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Class A Scholar-Athlete Award Scholarship Recipients Announced

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Feb. 26 – Twelve student-athletes at Class A member schools of the Michigan High School Athletic Association have been selected to receive scholarships through its Scholar-Athlete Award program.

Farm Bureau Insurance, in its 18th year of sponsoring the award, will give a \$1,000 college scholarship to 32 individuals who represent their member school in at least one sport in which the Association sponsors a post-season tournament. The first 30 scholarships are awarded proportionately by school classification and the number of student-athletes involved in those classes; and there are two at-large honorees which can come from any classification.

Each of the scholarship recipients will be honored at halftime ceremonies of the Class C Boys Basketball final game at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing on March 24. Commemorative medallions will be given to other finalists in recognition of their accomplishments.

The Class A Scholar-Athlete Award honorees are: Kerry Brennan, Dearborn; Alessa Cekauskas, Birmingham Seaholm; Alexander Davenport, Grosse Pointe North; Michael Charles Harden, St. Johns; Jeffery David Koelzer, Grand Rapids Northview; Jessica Konal, Berkley; Seth A. Meyer, Okemos; Nicole Naidoo, Brighton; Chelsey N. Quinlan, Plymouth; Alexander M. Ralston, Fenton; and Chelsea Read, Grand Ledge.

Overviews of the scholarship recipients of the Class A Scholar-Athlete Award follow. A quote from each recipient's essay is also included:

Kerry Brennan, Dearborn. Four-year letterwinner in softball, and two in basketball and volleyball. Volleyball academic all-conference and academic all-region junior and senior years. Softball first team all-league as sophomore and junior, and all-district junior year. Voted softball co-captain junior year. National Honor Society member junior and senior years; held treasurer position senior year. Link crew leader junior and senior years. Peer mediator for three years. Member of the Spanish club all four years, and held representative position for three years. Active with Volunteer Impact of Metro Detroit, St. Anselm Parish and school volunteer programs all four years. Volunteer with the Red Cross blood drive junior and senior years. Plans to attend Oakland University where she will plans to play softball and study pre-medicine.

Essay Quote – “Without good sportsmanship present in high school sporting events, student-athletes will not fully grasp the true meaning of winning. Treating others with respect and acting with dignity are far more important than the numbers glowing on a scoreboard.”

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Alessa Cekauskas, Birmingham Seaholm. Awarded four letters in volleyball, and two in basketball and lacrosse. Volleyball academic All-State. First team all-league and all-region in volleyball in 2005 and 2006. Also all-county and all-area in 2005 and 2006. Member of the forensics team. Took first place at the Eisenhower tournament, second place at the Titan tournament, and third place at the state tournament as part of the forensics team. Two-year member of the National Honor Society. Member of the student government and Birmingham educational council junior and senior years. PSD student member on the city of Birmingham board junior and senior years. Plans to attend Cornell University to study industrial and labor relations.

Essay Quote – *“In life, as in athletics, sportsmanship will allow me to always be proud of my actions, and to keep my sights focused on those around me as I strive to always achieve my personal best.”*

James John Ciennik IV, Waterford Mott. Earned three letters in baseball and hockey. Academic All-State for both baseball and hockey all four years. Baseball all-league, all-area, all-district, and team MVP junior year. Member of the Anti-Defamation League, and peer positive influence group for all four years. Selected as a Detroit delegate to the National Youth Leadership Conference junior year. Active with the Waterford Youth Coalition and Michigan Miracle League. Tutored elementary students in mathematics, English, and geography for all four year. Plans to study international business at Kalamazoo College in the fall.

Essay Quote – *“As a high school Senior, I acknowledge that it is difficult to express true sportsmanship to classmates and opposing teams after heated competitions, yet it is important to do so no matter the outcome of the event.”*

Alexander Davenport, Grosse Pointe North. Awarded four letters in cross country, two in track and hockey, and one in lacrosse. Student council secretary junior and senior years. Member of the Impact Club all fours years, vice president junior year and president senior year. Member of the choir, both advance mixed and all male acapella, for all four years. Safe rides captain all four years. Member of the National Honor Society junior and senior years. Active with Trinity soup kitchen, Habitat for Humanity and Metro Beach cleanup for four years. Plans to attend Michigan State University and study pre-medicine.

Essay Quote – *“Sportsmanship extends from simple team membership to issues of loyalty, constructive problem solving, and continual re-evaluation of goals. Without sportsmanship, team unity and a structured learning environment would be unattainable.”*

Michael Charles Harden, St. Johns. Earned three letters in swimming and diving and two in baseball. Swimming All-State and academic All-State honors. Received *Lansing State Journal* all-area and athlete of the week. All-conference and all-district in baseball. Academic all-conference and all-district in baseball. President of class sophomore, junior and senior years, and president of student council one year. National Honor Society member junior and senior years, president senior year. Member of the school band all four years, and drum major for two years. Active with the St. Johns Sea Lions as a coach and life guard. Relay for Life chair member and participant sophomore and junior years. Plans to major in education at Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University, or Kalamazoo College.

Essay Quote – *“Sportsmanship reveals character, creates respect, and builds friendships that last a lifetime. These traits allow for educational athletics to combine the classroom and the court to create a student-athlete.”*

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3-3-3 – Class A Scholar-Athlete Award Scholarship Recipients Announced

Jeffery David Koelzer, Grand Rapids Northview. Awarded three letters in football and track. Voted track team captain in 2006. Football all-conference all-area and team captain in 2005 and 2006. Three-year member of the National Honor Society. Member of the school chorus freshman and sophomore years. Member of Varsity Voices junior and senior years. Volunteer at the Northview Rocket summer camp sophomore, junior and senior years. Active with senior Meals on Wheels for all four years. Received Meijer Dignity and Respect Award in 2005. Undecided on college choice, but plans to major in business and pre-law.

Essay Quote – *“Educational athletics is one of the greatest experiences of my high school career. But what has made the experience as fun as it has been, has been the good sportsmanship of everyone involved in the games in which I participated.”*

Jessica Konal, Berkley. Received four letters in soccer, three in volleyball, two in basketball, and one in bowling. All-conference scholar-athlete in all four varsity sports. Voted captain of basketball team and soccer team. Member of the Diversity Club all four years. Member of DECA, receiving two medals at districts junior year, and attending the DECA state competition. Peer mentor sophomore, junior and senior years. Active with the NCCJ-MI/MRDI, a diversity program in Michigan. Plans to attend Michigan State University or Central Michigan University to study physical therapy, sports medicine or orthopedics.

Essay Quote – *“Life lessons taught through sportsmanship like respect, solid work ethic, and overcoming adversity, are important morals that should be molded into one’s personality before they enter adulthood. Educational athletics have granted me these morals and I am grateful to emanate these skills learned through good sportsmanship.”*

Seth A. Meyer, Okemos. Three-year letterwinner in hockey, two in baseball and one in golf. Academic All-State, all-conference, and all-district in baseball. Academic all-conference hockey and golf. Member of the student orchestra for all four years, and principal violist. Member of student government sophomore, junior and senior years. The play-by-play voice of Okemos Chieftains sports on Okemos Channel 23, sophomore, junior and senior years. Sports columnist for the student newspaper senior year. National Honor Society member junior and senior years. Volunteer with the Sparrow Children’s Miracle Network all four years. Plans to attend Yale University, University of Michigan, Northwestern University, or Harvard University and double major in history and political science.

Essay Quote – *“I realized something that day; sportsmanship in athletics is merely an extension of the respect people ought to show one another in daily life. We all have the power to further this noble cause, ultimately leading to our own pleasant conclusions.”*

Nicole Naidoo, Brighton. Four-year letterwinner in cross country and track. Voted team captain of both the cross country team and the track team. Cross country two-time MHSAA Lower Peninsula Division 1 Finals qualifier. Six-time MHSAA L.P. Finals qualifier in track, and three-time Kensington Valley first team all-conference. Seven-time recipient of the Brighton High School and Kensington Valley Conference scholar-athlete award. Active in competitive figure skating for all four years. Participant in dance, both ballet and hip hop, for all four years. National Honor Society member senior year. Member of the Varsity Club all four years. Volunteer figure skating coach freshman and sophomore years. Plans to attend the University of Michigan, Stanford, or Michigan State University and major in business.

Essay Quote – *“Sportsmanship is a key lesson I have learned from my involvement in high school athletics. Nowhere can one learn the meaning of sportsmanship as well as in high school sports because high school athletes not only represent themselves, and their team, but the school and community as well.”*

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4-4-4 – Class A Scholar-Athlete Award Scholarship Recipients Announced

Chelsey N. Quinlan, Plymouth. Earned four letters in soccer, and three in basketball and volleyball. Earned soccer all-district and all-conference honorable mention sophomore and junior years. Voted team captain of basketball senior year, and captain of soccer sophomore and junior years. Student council secretary freshman and sophomore years. National Honor Society member junior and senior years. Volunteer timer and scorekeeper of the Canton recreational girls basketball league. Active in Field of Dreams community service project, and various fund-raising activities at elementary schools. Plans to attend the University of Michigan to study sports management.

Essay Quote – *“The importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics is something larger than just being fair and responsible. It is about competing hard during the contest, and enjoying the competitive challenge while being respectful of the opponent standing across from you, knowing that they want to win just as much as you.”*

Alexander M. Ralston, Fenton. Received three letters in cross country, two in track, and one in basketball. Cross country MHSAA Lower Peninsula Finals qualifier sophomore and senior years. Cross country first team all-Flint Metro League sophomore, junior and senior years. Academic All-State cross country senior year, and track sophomore year. First team all-Flint Metro League in track sophomore and junior years. Track MHSAA L.P. Finals qualifier sophomore and junior years. Student council freshman class president, junior class representative, and senior class treasurer. National Honor Society member junior and senior years. Also a member of Captain’s Club and band. Active with church youth activities all four years. Plans to attend University of Notre Dame to study mathematics.

Essay Quote – *“In order for high school athletics to be truly educational, we must remember that at the end of the race, game, or match, it is not the victor to whom the attention flows, but to he or she who is most gracious in the outcome.”*

Chelsea Read, Grand Ledge. Three-year letterwinner in softball. Received softball all-area in 2005, all-district in 2005 and 2006, and all-conference in 2006. Student athletic trainer all four years. Member of marching and symphony band all four years. Band section leader and band council secretary in 2006. Member and board officer of Students Against Destructive Decisions all four years. National Honor Society member junior and senior years. Volunteer with the Child Benefit Fund all four years. Three-year volunteer with the Ukraine clothing drive, and a youth softball clinic. Plans to attend Central Michigan University and major in athletic training.

Essay Quote – *“The lessons of sportsmanship learned in high school athletics cannot be duplicated in a classroom setting. They have to be experienced firsthand on the dirt, on the grass, or on the court.”*

Other Class A girls finalists for the Scholar-Athlete Award were: Alina Gatowski, Birmingham Groves; Chelsea Selden, Canton; Annie Hakim, Clinton Township Chippewa Valley; Jennifer Pisani, Farmington Hills Mercy; Taylor Hicks, Fraser; Bianca Cilla, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central; Helana Herberg, Jackson Northwest; Kristin Kingma, Mattawan; Ankita Mohanty, Mt. Pleasant; Rachel Lebovic, North Farmington; Kimberly Rustem, Okemos; Rachel Rideout, Okemos; Joanna Halls, Rochester Adams; Emily Martin, South Lyon; Margeaux Leighton, Temperance Bedford; Erica Olson, Traverse City West Leslie Russell, Warren Cousino; and Jennifer Hittle, White Lake Lakeland.

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5-5-5 – Class A Scholar-Athlete Award Scholarship Recipients Announced

Other Class A boys finalists for the Scholar-Athlete Award were: Bentley Goenka, Ann Arbor Pioneer; Will Heininger, Ann Arbor Pioneer; Cullen Salada, Battle Creek Lakeview; Joseph Jakcsy, Dearborn; David Galiyas, Detroit Catholic Central; Joshua Cupp, Fenton; Matthew Fitzgibbon, Garden City; Nicholas Ballou, Grand Ledge; Neil Delaney, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central; Alistair Smith, Kalamazoo Central; John Gundry, Lansing Waverly; Daniel Martin, Livonia Churchill; Luke Knochel, Livonia Stevenson; Anthony Schiro, Okemos; Tyler Dickenson, St. Johns; Charles Mouch, Troy Athens; Ryan Schell, Troy Athens; Zachary Ciochetto, Utica Ford; and James Ciennik, Waterford Mott.

Previously announced were the scholarship recipients in Classes B, C and D. The Class B Scholar-Athlete Award honorees are: Allison M. Assaly, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Eastern; Andrew Cuthbert, Dowagiac; Adam DeWolf, Marshall; Alexandria N. Henry, Alma; Tyler J. McCoy, Tawas Area; Katelyn E. Priesel, Imlay City; Shane Sinda, Capac; Shaziah Singh, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern; Ashley A. Theobald, Kingsford; Jason Thompson, Ludington.

The Class C Scholar-Athlete Award honorees are: Hilary Beauchamp, Iron Mountain; Riley S. Ford, Harbor Springs; Ben Halbower, Holton; Allyson J. Karaba, North Muskegon; Daniel L. Olsen, St. Ignace; and Kayla Jo Thompson, Marlette.

The Class D Scholar-Athlete Award scholarship recipients are: Emily Anne Feldhake, Cedarville; Aaron R. Fletcher, Walkerville; Spencer Andrew McFarland, Mackinaw City; and Brenda Sisung, Fowler.

Students applying for the Scholar-Athlete Award must be carrying at least a 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) grade-point average, and have previously won a letter in a varsity sport in which the Michigan High School Athletic Association sponsors a postseason tournament. Other requirements for the applicants were to show active participation in other school and community activities and produce an essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

Farm Bureau Insurance, one of Michigan's major insurers, has a statewide force of 350 agents serving more than 380,000 Michigan policyholders. Besides providing life, home auto, farm, business and retirement insurance, the company also sponsors lifesaving, real-time Doppler weather tracking systems in several Michigan communities.

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,800 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

6-6-6 – Class A Scholar-Athlete Award Scholarship Recipients Announced

MEDIA ADVISORY -- A complete list of scholarship nominees and finalists for the Scholar-Athlete Award can be found by clicking on the Recognition link on the home page of the MHSAA Web Site, and then clicking on Scholar-Athlete Award. Information about scholarship recipients will be posted on the MHSAA Web Site according to the schedule listed in this release, and media in the markets of the scholarship recipients will be notified the day before the public announcement. For more information about Farm Bureau Insurance, contact Luke Schafer, Public Relations Manager, at 517.323.7000. You can download the MHSAA's Scholar-Athlete Award logo from the MHSAA Web Site – click on Forms & Graphics off the home page.

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