



The Carl Fricks Sportsmanship Scholarship

Presented by the St. Louis Sports Commission Associates

-2014 Recipients-



ERIN BIRSCHBACH

The Sports Commission Associates selected Erin Birschbach to receive its top \$5,000 Sportsmanship Scholarship award for 2014. A three-year captain of the Fox High School varsity girls' basketball team, Erin led the school to its first district championship in 23 years and finished her high school career with the third most points in Fox history. The class and character she exhibited on the court surpassed her statistical accomplishments. Erin was lauded for the respect she had for officials and the camaraderie she shared with opponents. One game in particular exemplified her selflessness and compassion. In February, Fox played at rival Windsor High School on senior night. A week earlier, Windsor's top player suffered an ACL injury that ended her senior season. Erin wanted to help brighten the opponent's spirits, understanding how devastated the four-year starter and captain was to miss her final home game. So Erin and her coach devised a plan to allow the injured player to be on the court for the start of the game and score an uncontested basket. Erin was the one who "lost" the opening tip. She said seeing her injured competitor catch a pass from a teammate and make the shot was "an amazing moment." In his recommendation letter for the scholarship, Erin's coach, Jeremy Donald, mentioned that his seven-year-old son often gets to watch Fox's practices and games. Coach Donald said, "I can teach him the skills and talk to him about what is right and wrong. However, having the opportunity to watch a girl like Erin Birschbach is the most in-depth lesson he'll ever receive in what true sportsmanship is all about." Erin is continuing her education at Jefferson College.

KAYLA HEZEL

Kayla Hezel competed in multiple sports at Mehlville High School and served as captain of the varsity softball and soccer teams. Her on-field compassion and civility stood out throughout her high school career. She was praised for offering her hand to fallen players, going out of her way to congratulate opponents even after difficult losses, and consistently thanking referees for their hard work and professionalism. Kayla said in her mind, sportsmanship is the most important aspect of the game. Among her actions that back that up was an incident that occurred when Mehlville played Cor Jesu in softball. The Cor Jesu team was running late for the game and upon arriving at Mehlville, had to hurry down a steep hill to get to the field. A player carrying the squad's water jug tripped, busting the jug open and sending it down the hill. As the Cor Jesu players stood in disbelief, Kayla told them not to worry and encouraged them to start warming up. Kayla and a teammate then picked up the jug, filled it with water and ice, brought it to the Cor Jesu dugout, and wished her opponents good luck. Mehlville soccer coach Thomas Harper said, "Kayla understands that competition helps shape character and develop attitudes and values that will last a lifetime." Kayla is continuing her education at the University of Missouri.

KENNY PLEIMANN

Kenny Pleimann served as a student assistant for the football, basketball and baseball programs at St. John Vianney High School. He is the first student manager to receive the Sportsmanship Scholarship – a tribute to the extraordinary sportsmanship he displayed in the role. Although he never ran for a touchdown, made a basket or scored a run, he stood out among athletes at Vianney for his class, integrity and unselfishness. Kenny had an amazing rapport with officials and opposing teams. His favorite thing as manager was walking the line with his team after every game to shake opponents' hands and tell them they played a good game. Multiple opposing coaches and players commented to their counterparts at Vianney about Kenny's positive attitude toward the opposition, even when Kenny's teams were on the losing side. Perhaps the most powerful testament to Kenny's sportsmanship is offered by Vianney basketball coach Kevin Walsh, whose young son serves as the team's water boy. Coach Walsh recounted how after games his son would tell him about the sportsmanship lessons Kenny taught him at the end of the bench. Kenny would explain to him that he can't act poorly when a referee makes a call against Vianney because it reflects badly on the team. He would remind the boy that cheering when an opponent missed a shot or booing when one was made was not the right way to act. Coach Walsh said, "As a coach, I am so proud of Kenny for understanding the importance of sportsmanship. More importantly, as a parent, I am thankful that Kenny was the person sitting next to my son and educating him on why it is so important to have good sportsmanship." Kenny is continuing his education at McKendree University.