

Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship-2019

Background

Good evening. My name is Paul Nelson, this is my daughter Whitney, my sister Kristine, my niece Hannah and our family friend and board member Kristi James. We are excited to acknowledge the recipients of the seventh annual Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship here on "Lisa Nelson Court". It gives us great pleasure to introduce the male and female recipients who will each receive a \$5000.00 college scholarship this fall in honor and memory of Coach Nelson.

For those who are not familiar with Coach Nelson, she was a P.E. teacher and the head volleyball coach here at Ralston Valley from 2000-2013. She loved her position as an educator and a coach and she genuinely and deeply cared for her students, her athletes and her colleagues. Tragically on March 3, 2013 she passed away after a courageous battle with cervical cancer. She was 43. She never let cancer compromise her way. She battled cancer with dignity, strength and courage. She touched many lives during her 13-year tenure here as teacher and a coach.

To commemorate her life and to ensure that she continues to influence the lives of Ralston Valley students the Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship was established. Since its inception in 2013, Ralston Valley students, faculty and staff in conjunction with the surrounding community and many generous sponsors have contributed to ensure the stability and longevity of the fund.

So many people have helped the fund grow by participating in annual fundraising events. I want to extend a special thank you to Mrs. Braketa and the members of Student Government who annually organize and run the "Lisa Nelson Mustang Stampede" a school sponsored 5K that directly benefits the scholarship fund. I also want to thank all of those students, parents, teachers and staff members who participated in last fall's 5K. There were 364 runners at the start line at last year's event.

Together we have created a scholarship we can be proud of. Together we are fulfilling the mission of the scholarship board, which reads... **We want to remember and honor Lisa's legacy and Pay It Forward... through college scholarships for Ralston Valley High School Student Athletes.**

Selecting two recipients was not an easy task; as you can imagine there are some amazing student athletes in this building. Narrowing it down was very difficult due to the quality of the applications. Thank you to all of those that applied and to the teachers and staff that assisted them.

Both of tonight's recipients possess qualities respected by Coach Nelson. They are tremendous students, have experienced athletic achievement and have demonstrated leadership, good character, citizenship, sportsmanship and community involvement.

Mackenzie Friedman

Academics

Hello, I am Whitney, Lisa Nelson's daughter and I am going to announce this year's female recipient. Our female recipient will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the fall. She is a member of the National Honor Society carrying a 4.5 weighted GPA. She is RV's Student Body Vice President, a member of the Spanish Honor Society and a well-respected member and leader of Stugo. Each of her four years she has received an Academic Letter and a Stugo Letter. She also has been acknowledged yearly as an Outstanding Academic Athlete and as a junior was the recipient of the Dartmyth Book Award.

Athletics

Athletically our female recipient has been a multi-sport athlete participating in swimming, tennis and rowing. She has lettered in swimming four times and has served as the team's captain her junior and senior years. She has been a varsity tennis player since her sophomore year and has lettered the past two seasons. She is most passionate about rowing, winning a spirit award from the Colorado Junior Club in 2016. She has been a Coxswain and a Rower for Colorado Junior Crew since 2014. She will continue her student athlete experience as a member of the University of Wisconsin's Women's Lightweight Crew. In her essay to the scholarship committee she writes, "Perseverance transcends my sports, weaving its way into my academics and work ethic. Sports have taught me to find my voice, my strength and my grit when I am exhausted mentally and physically".

Community

Our female recipient excels in the area of community service. She has spent the past two summers traveling, learning, exploring and serving in both India and Cambodia. She writes, "The people I met in Cambodia are the happiest people I have ever seen. They sleep on the floor surrounded by the people they love; this is all they know and somehow it is enough". She goes on to write that her experiences both locally and abroad have taught her that "Happiness in life doesn't come from what we have, but what we do with it". Because of these experiences she started an organization with her mother where mothers and daughters volunteer in the community together. The organization has grown to 200 people who this year have volunteered a total of 2,632 hours. She also started a student government committee that plans events with the special need students here at RV. As if this weren't enough, she has also donated her time to organizations such as the Children's Museum, the Longmont Theater Company, the Rocky Mountain Honor Flight and the Alzheimer's Foundation.

Borrowing words from Mrs Braketa who described her as being an outstanding scholar, a three-sport athlete, a tremendous citizen and an exceptional leader; I am proud to introduce Mackenzie Friedman as the female recipient of the Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship.

Kyle Bowen

Academics

Hello, I am Hannah, Lisa Nelson's niece and I am going to announce this year's male recipient. Our male recipient will be attending the University of Colorado-Boulder this fall. He is a National Honor Society member carrying a 4.2 weighted GPA. He has taken several AP and Honors courses and has received four academic letters.

Athletics

Athletically he has been a five-sport athlete during his time here at Ralston Valley participating in baseball, football, track, cross county and swimming. He has lettered in three of these sports and all four years as member of the track team. He is a dual sport athlete this spring, competing in both track and swimming.

I want to tell you a little bit about his athletic journey. He started playing baseball the summer before his freshman year and unfortunately, he didn't make the team. Disappointed, instead of quitting, he re-grouped. He met this challenge head on and with guidance from his mom and twin brother he joined the track team. Reflecting on this experience he said, "It took character to grow from my loss, to maintain a positive attitude, and to re-channel my passion for baseball into a love for track".

He faced some adversity his sophomore year too. While going over a hurdle he injured his laybrum which ended his track season and eventually forced him to have multiple injections. Thankfully this healed the problem without him having to have surgery.

He played football his freshman, sophomore and junior years, but because of his size his playing time was limited. He joined cross county his junior year and developed such a passion for running that he made the difficult decision to not play football at all his senior year.

This spring he joined the swim team as a senior, because he wants to join the University of Colorado's triathlon team and he used the opportunity to improve on his swimming skills.

What did he learn from his high school athletic experiences? He writes, "I believe that the leadership and role modeling I have demonstrated through these examples of hard work, commitment and perseverance have not only pushed me to be a stronger, more quality person, but also have shown others the value of these characteristics through my actions.

Coach Loyd sums up our male recipient best by writing, "He is always going to give his best in everything he does, and he does it with such a positive outlook regardless of whether things are going well or difficult.

Community

Our male recipient has also been active in the community. He has worked with freshman as a Mustang Mentor and with local youth as an outdoor lab leader. He has also volunteered as a coach for the Arvada Youth Football Camp. For the past three years, as a member of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered extensively in the community helping with various activities like Trick or Treat Street and Hoops to Hope. He has donated his time to the Denver Food Bank sorting and handing out food to the homeless and to Samaritans' Purse packaging Christmas presents for children in less fortunate countries.

For outstanding academic achievement, for athletic perseverance and for community involvement, I am proud to introduce Kyle Bowen as the male recipient of the Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship.