

Fairfax County Athletic Council and  
Neighborhood and Community Services

**2022**  
**Champions**  
*of*  
**Character**  
**Awards**

March 8, 2022, 7 p.m.

Sponsored by TD Bank





**2022**  
**Champions**  
*of*  
**Character**  
**Awards**



# Do You Know a Champion of Character?

We are now accepting nominations for our 2023 Champions of Character Awards. Help us recognize and honor those Champions of Character in your community. If you know an athlete, coach or parent who you feel is deserving of this recognition for their dedication on and off the playing field or court, we want to hear about them.

**Program details and nomination forms are available online at:**

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/athletics/champions-of-character](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/athletics/champions-of-character)

**Attach a narrative of one page or less and submit them to:**

Fax: 703-324-5546

Mail to: **Champions of Character Awards**  
12011 Government Center Parkway  
10th Floor, Athletic Services  
Fairfax, VA 22035



# Program

Opening Remarks: **Lula Bauer**  
*Athletic Council*  
*Chairwoman, Fairfax County*

**Lloyd Tucker**  
*Director, Neighborhood and*  
*Community Services*

**Jeff McKay**  
*Chairman, Fairfax*  
*County Board of Supervisors*

Guest Speaker: **Tom Farrey**  
*Aspen Institute Sport and*  
*Society Program*

Awards Presentation: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
Fairfax County School Board  
Fairfax County Athletic Council  
TD Bank

# Nomination Guidelines

## The Champions of Character Awards

The Champions of Character Awards were first presented in 2001 to recognize those who go above and beyond in demonstrating good sportsmanship and character in youth sports.

The benefits of playing sports are well-documented:

- Participants experience improved health, community involvement, family attachment and academic performance.
- Young athletes are less likely to become involved in gangs, violent behavior, drug use and other problem behaviors.

Sports can only work their magic when they are enjoyable, and enjoyment stems from good sportsmanship. Among the thousands of parents, coaches and athletes in Fairfax County, we are proud to honor Champions of Character from each magisterial district in the following categories:

**Female Athlete**

**Male Athlete**

**Coach**

**Parent**

Each honoree has proven himself or herself to be a Champion of Character by exhibiting the following qualities outlined in each award category.

## Athlete Awards

- Being respectful to opponents and game officials.
- Treating all team players fairly, giving attention to all players regardless of skill level.
- Giving respect and consideration to other team members.
- Helping teammates with words of encouragement and inspiration.
- Playing true to the spirit and rules of the game and promoting friendly competition.
- Exhibiting courage in defeat and moderation in victory.
- Showing a willingness to sacrifice personal goals for those of the team.
- Giving back to the team or program by helping out when able.

# Athletic Council Members

**Marcia Pape Daniels**

Braddock District

**Gregory Beckwith Esquire**

Dranesville District

**Jeremy Lee**

Hunter Mill District

**Lisa Mickey**

Lee District

**Barbara R. Lowrey**

Mason District

**Lester Munson**

Mount Vernon District

**Stephen McLaughlin**

Providence District

**Michael Thompson Jr.**

Springfield District

**Gary Flather**

Sully District

**Katherine Quinn**

Member-at-Large

*Jon Samson (alternate)*

**Marc Fernandes**

Diversity-at-large

**Jeffrey E. Stein**

Town of Clifton

**Roland Taylor**

Town of Herndon

**Sam Althoff**

Town of Vienna

**Rob Hahne**

Baseball Council

**Suzy Willemssen**

Fast Pitch Softball Council

**Vacant**

Adult Softball Council

**Steve Bergstrom**

Basketball Council

**Mark Meana**

Football Council

**Mary Ann Wagner**

Lacrosse Council

**Barbara R. Lowrey**

Secretary

**Lula Bauer**

Chairwoman

Soccer Council

**Chuck Pruitt**

Volleyball Council

**Jenni Cantwell**

Vice-Chairman

Women's Sports Programs

# The Athletic Council

The Fairfax County Athletic Council serves in an advisory capacity to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, School Board and county agencies on matters relating to sports in Fairfax County. The council, comprised of 23 voting members, advises on policy and establishes priorities for enhancing the availability of sports programs to the citizens of Fairfax County.

Council appointees include one representative from each of the nine magisterial districts; a member-at-large; a representative from women's sports programs; a diversity-at-large representative; representatives from the Towns of Vienna, Herndon, and Clifton; and 8 members appointed from the county's 8 sports-specific councils.

## **Fairfax County Staff** **Serving on the Athletic Council**

**Lloyd Tucker**

*Director*

Department of Neighborhood  
and Community Services

**Sarah Allen**

*Deputy Director*

Department of Neighborhood  
and Community Services

**Karen Avvisato**

*Community Use Scheduling*

*Division Supervisor*

Department of Neighborhood  
and Community Services

**Michael Thompson Jr.**

*Board Member*

Park Authority

**Todd Brown**

*Director of Park Operations*

Park Authority

**Elizabeth Schultz**

*Board Member*

School Board

**William Curran**

*Director of Student Activities  
and Athletic Programs*

School Board



# Nomination Guidelines

## Coach Awards

- Being respectful to opponents and game officials.
- Treating all team players fairly, giving attention to all players regardless of skill level.
- Recognizing the efforts of individual team members.
- Motivating teams and individuals in a positive manner.
- Focusing on long term goals, not just win/loss records.
- Promoting the concept that success is measured by individual and team effort, not by a scoreboard.
- Imparting knowledge and love of the game to the team in a positive manner.
- Taking responsibility for the behavior of self, team and parents.

## Parent Awards

- Being respectful to players, coaches, and game officials.
- Treating all players, coaches and parents fairly.
- Recognizing the efforts of individual team members and opposing team members.
- Motivating parents, teams, coaches and fans in a positive manner.
- Promoting the concept that success is measured by individual and team effort, not by a scoreboard.
- Demonstrating good sportsmanship by approving and applauding good team play, individual skill, and good sportsmanship exhibited by players and coaches on both teams.
- Accepting volunteer roles to improve the communication and the needs of the coach and team.

# Braddock District

## **Bijesh Kharel, Male Athlete, Braddock Road Youth Club**

Bijesh exemplifies everything we as mentors try to teach our young people. He is intelligent, hardworking, and an extremely caring individual. Not only is he an excellent soccer player (one of the best in the league and two years younger than most), but he is also an even better student, and even still a better person. He came here from Nepal, learned English, and did so well in school that he's graduating from Robinson High School a year early and is looking to continue his studies in Cyber Security at George Mason University. He exemplifies what it means to be a leader and to serve his team.

One of many examples includes him giving up his own captain band to another player on our team to motivate that player even more for our playoff game. That player played his best game of the season because of what Bijesh did. Young people like Bijesh don't come around often, and I find myself in awe sometimes of what he says and does. He pushes me and all my staff to be better mentors of young people and I can think of no one more deserving of this award than Bijesh Kharel.

## **Noor Salama, Female Athlete, Braddock Road Youth Club Soccer**

Noor plays for BRYC Elite Academy U17G Silver. The team has always been very committed to service work and team co-Captain Noor is always at every event representing the club and the team and doing good deeds. Whether it is a game, practice, condition, running a bingo game at the Katherine Hanley Shelter House, giving back to the sport by donating her time to support coaching education in the Northern VA area, or raising money for the team at bake sales and car washes, Noor does it all with enthusiasm and a smile.

Noor shows commitment to personal excellence, working to improve her own skills. In practice and games, she is always focused and leads by example, helping push the team to improve. She also has added high school field hockey to her busy schedule. In her second season, she made the varsity team at Robinson. When a Captain position came open this fall on her soccer team, Noor was recognized for her leadership and offered the position. It's a position that is not just for the player with the highest skill, but the player who lives our team motto – "Play Hard. Play Smart. Play with Respect." – on and off the field. Noor does this beautifully. Noor truly is a Champion of Character.

# Braddock District

## **Jurgen Bautista, Coach, *Braddock Road Youth Club Soccer***

Jurgen has been with Braddock Road Youth Club since he was four years old. From soccer to football to basketball, he always played with passion and proudly represented Braddock Road, and that has now continued on into coaching. He began coaching a soccer team of freshman boys when he was a senior in high school, and after graduating from James Madison University and becoming a realtor, he came right back to continue his work. He always says that he wants to give back to the club that gave him so much as a kid. He cares deeply about all of his players, and they have always looked to him as a mentor in more than just soccer.

He is now the League Director for the U19 Boys and oversees the development of the U16 age group as well, with the help of his staff, and also coaches at multiple high schools. Not only have the players improved on the field, but there have been vast improvements off the field as well. His players have grown more confident in themselves, and have become more respectful individuals, as well as leaders. His players know that he emphasizes accountability and honesty in his program, and even though it can be hard work sometimes, at the end of the day it's about the players having a positive experience, regardless of ability. Among the four teams he oversees, there was only one red card all season, and it came from a younger brother trying to protect his injured older brother on the same team. And even in that situation, Jurgen was able to ensure that the younger brother understood what he could have done better while still protecting his brother. He is a great example for what young people should strive to be, and his attitude is infectious throughout his teams.

# Braddock District

## **Camilla Roberts, Parent, Braddock Road Youth Club Soccer**

Camilla has been a very active supporter of BRYC in various capabilities (coach, league director, executive committee member) and various sports for many years. She is a prior recipient of the Champions of Character Award as a coach. This year, as BRYC soccer exceeded our pre-COVID numbers for registration, we knew we would need someone to ensure that our protocols were sound and that our teams and players followed them. Camilla volunteered yet again to be of service to the club. She stepped in as the newly created Health & Safety Director for BRYC Rec Soccer.

With her background as a Montessori teacher, she was very clear on the guidelines and was able to re-write our protocols and update our procedures to ensure that all the children in our rec soccer program were able to participate safely. Over the season, she responded to every case, reporting them properly through the Fairfax County Health Department, and advised our coaches and Executive Committee on the best courses of action in each incident. Camilla has been an invaluable source of leadership, information and communication through the season regarding all things COVID as they relate to the club. We are so very thankful for her willingness to take on this task (on top of everything else she already does). Thanks to her guidance, we are confident we are handling each case properly.

# Dranesville District

## **Joey Endreola, *Male Athlete, Herndon Youth Soccer***

Joey is an ambassador of our community and Herndon Youth Soccer, illustrating the traits of great character. As a young student athlete, he shows extraordinary commitment to his family, his team and our club. He is respectful of his peers and coaches at every opportunity, and all entrust Joey to give his best effort and put the team ahead of the individual with fairness and good sportsmanship. Through his hard work and dedication, he has earned the great respect of his teammates. He shows a tremendous sense of responsibility through his attendance at every training opportunity. This was considerably impressive when his team did not compete in games for an entire season; he showed the dedication to attend every training opportunity regardless of the reward.

When faced with a dangerous and frightening situation for any child, Joey showed a deep sense of strength, responsibility, duty, caring and trustworthiness. About a year ago, Joey's house suffered a fire while he was home with his younger sibling. While the house was burning, Joey ran inside to save his sister and bring her to safety. The fire was severe enough to force the family to move. We are proud of the character Joey embodies as a student, athlete and citizen. Herndon Youth Soccer greatly values his contribution to our club and our community.

## **Sophia Horowitz, *Female Athlete, Langley High School Lacrosse***

Sophia has been an exceptional example of a community athlete leader since the very first years of elementary school up to her current starting varsity position at Langley High School. Already a standout in elementary school, she would often win token prizes and would naturally share any of the prizes with the rest of the team. She had an ability even then to really bring the spirit of her team to a high. As she progressed through elite clubs and varsity play, she always found time to return to the recreational leagues to donate her time and share her skills with the newer players. These new players adore her and are constantly asking for her return.

Sophia shines because she is unselfish and has a sincere desire to help others and improve our community, and she sees value in all teammates regardless of their skills. Sophia's positive attitude not only lifts her teammates, but the coaches and parents as well. It is always a joy to watch her play and to hear that positivity coming from her off the field. Our community is in a better place because of Sophia's contributions.

# Dranesville District

## **Steve Trembler, Coach, *McLean Youth Athletics Basketball/Soccer***

Steve routinely volunteers to coach his daughter's soccer teams and his sons' basketball and flag football teams. He's typically coaching multiple teams per season and approaches every day as an opportunity to help his team learn positive behaviors both on and off the field/court. His leadership position within MYA includes chairing our sportsmanship and scholarship committees. Steve is seen as a community leader, communicating fairness, respect and citizenship through his support of MYA activities as well as within the specific sports. Steve has championed programs such as the Positive Coaching Alliance sessions and has been a positive influence in the McLean community. In all, Steve demonstrates the values of responsibility, fairness, respect, citizenship and trustworthiness as a caring member of our community.

## **Joshua Jordan, Parent, *Herndon HS Booster/Herndon OC***

Josh has readily volunteered to coach multiple sports including flag football and field hockey. This past season he answered the call for volunteers even though he had limited experience with the sport. He proved to be a reliable and dependable asset to the program. At all times, Josh treated players, officials and parents with respect. He worked well with other coaches, and always made the players' safety and development a priority. Josh advanced his knowledge in the sport and continued to take advantage of learning opportunities. In addition to working with youth sports, Josh is very involved with the Herndon High School boosters.

# Hunter Mill District

## **Camden Erickson, Male Athlete, Vienna Youth Inc Rugby**

Camden, a junior at Madison High School, has played VYI Rugby for 11 years, serving as Team Captain and leading his team to 10 VA State Titles, one National Championship, and one Runner-Up at Nationals as a scrum-half and fly-half. As a sophomore and junior, he was selected to start on the Major League Rugby Old Glory U19 Academy team. Leadership, character, compassion and service are defining characteristics of Camden..

Camden has held church and scouting leadership positions including Senior Patrol leader, Teachers President, Deacons President, and led monthly service activities. He certified as a USA Rugby Referee in 2016, has volunteered his time to referee rugby games, and was recognized as the top Under 18 Referee in the VA/MD/DC Referee Society. Camden played seven seasons of VYI basketball, and also wrestling and baseball. He aspires to study and play rugby at Brigham Young University and one day represent his country with USA Rugby.

## **Eliane Ahearn, Female Athlete, Vienna Youth Inc Cheer**

Eliane has been competing in gymnastics for years and joined our VYI Cheer Senior Squad this fall. Even though she was one of our younger cheerleaders, she led our team with her outstanding abilities to flip, tumble, jump, stunt, build, cheer and learn new skills.

Eliane puts the team's needs first. During cheer camp, she stepped forward to teach the younger cheerleaders and Senior Squad teammates. Not only is she athletic but Eliane's character is also noteworthy. Eliane is loved, respected and appreciated by everyone in her VYI Cheer Squad community. At our End of Season Awards Ceremony, Eliane unanimously earned the 2021 VYI Cheer Senior Squad Most Valuable Player Award. Eliane is a great candidate for the Female Athlete Award because not only is she gifted athletically, but her work ethic and character make her exceptional.

# Hunter Mill District

## **Oscar Lyon, Coach, Vienna Youth Soccer**

Coach Oscar is the ultimate coach by teaching the kids not only about soccer and fundamentals but advocating attitude and effort. He is a fair coach and is famous for always asking the boys questions on the field versus telling them what to do. "Luca, where are you covering?" is an example. He is a wonderful teacher and the boys have grown so much under his guidance. He is a wonderful coach to the parents by keeping them engaged and reminding them about all the aspects of sports, not just winning. If you ask him any time during or after the game what the score is, he says 0-0. My son and his team have grown so much under Coach Oscar's guidance, and I hope he continues to work with Coach Oscar in the years to come. I wish there were more amazing men like him.

## **Jenny Forbes, Parent, Vienna Youth Inc Football**

Over the last 10 years, Vienna Youth Football has been the most successful youth football organization in the DC Metropolitan area. While our players and our coaches have been at the forefront of this success, behind the scenes there is one person who has stood out and has not been recognized for her efforts. Jenny Forbes is the most selfless volunteer I have ever met. She has coordinated our volunteers, run our snack bar, and ensured that our players are rewarded for their efforts on and off the field. As much as wins and losses, the success of an organization is measured by the smiling faces after games/practices and the numbers that come back the following year. Jenny sets the standard for VYI. She is a friend, a coordinator and a mentor to our football family.



# Lee District

## **Jairo Reyes, Male Athlete, 2006 Lee Mount Vernon Club Soccer Patriots**

Jairo is a kind, thoughtful, committed and hardworking player. Jairo plays soccer at a high level, but that did not come without a strong work ethic. Jairo has an incredible work ethic which helps his teammates be the best they can be. He is extraordinary in that he enjoys giving back to his community. Jairo has learned the value and gratification of community service. His kindness, thoughtfulness, and the positivity he displays to his teammates and his community make him a Champion of Character!

## **Mara Surovell, Female Athlete, 2005 Lee Mount Vernon Club Soccer Patriots**

Mara is a student-athlete in every sense. She works hard at both her academics and her athletics. She is an amazing athlete who leads by example. Mara suffered a knee injury during a high-level soccer match and miraculously continued to play the rest of the game. She had surgery to repair an ACL and meniscus. Mara never wavered in her goal to return to soccer faster and stronger. Mara has met that goal and is now competing in College Showcase Tournaments. Mara has outstanding characteristics. The one that stands out is her leadership skills. She continued to attend training and games while supporting her teammates during her recovery period. Mara is such a supportive teammate and a Champion of Character on many levels.

# Lee District

## **Nadine Lilavois, Coach, Monument Volleyball 17U**

Nadine dedicates endless hours to studying volleyball and analyzing players' strengths and needs. Coach Nadine uses a strong voice to coach because her strength and vitality are part of who she is and how passionate she is about the sport of volleyball. Her players learn to respect this way of coaching because they can see how much she cares. Nadine respects that her players are young adults and therefore teaches them life skills through her coaching. Coach Nadine shows the girls how to welcome and learn from constructive criticism. This helps them to become contributing members of society through hard work and commitment.

Nadine promotes and encourages her players to strive to achieve their best; she does not settle for mediocre. She sees positive futures in every player and will go above and beyond to make them see their true potential. Young women in America need role models like Nadine to teach leadership. Nadine has overcome her own personal health battles in order to endorse a bright outcome for each and every player she comes in contact with. In turn, Coach Nadine teaches her players to fight for themselves and consider endless possibilities and opportunities for their futures.

## **Carol Montoya, Parent, Lee Mount Vernon Soccer**

Carol is a volunteer extraordinaire! She has volunteered and continues to volunteer as a Board Member, Program Player Director, Registrar, League Representative, High School Booster Club Member, High School game day soccer announcer – whatever it takes to make sure every child plays, and more than that, every child has a memorable experience, all while owning and managing her own business! Carol's commitment to her community makes her extraordinary. For years Carol has volunteered her time for programs, events, community service, and most admirable, community outreach by helping parents register their children in organized sports. Carol's years of service to the Lee District community exemplify a Champion of Character.

# Mason District

## **Ben Smallwood, Male Athlete, Woodson HS/Metro Baseball Senators**

Ben has been a member of our travel baseball program for the past several years. He exemplifies what it is to be a good teammate. In addition to being one of the best pitchers on our team and in his high school district, Ben is the first player to pick up a teammate when things are not going well for them. He is a constant hard worker with a positive attitude that seemingly cannot be altered by anything. He is a remarkable young man and baseball player!

## **Celeste Reyes Rodas, Female Athlete, Annandale Boys & Girls Club**

Celeste plays travel soccer for the Annandale United U19 girls' team and for the Junior Varsity team at Falls Church High School, where she is a junior. She has been playing soccer since fourth grade and with her current team since sixth grade. Her coach describes her as having "outstanding character" and notes she is "a thoughtful and caring team player, listens well to her coaches, is respectful and helps other players reach their potential." She volunteers for community food drives and loves to read and spend time with her family. She hopes to go to college and become a diagnostic medical sonographer. Celeste states that her dedication, positivity and honesty make her a Champion of Character nominee. ABGC is proud to nominate her.

# Mason District

## **Terry O'Brien, Coach, Annandale Boys & Girls Club**

Terry began coaching soccer with ABGC in spring 2013 when he coached a Mitey Mites (preschool) team for his son and continued with that team through first grade. In spring 2018, he coached his daughter's U14 team and continued on with them through U19 as an assistant coach. In spring 2018, he also coached a Mitey Mites team and continued with them through spring 2019. At that time, he also stepped up to be a second-grade girls' commissioner and coach and continues to serve as a third- and fourth-grade girls' soccer commissioner.

In addition to soccer, Terry coached ABGC basketball starting in 2011 and continuing through 2017. He has also been coaching two CYO basketball teams and served as Swim Team Rep for the Forest Hollow Swim Club. Throughout all this, he has inspired players to outstanding sportsmanship and role modeling for other players. He also volunteers as a food captain for the Annandale Christian Community for Action Food Pantry four times a year. Because of his leadership through sports, ABGC is honored to present Terry O'Brien as a nominee for the Fairfax County Champions of Character award.

## **Kate Chmielewski, Parent, Annandale Boys & Girls Club**

Kate is "always there" – as Soccer Commissioner and beyond, even helping to assemble 500 Soccer Festival goodie bags. Born and raised in Poland, she came to Virginia as an au pair. Intending to stay two years, she still "lives my dreams" here. Earning a Business Administration and Management degree, she became an investment company's executive assistant. She volunteers with local churches and works on bi-annual gatherings and promotions with Excellent Living, a women's ministry encouraging Biblical truth to make choices.

She and her husband have three young energetic boys. When the 8-year-old was four, she registered him with ABGC's Mitey Mites soccer. Her 60-year-old father plays and manages soccer in Poland; she felt soccer was "in her blood." Wanting to be involved, she volunteered to be Mitey Mites Commissioner, establishing teams and working with coaches. Now two sons are age-eligible; she commissions several ages and goes to practice "to help the kids become better." Kate serves as chairwoman of the Parents' Council and first-grade representative with Poland Embassy's Polish School. Kate says she likes "doing good things ... seeing someone succeed." St. Jude Children's Research Hospital recognized her support. She is a Champion of Character.

# Mount Vernon District

## **Owen Joachim, Male Athlete, West Potomac High School**

Since Owen joined Fort Hunt Youth football in fourth grade, he had dreamed about playing quarterback for the West Potomac Wolverines. Following two head coaching changes and a COVID reduced 2020 spring season, his senior year finally arrived and he had his chance to represent his school and help lead the Wolverines to a successful season. After a promising start his dreams were seemingly shattered when he broke his fibula against rival Mount Vernon in the fourth game of the season. Despite the injury, he played two quarters on his broken leg to secure the victory, then was taken to Mount Vernon hospital where he was told his football career was over.

Feeling like he let down his friends and community, he was at a low point. Owen went to practice every day with a selfless and positive attitude and did whatever he could to help his replacement, teammates and the coaching staff. After further x-rays it was determined by the team orthopedic doctor that after four weeks of recovery he could play on the injury as long as he could take the pain. At exactly four weeks he came back on senior night and went on to lead West Potomac to two playoff upset victories against higher seeds Fairfax (37-38) and Lake Braddock (31-24) before finally losing to South County (33-26) in the State Championship quarter finals, the farthest West Potomac Football has advanced in over 20 years. Owen was humbled to receive the Coaches award at the end of the season and was honored to be highlighted in a Washington Post article with teammate George Stamos. Owen was also involved in a West Potomac Club called One Love that sponsored one of the season's home games during his injury. One Love increases awareness about healthy relationships and has made great strides within West Po's athletic teams.

# Mount Vernon District

## **Ella Meyer, Female Athlete, Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association**

Ella has played softball every season since age five. At age 12, Ella joined the Firebirds, NVGSA's travel program. She embraced the challenge and became the reliable pitcher she is today. Throughout her years in NVGSA, she has fostered a deep love for the sport and the larger softball community.

Ella's impressive contributions as a league volunteer embody the strength of character that NVGSA hopes to inspire in our athletes. Over the last several years, Ella has shared her passion for softball by volunteering as an instructor at the Firebirds' skill camps and clinics, offering pitching lessons to younger players, and participating in the USA/ASA umpire training clinics. She has also volunteered as an assistant coach for a 12U house team, an experience where she not only got to coach her younger sister but was able to share her love for the game and inspire our young athletes. Ella will be continuing her academic and softball career at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania this fall.

Ella serves as an example of dedication to a passion and the willingness to share that passion with others. Her athletic drive paired with her humble demeanor and love for the game – shown through her willingness to volunteer her time, work hands-on with budding young athletes and be that reliable player her teammates can depend on – makes her a strong candidate for this year's Champion of Character Award.

# Mount Vernon District

## **David Houston, Coach, Jr., West Potomac High School**

Dr. David Houston, Jr. has served as Assistant Boys Basketball Coach at West Potomac High School for the past 18 years. His son, David Houston III, is the head coach. During that time, West Potomac has won four district championships and over 200 games, becoming one of the most consistently successful programs in Northern Virginia. Dr. Houston provides moral leadership for the team and is universally respected by players, parents and administrators. Notably, there is no swearing at West Potomac practices or during games.

Dr. Houston serves as a mentor for young players and encourages them in their personal and athletic growth. He provides valuable lessons and wise counsel based on his extensive experience in athletics and life. He is an expert in shooting statistics and improving the shooting form of players. He is a leader in the West Potomac athletic community and a dignified presence at many school functions. Before coaching at West Potomac, Dr. Houston was an assistant coach at West Springfield and Edison High Schools and also coached at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. In addition to his coaching duties, Dr. Houston works full-time for the U.S. Department of Labor as an agricultural economist.

## **Corea Smith, Parent, Lee Mount Vernon Sports Club**

Corea is a longstanding team manager at Lee Mt. Vernon Sports Club. The team manager is a volunteer position that sometimes requires patience, attention to detail, creativity, and at times, individual immediate attention. Corea not only serves the role for her daughter's team willingly and efficiently, but she also stepped in to serve as Team Manager for other teams (since there were no parent volunteers willing to step up).

At Lee Mt. Vernon Sports Club we hold our team manager dearly and rely on them heavily. If a team does not have a team manager, the kids on that respective team would not be able to play since the registration process can be quite tedious and the game day experience requires the manager to be present to help with the check-in process. Additionally, Corea goes into the community and encourages parents/kids to join the club as a means of keeping them out of trouble. Apart from serving in the military, playing the role of full-time mom and husband, Corea still finds time to support the community. I strongly recommend Corea Smith as a Champion of Character.

# Providence District

## **Matteo Pipia, Male Athlete, Falls Church Kiwanis Little League**

Matteo is a 12-year-old who has played Little League and travel baseball for several years. He loves the game of baseball, its history and strategy, and plays it with integrity and pride. One of his strongest characteristics as a young man is his ability to lead by example. He is always the first player on the field and the last to leave. Regardless of skill level or social standing, Matteo is warm and welcoming to all his teammates. Whether at a practice or a game, he is always encouraging his teammates, keeping them positive and engaged, and making the experience fun for everyone.

As a parent, it is exciting to watch him play the game, and also see how he mentors younger players. His commitment and enthusiasm for the game is a constant source of motivation for players of all ages in our league. As a leader, Matteo has consistently demonstrated the virtues of Little League Baseball – character, courage and loyalty. As a teammate, he exemplifies our league qualities of citizenship, discipline, teamwork and physical well-being.

## **Sophia Toole, Female Athlete, VA Glory**

Sophia is a standout athlete who plays travel softball for VA Glory and high-level basketball. She is a competitor who respects her teammates, the game, and the officials who support it. She is the kid who the girls look to when things get tough because she holds herself and everyone around her to the highest standard. It is a joy to watch her compete. She attends Franklin Middle School as an eighth-grade student where she is a standout student as well. She defines what it means to be a student athlete.



# Providence District

**Brian Monday, Coach, Vienna Youth, Inc. Football**

**Shane Sherlund, Coach, Lady Lightning Gold NoVA 16U Softball**

Shane has been a part of the LLG Travel Organization as a coach for many years. "Coach Shane" selflessly donates his time to the development of female athletes both on and off the field and has been a model of stability, consistency and leadership to these young women far outside the white lines of softball fields across the country. Aside from his coaching and skill development prowess, Coach Shane also routinely holds recruitment seminars and messages the girls about standardized test scores, timelines and college entrance requirements. Above this, he holds study group sessions with his teams in hotel conference rooms while traveling across the country to pursue their collegiate softball dreams.

Coach Shane is a model coach, tutor and mentor. As a father of one of his players, I say without question that he is exactly what we need in women's sports. He is a role model for the sport and the region for how we should be running youth sports.

**Kim Melvin, Parent, VA Glory**

A servant's heart...those two words describe Kim. She is one of the most supportive parents a team could have – giving, kind, considerate, she just makes you feel good. Plus, she gets things done. Kim defines a "go to" person who wears a tremendous number of hats and whatever the task happens to be, it's done in a first-class manner. From coordinating the parents to providing gameday meals, scorekeeping, setting up a messaging system, creating the fuel bag for the dugout, making sure the coaches are taken care of – she is ready to step in to assist whenever and wherever needed. She is extremely generous with her time but more importantly with her heart. Service to others is her trademark. Kim is truly a Champion of Character.

# Springfield District

**Nicholas Bailey, Male Athlete, Springfield/South County Youth Club Track**

Nicholas is an eighth grader who has been with the SYC Track program for a number of years. As the Head Coach of VA House of Speed, I have had the pleasure of meeting and coaching Nicholas (Nick) this past year in 2021 and it has been nothing less than extraordinary. Nicholas's dedication, commitment and integrity is inspiring to me as a coach and to his teammates both on the SYC Rec Track Program, but especially on the Travel Track team – VA House of Speed.

“Actions speak louder than words” should be Nick's mantra. While he is initially shy, when around his teammates, his work ethic and willingness to listen and learn is a coaches' dream. He naturally exudes respect from his teammates. This was further exemplified in his willingness to accept the challenge of moving from a 100m runner to a 200m and 400m runner. He worked diligently and his teammates saw this pay off as he qualified in his first attempt for the AAU National Track Championships and came back with a personal record in the 200 and one of his best times in the 400. Nick is a true joy to coach and emotes personal integrity amongst his teammates. I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of the SYC Spirit award.

# Springfield District

## **Isabella Mistretta, Female Athlete, Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association**

Isabella plays hard-nosed, competitive, fastpitch softball for the NVGSA Firebirds 16U Travel/Select Team, but also excels in sportsmanship and respect for the sport and her team's opponents. Bella was elected and currently serves as co-captain of her team but also is an assistant coach for the younger NVGSA 10U Travel/Select Team. Her coaches think they're lucky to have Bella's leadership and softball skills on the team they coach.

Bella epitomizes the notion that lessons learned in athletics also serve personal growth, whether on the field, in school, or in the community. She excels academically at Hayfield Secondary School and in extra-curricular activities. Her current GPA is 4.25 and she was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society in 2020. She has received the Presidential Award for Educational Excellence. And, she is currently the 1st chair, 2nd violin on the Hayfield Orchestra. Bella is a member of Student to Student (S2S) that is a student-led and faculty-advised program with the mission to take care of new students as they become part of their new community. She participated in community service by helping pack food for Rise Against Hunger at Christ Church in Fairfax Station for the past two years. Bella also volunteered at Rose Hill Elementary, where she organized their new book room. Often, she helped teachers in their classroom and volunteered to read with other students.

Isabella is that hard-nosed catcher with dirt on her torn uniform encouraging her teammates from behind the plate. She gets the best from herself and her teammates. Bella is a consummate student athlete, equally active in community, school and family. She is well respected by teammates, coaches and those on opposing teams. Bella represents the type of player that all coaches in all sports want on their team. Isabella Mistretta is truly a Champion of Character!

# Springfield District

## **Zakaria “Zak” Mawloud, Coach, Chantilly Youth Association Basketball**

Zak models all of the traits we want to see in our community and encourage in our young people. For more than five years, Zak has volunteered with CYA’s House, Travel, and AAU girls’ basketball programs. He has created an environment that builds strong character and talent in all of the girls, and he brings an unparalleled level of commitment to his coaching. He has impacted the lives of hundreds of girls and helped grow the club’s programs – holding extra skills sessions, coaching multiple teams simultaneously, and mentoring new coaches.

He creates an inclusive and challenging environment that fosters each of his player’s strengths and promotes their growth on and off the court, and has made every attempt to keep costs affordable so that no player is excluded. During the pandemic, he led many hours of socially distant weekly training to ensure the girls had a safe space to practice and be together. He is a role model to many inside and outside CYA. He supports the girls in their basketball journeys beyond his teams and instills key values – good sportsmanship, the importance of teamwork, and the joy of the game.

## **Marissa Primozić, Parent, Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association**

Marisa has been a Firebirds team parent for a couple of years. Girls from every team she works with call her Momma Bird. She uses her educational background in sports medicine to help develop athletes. She combines fun and fitness so that the players enjoy working hard. She greets everyone with warmth and genuine enthusiasm, so they all feel like her kids. Each athlete knows she’s someone who supports them on and off the field. She’s spent countless hours planning team bonding, team activities and fundraisers. Marisa is invested in each of the teammates and it’s obvious that they benefit from their relationships with her. They feel important and seen, not for how they play but for who they are.

# Sully District

## **Jackson Mullins, Male Athlete, Southwestern Youth Association Football**

I had the pleasure of coaching Jackson for two years at Anklebiter and have watched him grow into a great football player and a better person. I first met him at our annual skills camp when he was four years old doing drills with the seven- and eight-year-olds. Even then he was focused and very coachable. As an eight-year-old at Anklebiter he started both ways and was a natural leader. He was named captain and led his teams to two Anklebiter championships.

Jackson always treats his coaches, officials, teammates and opponents with respect. He always gives his best effort and puts his team above himself. Jackson also is an elite travel flag football player with several undefeated seasons and a recent championship. He plays SYA fourth-grade basketball in the winter and is a leader on the court as well. Jackson is a true friend and helper in the classroom and always brings home those 4's on his report card. He is currently involved in an afterschool special for fourth graders, "Paw Print Reading Club," where he reads to shelter dogs every Thursday. Jackson has a great attitude and is a true inspiration to his teammates and coaches. His enthusiasm and intensity will continue to make him successful in anything he does.

## **Katelyn Brubaker, Female Athlete, Southwestern Youth Association Field Hockey**

From day one Katelyn has shown great character. She encourages her teammates to be better while showing selflessness in helping them gain confidence. I witnessed something that I have never seen from a young player: after games, she took the time to go to the referees and thank them for their time and efforts in managing the game. After one game a referee was exiting the field and made a point to go to Katelyn and tell her how great she was and to keep up with what she was doing. He was not commenting on her talent, he was commenting on her character.

Her selflessness shows even more by giving back to the community and participating in various children's programs at church, leadership committees and toy drives. She is also in SCA and NJHS. Katelyn has shown great maturity for a person of her age. Every coach should want an individual like Katelyn on their team. A lot of people look for individuals who have the best talent to be the leaders of the team. More should look to people like Katelyn to be their leaders.

# Sully District

## **Robert Thomas, Coach, Northern Fairfax County Babe Ruth Baseball League**

Robert (Bob) is participating as a head coach for the third season in the 16-18 Northern Fairfax County Babe Ruth baseball league. Bob has given freely of his time even when he has not had a son playing on his team. Bob has completely exhibited the characteristics outlined in the Babe Ruth League mission statement. He strives to teach baseball skills to his team, to instill the ideals of sportsmanship and fair play, and to promote respect for the rules of the game. Bob exhibits integrity, tolerance and modesty in his coaching style. He works to develop each player into a young adult who has the skills to succeed in the workforce when their competitive baseball days are finished and to contribute to our society as a true citizen.

He works to instill a love for the game that the players will carry in life and hopefully pass on to their kids and other kids. Bob works to make every player's baseball experience fun, rewarding and memorable. Bob has coached both softball and baseball for many years. Besides coaching in our 16- to 18-year-old league, he also simultaneously coaches a 13-year-old team in the Northern Fairfax County 13-15 Babe Ruth league. He also heads up the umpire group for Reston Little League. Bob clearly has an extreme love for baseball and the kids he leads.

## **Kara Rivera, Parent, Southwestern Youth Association Cheer**

Kara became involved with SYA Cheer when her daughter, Shakira, joined the program in 2012. Over the past eight years, Kara has become an important part of our cheer program. She has worked tirelessly to recruit talented athletes for our program, collect intel on other teams for competition purposes, and has been the official gym housekeeper for the past three years. Kara is a hard worker and is a huge asset to our gym, keeping it clean and in excellent condition. Kara is always one of the first parents to volunteer her time to work at community events, to help raise money for our program, and to help anyone that is in need. Kara is a respected member of our community and of our organization. She is the perfect example of someone who exemplifies respect, caring, trustworthiness, citizenship and fairness.

# Fairfax County Athletic Council and Neighborhood and Community Services



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