learning a new culture, Mohamed made the honor roll & excelled in sports.

Byanka Quinonez, field hockey, basketball and badminton. The support of her teammates and coaches helped Byanka overcome life's challenges to become a strong, driven young woman.

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