

# **Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship-2018**

## **Background**

Good evening. My name is Paul Nelson, this is my daughter Whitney and my sister Kristine, and we are here to acknowledge the recipients of the sixth annual Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship. It gives us great pleasure to introduce the male and female recipients who will 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. Over the span of her career, she positively impacted so many people here at Ralston Valley. Tragically on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013, she passed away after a courageous battle with cervical cancer. She was 43.

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 it's inception the 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. Thank you Stugo for all of your efforts! I also want to thank all of those students, parents, teachers and staff members who participated in last fall's 5K. There were over 375 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.

## **Lauren Bader**

Our female recipient will be attending the University of Northern Colorado where she will begin working toward a degree in nursing. She is a National Honor Society member carrying a 3.5 weighted GPA. As a freshman she received an Academic Letter. During her sophomore, junior and senior years her swim team received the Les Schwab Academic All-State Team Championship Award. She received Academic All State First Team honors her junior year and Academic All State Honorable Mention her senior year. She is also a three-year member of student government where Mrs. Braketa describes her as a highly motivated, caring, intelligent and remarkable student leader.

Athletically our female recipient has been a multi-sport athlete participating in volleyball and track her freshman and sophomore years, tennis her junior and senior years and swimming for all four years she had been at RV. She is a four-year letter winner in swimming, an accomplishment that is very difficult to achieve at a school like Ralston Valley. She is so well respected by her teammates and coaches she was named team captain in volleyball, tennis and swimming. Former swim coach Anne Carpenter writes "She would do whatever the team needed weather she wanted to or not. Our recipient is a selfless, well respected, hard-working, team-oriented student athlete. Athletics has taught her many things. When asked "how being a student athlete has impacted her life" she wrote "I have learned time management, responsibility, self-discipline, competitiveness, and how to recognize strengths and weaknesses in myself and others and work together to accomplish common goals".

Our female recipient shines in the area of community service. She has been very active her entire high school career. Through Arvada Covenant she participated in programs such as Random Acts of Kindness and Packs of Hope for children entering foster care. She volunteered as a coach for the annual mini-mustangs volleyball camp. She worked with the VFW to place flags on graves of soldiers for Memorial Day ceremonies. She volunteered at West Woods Elementary School assisting with book fairs and at Stott Elementary assisting with several of their carnivals. In addition, she has been a part of various school related service projects like the Lisa Nelson Mustang Stampede, Trick or Treat Street, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Thanksgiving food drives and Special Education Buddy. Mrs. Braketa summed her up beautifully saying "she has the uncanny ability to put the needs of others above her own and she strives to make a difference for those around her".

For athletic and academic achievement, for demonstrating tremendous leadership and for selfless service I am proud to introduce Lauren Bader as the female recipient of the Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship.

## **Gavin Jones**

Our male recipient will be attending the Colorado School of Mines this fall where he will begin work on a degree in biomechanical engineering. He is a National Honor Society member carrying a 4.4 weighted GPA. He has a passion for the sciences and has excelled in several honors and AP Classes. He is a two-time CHSAA Academic All State Winner and has received Academic Athlete Honors each year here at Ralston Valley. He has also been recognized by the Arvada Optimist Club who presented him with an award for Excellence in Academics, Community Service and Leadership. He is a member of student government, the pre-med club, the Kendama Club and he is the current Senior Class President.

Athletically he was a four-year member of both cross country and track. He was named cross country team captain for the past three seasons and was the teams 2017 MVP. According to Coach LeSavage, he has received numerous first team all-conference achievements. He was instrumental in helping the cross-country team qualify for state for the first time in eleven years and he was a contributing factor to the 4x800m record breaking relay that won a league championship in track. In reading his essay to the scholarship board I get a sense that the accolades he received don't mean as much as the lessons he learned and the connections he made throughout it all. He wrote in his essay to the scholarship board "My team taught me that anything can be accomplished, even with the slimmest of odds, if we remained united". He went on to elaborate about friendship saying, "Friendship means unconditional devotion, faith in the bonds of loyalty, and unwavering support even if competition rocks the foundation". It is a victory for this high school's athletic program for him to walk away with a perspective like that and a testimony to the outstanding individual and student athlete this young man is.

Our male recipient truly has a heart for service. At a young age he helped the homeless through the Volunteers of America and spent many evenings on the Ralston Creek trail picking up trash as a Boy Scout. His proudest accomplishment was the completion of his personal Eagle Scout project where he planned a service project at Allendale Elementary School. He oversaw 40 volunteers as they repainted the asphalt lines, the four squares courts, the hopscotch lines, the basketball backboards and the stairs. In addition, his team added a large US and World map. His contributions to community continued in high school where as a member of Stugo he participated in raking leaves for the elderly, collecting food for a Thanksgiving food drive and playing piano and singing carols at local nursing homes. Some other projects he has participated in include included Trick or Treat Street, Make a Wish Foundation and outdoor lab. To cap off his service accomplishments here at RV he was part of a Stugo project that purchased, painted, stocked and installed a few mini libraries around the Arvada area.

For outstanding academic and athletic achievement, for being a tremendous leader and for his extensive community involvement, I am proud to introduce Gavin Jones as the male recipient of the Lisa Nelson Memorial Scholarship.