

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC LEAGUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WPIAL Names 2023 James Collins Scholar-Athlete Award Recipients

The 32nd year of the program saw 20 winners selected from a pool of 162 applicants, its most since 2002

Pittsburgh, Pa. – April 19, 2023 – The Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) revealed the recipients of the 32nd annual WPIAL/James Collins Scholar-Athlete Award on Wednesday, with 20 candidates (10 male, 10 female) selected from a group of 162 nominees.

The 162 nominees are a 21-year high for the program and are a 20-nominee increase from the 2021-2022 school year. The candidate pool consisted of 81 male and 81 female student-athletes from a total of 92 schools. Among the 2022-2023 group of applications, 88.3 percent participated in multiple sports, 53.4 percent ranked inside the top 10 of their class among schools that rank, and 17.7 percent were ranked first in their class among schools that rank.

The 20 winners are listed below, as well as a brief overview of each recipient's varsity career. The full list of nominees is attached to this press release.

2023 WPIAL/James Collins Scholar/Athlete Award Winners

Ty Banco	Trinity	Cassidy Dell	Freeport
Michael Church	Waynesburg Central	Deirdre Flaherty	Mt. Lebanon
Vincent Cugini	Aquinas Academy	Gwen Howell	Mars
Chase Dustevich	Mt. Lebanon	Nora Johns	Quaker Valley
Harron Lee	North Allegheny	Ella Menear	Mapletown
Beaux Lizewski	Seneca Valley	Aaralyn Nogay	Neshannock
Cadin Olsen	Armstrong	Christina Shi	North Allegheny
Matthew Purcell	Avonworth	London Whipkey	West Greene
Steven Suchko	Peters Township	Eden Williamson	Trinity
Landon Urcho	Bentworth	Sophia Zalar	Carmichaels

Ty Banco (Trinity) – 3.18 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in football, wrestling, and baseball ... Three-year captain for the wrestling team and two-year captain of football and baseball teams ... Captured the 2023 WPIAL wrestling title at 285 and placed sixth at the PIAA Championships ... Three-time section champion in wrestling ... All-State as a senior in football ... Three-time All-Conference and Bill Fralic Memorial Award nominee in football ... Finished with over 121 career wins in wrestling and the school's single-season pins record ... Led the baseball team in batting average in 2021 ... Member of Student Council, Future Business Leaders of America, Trinity Cares Club, Friends of Rachel Kindness Club, and Trinity Buddies Club ... Serves as Vice President for Senior Class and Student Council ... Plans to pursue a degree in sports management

Cassidy Dell (Freeport) – 4.52 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner and captain in volleyball ... Helped lead Freeport to three WPIAL championships and the 2022 PIAA title ... Named All-State twice and was the State Championship MVP as a senior ... Garnered three All-WPIAL First Team nods and a Third Team selection as a freshman ... Selected to the Junior Volleyball Association Watch List as a junior ... Serves on the Principal's Senior Advisory Committee, National Honor Society as Vice President, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes as President ... Gave her time as an Extended School Year Volunteer, winter clothing drives for The ARC of Indiana/Armstrong Counties, and Key Club ... Plans to pursue a degree in occupational therapy and play volleyball at Messiah University

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Michael Church (Waynesburg Central) – 4.00 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in wrestling ... Served as team captain for the wrestling team as a junior and senior ... Won three WPIAL and two PIAA championships individually and helped lead Waynesburg Central to three WPIAL championships and the 2021 PIAA crown ... Claimed a silver medal as a senior and bronze as a freshman at the PIAA Championships ... Earned the No. 4 national ranking at the 145 weight class as a senior ... Captured the Ironman title as a senior and Powerade gold as a freshman ... Member of National Honor Society and Future Business Leaders of America ... Assists as youth wrestling clinics and Special Olympics ... Plans to pursue a degree in food science & technology and wrestle at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)

Deirdre Flaherty (Mt. Lebanon) – 5.30 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in softball ... Two-year captain of softball team as a junior and senior ... Led Mt. Lebanon to a section title as a junior ... Two-time All-State selection and the Overall Pennsylvania Player of the Year as a junior ... Named a USSSA Softball All-American as a sophomore and Softball Factory Academic All-American in her first two varsity seasons ... Owns school records in single-season homeruns, batting average, runs batted in, and hits, and career homeruns ... Led entire WPIAL in homeruns as a junior ... Earned Jefferson Book Award, PHEAA Certificate of Merit, National German Exam Gold Medal, and College Board AP Scholar with Honor among academic honors ... Helped organize school blood drive and coached at Al Liberi Youth Baseball/Softball Clinic ... Member of National Honor Society ... Plans to pursue a degree in pre-medicine and play softball at the University of Dayton

Vincent Cugini (Aquinas Academy) – 3.71 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in basketball, serving as captain as a senior ... Broke 30-year WPIAL all-time scoring record and finished with 3,198 career points ... Finished varsity career ranked fourth all-time in career points for Pennsylvania high school basketball ... Led the nation in scoring as a senior according to MaxPreps and paced the WPIAL in all four varsity seasons ... Only player in WPIAL history to average over 40 points per game in a season ... Three-time All-State selection ... Earned Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude Honor Roll accolades ... Member of Photography Club, Volleyball Club, and Mini-Hoops Club ... Plans to pursue a degree in business economics and play basketball at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown

Gwen Howell (Mars) – 4.66 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in soccer ... Served as team captain for the soccer team as a junior and senior ... Helped lead Mars to WPIAL and PIAA championships as a freshman, sophomore, and junior ... Named All-State and All-WPIAL twice, and All-Section three times ... Captured United Soccer Coaches All-Region accolades as a junior and senior ... Picked among 43 student-athletes to play in the All-American High School Soccer Game ... Member of National Honor Society, Science Honor Society, German Honor Society, Student Council, and Class Council ... Volunteered her time to Discovery Christian Church, Kick 4 Kickz, Toys for Tots, Harvest Street Mission, Mars Home for Youth, and Foster Love Project ... Plans to pursue a degree in the medical field or psychology and play soccer at the University of Richmond

Chase Dustevich (Mt. Lebanon) – 5.30 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in swimming & diving, serving as captain as a senior ... Won a WPIAL gold medal as a senior in the 400 freestyle relay ... Helped lead Mt. Lebanon to section titles as a freshman and senior ... Spent two years as a student pilot at High Flight Academy ... Named a National Merit Scholar Finalist as a senior and earned AP Scholar with Distinction as a junior ... Member of National Honor Society, Investment Club, Future Business Leaders of America, and International Marketing Competition ... Given his time as academic tutor and volunteer for Mt. Lebanon Aqua Club ... Plans to pursue a degree in physics or mathematics at the United States Air Force Academy

Nora Johns (Quaker Valley) – 4.33 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in soccer, basketball, and track & field ... Served as captain of the basketball team as a senior ... Captured WPIAL and PIAA gold medals in the 300-meter hurdles as a sophomore and junior, and a WPIAL gold in the 4x400-meter relay as a sophomore ... Helped lead Quaker Valley to the WPIAL team championship in junior ... Named All-Section in soccer as a senior and made the Beaver County Times Girls' Basketball All-Star Team as a junior ... Owns school records for the 300-meter hurdles, single-season three-point field goal percentage, and games played in basketball ... Member of National Honor Society, Girl Scouts of America, Peer Jury, Yearbook, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes ... Plans to pursue a degree in marketing and communications and compete in track & field or basketball

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Harron Lee (North Allegheny) – 4.61 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in baseball and three-year letterwinner in football ... Captain of the baseball team as a senior ... Helped guide North Allegheny to WPIAL championships in football as a senior and baseball as a junior, and two section titles in both sports ... Named All-Conference in baseball and football as a junior ... Garnered Perfect Game Baseball Preseason All-America honors as a senior and two All-Region nods from Baseball Factory ... Member of National Honor Society, Student Council, Key Club, Project Water, Chamber Orchestra, Chess Club, DECA, Ping-Pong Club, Interact Club, and TigerThon ... Hosted clothing drive that supports the homeless community ... Named Homecoming King as a senior ... Plans to pursue a degree in finance and play baseball at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Ella Menear (Mapletown) – 4.59 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in volleyball and swimming & diving ... Captain of the volleyball team as a senior ... Won six WPIAL and three PIAA gold medals in the 200 individual medley and 100 backstroke ... Captured All-State honors in swimming & diving three times ... Named All-WPIAL in volleyball three times and All-Section all four seasons ... First state champion in 34 years at Mapletown ... Finished in top 20 at USA Swimming Junior Nationals ... Member of National Honor Society, Student Council, Future Business Leaders of America, Interact Club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Maples For Christ, and Future Teachers of America ... Earned the College Board National Rural & Small Town Award, 1st Federal of Greene County Community Service Award, and two USA Swimming SAA Scholastic All-American nods ... Plans to pursue a degree in sports medicine and compete in swimming & diving at the University of Alabama

Beaux Lizewski (Seneca Valley) – 5.27 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in soccer and two-year letterwinner in basketball ... Captain of the soccer team as a senior ... Helped lead Seneca Valley soccer to four section titles, WPIAL championships as a sophomore and junior, and PIAA titles as a sophomore and senior ... Named All-State in soccer twice and All-WPIAL three times ... Garnered All-American honors in soccer as a senior and All-Region in his last two seasons ... Owns the school record for career assists ... Member of Model United Nations, Key Club, Student-Athlete Leadership Team, and National Honor Society ... Volunteered his time to Purpose Program, Snow Angels, and Casa San Jose ... Plans to pursue a degree in international relations

Aaralyn Nogay (Neshannock) – 3.96 GPA ... Won a total of 14 letters in softball, track & field, basketball, and volleyball ... Captained the volleyball, basketball, and softball teams as a senior ... Helped lead Neshannock to PIAA championships in basketball and softball as a junior, three WPIAL titles, and four section championships ... Named All-State in softball and All-WPIAL in volleyball as a junior ... Earned a spot on the Sally Ward All-Academic Team ... Served as Class Vice President as a junior and senior and on Student Government ... Member of National Honor Society, Choir, Honors Choir, District Choir, and Art Club ... Given her time to concession stands, Secret Santa, basketball camps, junior high volleyball, and as a tutor for math and science ... Plans to pursue a degree in pre-professional/neuroscience and play softball at Bowling Green State University

Cadin Olsen (Armstrong) – 4.30 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in football and basketball, serving as captain of both as a junior and senior ... Helped lead Armstrong to a section title as a senior ... Named All-State First Team and NexGen National Quarterback of the Year as a sophomore and senior ... Picked to play in the PSFCA Big 33 Game ... Garnered Mr. Pennsylvania Football Tremendous 25 honors ... Captured the Willie Thrower Award in back-to-back years as a junior and senior ... Three-time All-Conference First Team selection in basketball ... Owns 15 school records in football, two in basketball, and is part of the 1,000 point club ... Collected HSFA Academic All-American accolades as a sophomore and junior ... Member of National Honor Society, Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and Leo Club ... Volunteered his time to blood drives, YMCA Kids Day, Special Olympics, Drugs Kill Dreams, and basketball tournaments and camps ... Plans to pursue a degree in biology and play football at the University of Pennsylvania

Christina Shi (North Allegheny) – 4.00 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in swimming & diving, serving as captain as a senior ... One of 26 student-athletes to win four WPIAL gold medals in a single event, doing so in the 1-meter dive ... One of 19 student-athletes to win at least three PIAA gold medals in a single event, winning the 1-meter dive as a sophomore, junior and senior ... Three-time All-America selection and USA Diving Junior National Championships finalist ... Named MaxPreps High School Athlete of the Week as a senior ... Owns school records in the 6-dive and 11-dive formats for the 1-meter dive ... Member of National Honor Society, Class Council, Student Council, Pittsburgh Chinese Association Youth Center, Pottery Club, Global Goals Club, and Yearbook ... Volunteered with Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and Kumon Center ... Plans to pursue a degree in economics and statistics and compete in swimming & diving at Harvard University

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Matthew Purcell (Avonworth) – 4.49 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in swimming & diving and two-year letterwinner in cross country ... Won a pair of WPIAL gold medals in the 200 individual medley as a senior – setting a meet record – and 500 freestyle as a junior ... Captured the PIAA gold medal in the 500 freestyle as a junior ... Helped lead Northgate to three section titles in swimming & diving ... Posted NISCA All-America consideration times as a senior ... Named a USA Swimming Scholastic All-American and qualified for the finals in the 400 individual medley of USA Swimming Junior National Meet as a junior ... Captured school's second male individual state championship in any sport ... Owns school records in the 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay, 100 backstroke, 500 freestyle, and 200 individual medley ... Serves as Class President and member of National Honor Society, Key Club, Allegheny Mountain Swimming Board of Directors, and The Avonews school newspaper ... Established now-annual event to benefit Highmark Carin Place, raising more than \$5,600 total ... Plans to pursue a degree in business analytics and compete in swimming & diving at Brown University

London Whipkey (West Greene) – 4.20 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in softball and volleyball and won a letter as a freshman in rifle ... Served as captain for the softball team as a junior and senior and the volleyball team as a junior ... Helped guide West Greene to the WPIAL softball championship as a sophomore ... Named All-State in softball as a sophomore and junior ... Garnered All-WPIAL honors in volleyball as a senior ... Served as Class President for four years ... Won American Excellence Award, American Citizenship Award, Lions Club Outstanding Student, and The Challenge Program Award in STEM and Academic Excellence ... Member of National Honor Society, Academic League, Student Government, Calculus Club, Science Club, Engineering Club, and Peer Mentoring Club ... Organized donation collections for WVU Children's Hospital and free cooking classes with Corner Cupboard Food Bank ... Plans to pursue a degree in biomedical engineering at the University of Mount Union

Steven Suchko (Peters Township) – 5.27 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in soccer and track & field, serving as captain for both teams as a senior ... Helped lead Peters Township to three section titles in soccer ... Named All-WPIAL and to the Finest Fifteen in soccer as a senior ... Collected AP Scholar Award accolades as a sophomore and junior ... Member of National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, German Club, Chess Club, Math Club, and Boy Scouts of America ... Given his time to City Mission, 412 Food Rescue, PTHS Soccer Car Wash, PTSA Little Indians Soccer Camp, Scouting for Food, and as a math tutor ... Assisted in rebuilding chapel at Boy Scout Camp Anawanna and building and placing luminaries at St. Benedicts' Christmas and Easter masses ... Plans to pursue a degree in chemical engineering at Penn State University

Eden Williamson (Trinity) – 4.75 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in basketball and track & field, captaining both teams as a junior and senior ... Helped lead Trinity to two section titles and WPIAL runner-up finishes as a sophomore and junior ... Finished second in high jump at the WPIAL Championships as a sophomore and fourth as a junior ... Led the basketball team in scoring, field goal percentage, free throw percentage, rebounding, and steals as a senior ... Member of National Honor Society, Academic League, Math League, Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science, Trout in the Classroom, Superintendent Advisory Committee, and Distinguished Alumni Committee ... Garnered AP Scholar with Honor plaudits as a junior ... Volunteered her time to Read Across America, St. James Parish Sunday Bible School, Vitalant Blood Drives, served as a camp counselor/coach, and organized events for kids battling cancer ... Plans to pursue a degree in pre-health and play basketball at New York University

Landon Urcho (Bentworth) – 4.22 GPA ... Lettered in five different sports over varsity career, winning four in baseball, basketball, and soccer, two in golf, and one in football ... Captained the baseball and basketball teams for three years, and the soccer and football teams as a senior ... Helped guide Bentworth to a soccer section title as a junior ... Three-time All-WPIAL in soccer ... Collected eight All-Section honors between baseball, basketball, and soccer ... Ranks first in Bentworth history in single-season goalkeeper wins and shutouts in soccer, and top five in career points in basketball ... Won the National Recognition Program Award: Rural & Small Towns Award as a junior ... Member of National Honor Society, Gifted Program, Student Council, and Varsity Club ... Volunteered his time to United Way Worldwide, Boy Scouts of America, and St. Katherine Drexel Parish as an usher/lector ... Plans to pursue a degree in computer science

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Sophia Zalar (Carmichaels) – 4.20 GPA ... Four-year letterwinner in basketball and softball, and a two-year letterwinner in volleyball ... Captained the basketball team for three years and the softball team as a senior ... Two-time All-State selection in softball and two-time All-Section pick in basketball ... Scored over 1,000 career points in basketball and led volleyball team in blocks twice ... Member of National Honor Society, Envirothon, Youth Governor's Council for Wildlife, Standing Committee, Junior Achievement, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Debate Team, Student Council, Marching Band, and Concert Band ... Finished top 10 twice in State Envirothon and won County Envirothon as a sophomore and junior ... Volunteered her time to trout stocking, job shadowing at Point Marion Vet Clinic, Earth Day planting, building bird boxes, and the food bank ... Plans to pursue a degree in veterinarian medicine at Penn State University

The WPIAL Scholarship Fund was created to award scholarships annually to student-athletes from schools and school districts comprising Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) District VII. Since 1992, the league has given \$698,000 in scholarships to the James Collins Scholar-Athlete Award recipients.

About the WPIAL

Founded in 1906, the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) represents Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) District VII, which is one of the 12 districts governed by the Constitution and By-Laws of the PIAA. The WPIAL represents its member schools by promoting academics, the safety of participants, sportsmanship, citizenship, and lifelong values as the foundation of interscholastic athletics. The league holds championships for 26 different sports, and its member schools are made up of 10 state counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland.

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