

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Student-athlete Selected as National Recipient of NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 9, 2016) — Ashley Carson, a junior student-athlete at Ord (Nebraska) High School, has been selected the 2016 national recipient of the “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” was created by the NFHS to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the spirit of sport that represent the core mission of education-based athletics.

Since literally the day she was born, the 17-year-old Carson has faced challenging circumstances that most adults don’t face in an entire lifetime. Undaunted, she has demonstrated incredible drive and resolve to overcome those challenges and to become an exceptional athlete and student.

Ashley and her twin sister Andrea were born six weeks premature. Due to a blockage of an artery while developing in the womb, Ashley was born with numerous facial deformities that included a cleft lip and palate, no left eye or left ear, and deformities to her nose and jaw structure. In short, Ashley was born with little or no structural development on the left side of her face.

To date, Carson has been through eight surgeries – the first one at six months. She has had surgeries to close her palate, to repair her lip, to build up her nose to help with breathing, and to repair the eye socket for a glass eye — all to give structural repair and to improve cosmetic appearance.

Carson played an integral role on the Ord High School varsity volleyball team that finished the 2015 season as the Nebraska School Activities Association Class C1 state runner-up. As a seventh-grader,

she was a member of the 4x800-meter Nebraska Junior High Track Championship relay team with a time of 10:25.37.

In addition to her athletic accomplishments, Carson excels in the classroom with a 4.456 grade-point average, ranking third in her class of 57. She also has earned two academic letters and Academic Excellence Awards, and is a member of the National Honor Society.

Among her other activities, she has served as class secretary and as class treasurer, and currently is a member of the prom committee. In addition, she was a member of the Loup Platte Conference Championship Ord Art Team.

Further, Carson is involved with numerous community service projects through her Catholic Church Youth Group, including repainting parking lot lines, repainting the Statue of Mary in the Catholic Cemetery, delivering meals for shut-ins, cleaning the Ord Township Library, highways trash pickup, spraying weeds around the track, Christmas caroling, alter serving, organizing Bingo at the Grandview Retirement Community, and helping with little kids basketball and volleyball camps.

According to Karla Callan, Ord High School assistant volleyball coach, Carson embodies the very essence of overcoming challenges to achieve success.

"I have had the pleasure of working with Ashley Carson during the past three years through the Ord High School volleyball program," Callan said. "She is an amazing young woman at a glance and once you get to know her, you realize just how amazing she is. Ashley has had so many obstacles to overcome and not once have I ever heard her complain or say a negative word. She always is positive and has a wonderful sense of humor about life. Her work ethic is impressive and as I watch her compete, I wish I could take some of her desire and devotion and spread it out to other players. As a parent and educator, I could not ever pick a more dynamic role model than Ashley for our young girls to follow. She is truly an example of relentless bravery."

About the Award

In addition to the selection of Ashley Carson as the national award recipient, the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee chose eight individuals for section awards. Following are the 2016 National High School Spirit of Sport section winners:

Section 1 – Samantha (Sam) Peterman, student-athlete, Amherst (New York) Sweet Home High School

Section 2 – A.J. Digby, student-athlete, Tontogany (Ohio) Otsego High School

Section 3 – Liana Mutia, student-athlete, Raleigh (North Carolina) Millbrook High School

Section 4 – Wolfgang Kemp, student-athlete, Woodstock (Illinois) High School

Section 5 – Ashley Carson, student-athlete, Ord (Nebraska) High School

Section 6 – Joe Martel III, student-athlete, Beggs (Oklahoma) High School

Section 7 – Forestville (California) El Molino High School Football Team and Booster Club,
Forestville (California) El Molino High School

Section 8 – Acey Shaw, coach, Dietrich (Idaho) High School

Nominations for this award were generated through NFHS member state associations and reviewed by the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee composed of state association staff members. While the national winner will be recognized June 29 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in Reno, Nevada, the section winners will be recognized within their respective states and will receive awards before the end of the current school year.

The National High School Spirit of Sport Award was started in 2008. Including this year, nine individuals and three teams have been chosen national award recipients.

The previous award recipients follow:

2008 – Tammy Dufford, cheerleading coach, Evergreen (Colorado) High School, and Megan Bomgaars, cheerleader, Evergreen (Colorado) High School

2009 – Dakota Dana, student-athlete, Afton (Wyoming) Star Valley High School

2010 – Tori Clark, student-athlete, Roselle (Illinois) Lake Park High School

2011 – New Kensington (Pennsylvania) Valley High School Softball Team and Umpire Bill Dithrich

2012 – Jacob Goldberg, student-athlete, Fort Lauderdale (Florida) Pine Crest High School

2013 – Magoffin County High School, Salyersville, Kentucky, and Logan County High School,
Russellville, Kentucky

2014 – Zach Pickett, student-athlete, Shingle Springs (California) Ponderosa High School

2015 – Grace Cummings, student-athlete, Madison (Connecticut) High School

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 16 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.8 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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