

LONG ISLAND JUNIOR
SOCCER LEAGUE

SCHOLARSHIP 2026





ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

We are privileged to present these 22 awards to some of the finest student athletes in LIJSL. Many of these awards are in memorial of individuals who viewed soccer as not only a passion, but a way of life.

We are proud of the corporate and foundation support along with our League that enables LIJSL to expand these awards.

The contributions made by individuals and organizations enable LIJSL to provide these scholarship awards, which honor these exceptional young adults.

LIJSL Scholarship Recipients, never forget that you have overcome challenges in the past by being innovators and never quitting. Please surround yourself with positive influences and continue to be the positive influence that has led you to this moment. One mistake can change all of that. You are all exceptional in your own right.

“You could not prevent a thunderstorm, but you could use the electricity; you could not direct the wind, but you could trim your sail so as to propel your vessel as you pleased, no matter which way the wind blew.”

- Cora L. V. Hatch



AWARDS RECIPIENTS

AWARD

LIJSL TOPSoccer Scholarship
LIJSL George Hoffman Memorial
LIJSL George Hoffman Memorial
Addie Mattei-Iaia Presidential Scholarship
Bill Peet Memorial Scholarship
Brittney Walsh Memorial Scholarship
Brittney Walsh Memorial Scholarship
Carolyn Page Memorial Scholarship
Frank Gorman Memorial Scholarship
Jerry and Sally Marinan Memorial Scholarship
John Pinezich Memorial Scholarship
Joseph Lombardo Memorial Scholarship
Marc Stein Memorial Scholarship
Matthew Scarpati Memorial Scholarship
Michael Scarpati Memorial GK Scholarship
Michael Secko Memorial Scholarship
Pat Greco Scholarship
Peter C Collins Memorial Presidential Scholarship
Rocco Amoroso Memorial Sportsmanship Scholarship
Sandra Atlas Bass Scholarship
Sean Urda Memorial Scholarship
Tania Bonilla Memorial Scholarship

RECIPIENT

Ella Schwartz
Abigail (Abby) Gunner
Carolena Passeggiata
Jasmine Canales Luna
Brody Deutsch
Cailyn Talt
John Yuli
Kylie McElwee
Karina Alvarez
Raven Birch
Paul "PJ" Scheiffele
Joseph DePalma
Michael Karcher
Jack Darlington
Brianna Farrell
Samantha Witz
Jacqueline Vinas
Oliver Ko
Jason Haley Jr.
Madeline McCullough
Christopher Janal
Sofia Chavez

LIJSL & GEORGE HOFFMAN TOPSOCCER SCHOLARSHIP



The Outreach Program for Soccer (TOPSoccer) is a community-based program to give children and young adults with physical and/or intellectual disabilities the chance to step on the field. The program has been running through LIJSL for over 40 years.

Much like the mainstream LIJSL season, players participate in the spring and fall. There are several tournaments hosted by LIJSL member clubs and the year culminates with the TOPSoccer BBQ at the Peter C. Collins Soccer Park in Plainview, where every player receives an award for their participation in the program. The start of the TOPSoccer program dates back to 1979 when Mike Ludin's son, Craig, ran out on the field during one of his brother's game.

After that moment, Ludin wanted to find a regular place for Craig, who has Downs Syndrome, as well as other kids with disabilities to play. The TOPSoccer program has grown since, evolving into a program with tremendous support from member clubs.

George Hoffman, a Long Island Junior Soccer League Hall of Fame member, served on the Long Island Junior Soccer League Board of Directors for decades before his untimely passing in 1997. George was much of the creative force behind the Long Island Junior Soccer League newspaper "Kick Off" and his Bits'n Pieces column could be controversial but it always made you think.

George was active supporter of the TOPSoccer Program and LIJSL sponsors two scholarships to youth volunteers in his memory.

Ella Schwartz

Recipient



Ella Schwartz has spent six years as a volunteer with Plainview-Old Bethpage TOPSoccer. Her coach has nothing but glowing recommendations for her. He says that Ella is a truly compassionate and dedicated young woman who has dedicated her young years to bettering the lives of dozens of kids facing emotional and intellectual challenges. Ella is unique - no matter what the challenge, she never flinches. She shows incredible patience and persistence. She is first to arrive and set up and last to leave and clean up. She has endless energy matched by unlimited enthusiasm for helping others. Ella has recruited many of her school friends to become volunteers and this has helped our junior program to grow from zero to 25. She inspires her fellow coaches, parents and most importantly the players. She never seeks the slightest recognition for her volunteering.

Ella is a member of the National and Spanish Honor Societies, High Honor Roll Student, Financial Literacy Certificate and participant of the Career and Technical Education Program. She was a Club soccer member and two year NCSY Plainview, Vice President. She was chosen 2025 TOPSoccer Buddy of the Year by ENYYSA. Ella was a member of Makon Youth Group, Soccer referee and Camp Counselor.

Ella was Art Assistant with Create with Shira Art Studio. As TOPSoccer coach she did everything including handing out uniforms and moving heavy nets into position. She organized, packed and distributed food for individuals and families in need, through the Young Harvest of Melville. She was Community Service Board member for the Hebrew Heritage Club, and worked with B'nai B'rith Youth Organization. At Thanksgiving she assisted with meal distribution for under resourced families, collected hoodies for the homeless and was Camp Tour Guide.

Ella writes she started as the youngest volunteer following her dad to the field who was a board member working with the program. But over time she grew into her own. She became head trainer, helping to build POB's junior program. Being cut from the high school soccer team, she lost her love of soccer. That was until she saw soccer through the eyes of the TOPSoccer kids. It reminded her of the fun, joy and passion that soccer can bring. Each athlete has had a lasting impact on how she views the world. Growing up with a learning disability herself has shaped much of who she is. She often felt out of sync. She used humor and jokes to avoid being seen as different. For a time she viewed her learning challenge as her greatest weakness but working with TOPSoccer players changed that. She says what made her feel different was also what made her a more empathetic coach. Her disability no longer felt like a burden, it became a bridge.

Ella will be attending the University of Connecticut this fall and of course, her coach says he doesn't know what he is going to do without her.

Abigail Gunner

Recipient



Abigail (Abby) Gruner for the last four years has volunteered with the Rockville Centre TOPSoccer Program. She also volunteered as Classroom Assistant for Rockville Centre School summer and winter ACE Program. Abby worked booths and helped with setup/cleanup at the Riverside Elementary School Carnival fundraiser. As part of the Athletes Helping Athletes Club, she taught young children and athletes about the importance of values like sportsmanship and civility. She fundraised at Bethany House for women and children at the homeless shelter and fundraised and collected items to donate to the Birthday Wishes Foundation on Long Island to help birthday celebrations for underprivileged children. Abby organized South Side High School girls' Varsity Soccer Team Community Clinic fundraiser for 60 girls, coordinated team merchandise, Pasta Parties, social media and flyers.

Abby's coach states that working closely with Abby for the last several years he can attest to her outstanding commitment and service to their program. She is one of the few volunteers who has risen to a leadership role. She is adept at blending music, dancing and games with soccer in a way that promotes enthusiastic interaction between their players and volunteer coaches. Abby has been a model of what they hope to see from all their volunteers. Coaching TOPSoccer requires patience, discipline, adaptability and enthusiasm and Abby has all those qualities.

Abby was a goalie for the South Side High School soccer team as well as Rockville Centre Soccer Club. She also was on the school Track Team. She was Treasurer of the Model United Nations Club and participated in Mathletes. Abby plays the Flute in the high school Pep Band and Marching Band. She is a member of the National, Tri-M Music, National Art, Science, Math, World Language and Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Societies. She received Academic Achievement School Recognition Award, Brandeis University Book Award and Scholastic Art Honorable Mention Award.

Abby was paired with a non-verbal four-year-old who refused to leave his dad's side. Little by little he began to trust and engage with her. While she taught him soccer; he taught her the importance of patience and resilience. She states that TOPSoccer has really been a gift to her and getting to watch it blossom has been a huge privilege. It has taught her how beautiful it can be to be part of something that brings joy to the community and building something meaningful is what makes service worthwhile. At first she was terrified and didn't know what to expect. But these kids put her at ease and quickly transformed that one hour into the best part of her week. Coaxing her first player out of his shell helped her come out of her shell. It challenged her to grow, pushing her out of her comfort zone while having fun. TOPSoccer has taught her all the skills she needs in college and later in life. She is grateful for the experience.

Abby will be attending the University of Virginia's Echols Scholar Program. Virginia's gain is TOPSoccer's loss.

Carolena Passeggiata

Recipient



Carolena Passeggiata started working with Smithtown TOPSoccer when she was 10 years old. Her sister Brianna is part of the program, and she loved watching her interact with others. The TOPSoccer coach said that Carolena consistently demonstrates exceptional communication and compassion for the children with special needs from both her personal experience and caring nature. She is one of the most dedicated, intelligent and compassion student. Her leadership in volunteering has inspired peers and contributed positively to their soccer community. She possesses a remarkable sense of integrity and empathy. She approaches every task with sincerity and a general desire to make a difference.

Besides TOPSoccer volunteer, Carolena gave tour guide to incoming freshman to give helpful advice to help ease their transition into High School. She Co-Coached Smithtown West Track, teaching them track skills, was Booth Manager for their Safe Halloween, encouraging and teaching kids how to play the game at her station. Carolena was Co-Teacher in high school heroes, volunteering to educate elementary students about different ways people can earn, save and spend money. As part of Relay for Life fundraising for cancer, she helped raise \$90,000. She was Booth Manager of Smithtown West Homecoming Carnival volunteering to run multiple stations for Clubs and Honor Societies, as well as Class Council Treasurer.

Carolena has played soccer since 6th grade as well as school soccer. She is member of the National and Math Honor Societies, as well as the Spanish, Science and National English Honor Societies. She belongs to Varsity Track Team. She received Sportsmanship Award, AP Scholar with Honors and Gold Cord with Distinction.

Carolena remarks that TOPSoccer has shown her how hard some children must work to do activities that others do very easily. However, through their challenges they do not give up. This opportunity has taught her many things; it has shown her perseverance, joy and to appreciate the little things in life and every small success we have. She has learned that these children just want to be treated like everyone else and deserve our patience, kindness and understanding. She has gained great compassion for these children, and this experience has greatly impacted the person she is today. She says that appreciation for little things in life she has gained from this opportunity will stay with her always. She plans to continue this experience at Binghamton University through the Best Buddies program that allows her to develop friendships and guide special needs young adults.

Everyone wishes Carolena well as she leaves for Binghamton.

ADDIE MATTEI-IAIA PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP



In forty years of dedicating herself to youth soccer on Long Island, Addie Mattei-Iaia touched nearly every aspect of the game. It started in Smithtown, NY, where she coached and helped cofound the Smithtown Soccer Club. She created, organized, and ran the Smithtown International Tournament that brought teams from around the world to Long Island.

Soon she was volunteering at the league level, where amongst many other things, she served for 25 years as the Chairperson of the LIJSL Convention. Mattei-Iaia served on the LIJSL Board of Directors for 18 years, and in 2004 she succeeded Peter Collins as President of the League and served for 12 years. She also served as Vice President on the Eastern New York Soccer Association Board of Directors.

Under her watch, the League's enrollment grew annually, and she increased sponsorships and revenues to support League programs like TOPSoccer, Scholarship, and Player Development Program as well as many more. Mattei-Iaia also spearheaded an agreement with the New York Red Bulls that allowed the LIJSL's top players to take part in the MLS club's Regional Development School. She also made improvements to the Peter C. Collins Soccer Park in Plainview, making it one of the finest soccer-only facilities in the region. She also provided support to the families and soccer communities in need after 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. In addition, she was instrumental in purchasing a new office facility for the League Office.

Current LIJSL President Andrew Seabury said, "There have been few people who have had such an impact on the Long Island soccer environment as Addie. You can be recognized for how you played the game, but equally we should recognize how we provide the environment for players to reach the heights of the beautiful game."

She is now the Chairperson of the LIJSL Hall of Fame.

Mattei-Iaia was inducted into the LIJSL Hall of Fame in 1996, inducted into the ENYYSA Hall of Fame in 2000, and named US Youth Soccer Region One Administrator of the Year in 2007.

She was honored at Red Bull Arena for her service to youth soccer and was instrumental in partnering with the Red Bull Academy Training Program in 2015. Officially launching the Regional Development School on Long Island, it has developed several professional players from Long Island.

Mattei-Iaia was inducted into the Long Island Soccer Player Hall of Fame and received the Paul LeSueur Ambassador of the Game Award in 2025.

Jasmine Canales-Luna

Recipient



Jasmine Canales graduated from Central Islip High School. Jasmine played soccer for her high school, as well as the East Islip Soccer Club and the Red Devils United for the past two years. Jasmine also played club soccer for the Central Islip Soccer Club until 10th grade before making the transition to the Red Devils United in East Islip.

With the East Islip Soccer Club, Jasmine made a tremendous impact to the Red Devils United. Coming to the team in the summer of 2024, some of the team accomplishments, were as follows, 2025 LI Cup Finalists, 2025 Fall LIJSL Division Champions, 2026 U18/U19 ENYYSA State Cup Finalists. This would have not been possible without Jasmine. Being leader on the field, the success of this team came from Jasmine directing traffic from center mid-field. Not the loudest player on the field, she led by example with her hustle and knowledge of the game for all 90 minutes of play. With the high school team, her leadership abilities got her the acknowledgement of being named captain by her teammates her senior year. With her hustle, and love for the game got her the coaches award her senior year as well. Otis Scerbo, one of her coaches for Central Islip put it best, "Jasmine is a natural leader who elevates the performance of teammates through consistent communication and a relentless work ethic."

In the classroom, Jasmine is an excellent student. With an unweighted GPA of 94.8, what was impressive of the improvement of her GPA average all 4 years at Central Islip High School. She was able to increase her overall GPA by 2 points from 9th to 12th grade. Also, was quite impressive is that Jasmine was recognized in high school by being on the high honor roll for all 4 years, graduated top 50 in her class of 2026 and received the New York Seal of Literacy Award. Finally, Jasmine took 5 AP Classes as well, to prepare her for college.

In the fall, Jasmine will be going to SUNY Old Westbury, where she will be a member of the Panthers Women's Soccer Program.

BILL PEET MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



William S. Peet III, known as Bill, began his volunteer work in youth soccer with the Brentwood Soccer Club in the early 1960s coaching his twin sons. He later served in many different capacities with the club from coach to treasurer to president.

Peet was elected to the Long Island Junior Soccer League Board of Directors in the early 70s and served as the league treasurer for decades. Under his financial guidance, LIJSL became financially secure and was able to purchase the building where the offices are now. Peet also served as the Chairman of the LIJSL Appeals Committee and was an advisor to ENY Soccer. In 1999, he was inducted into the LIJSL Hall of Fame.

Bill is survived by his wife Maryanne, twin sons Bill and Michael, and his daughter Karen.

Brody Deutsch

Recipient



Brody Deutsch graduated from Islip High School, where he was a member of the Islip Boys High School Program for all 4 years (10th through 12th Varsity) and as well as the Islip High School football program as the kicker.

He also ran track in the winter and track in the spring for the high school. For his club soccer experience, Brody was a member for the East Islip Soccer Club playing for the United (U19), Barcelona 2007 and the United 2008.

On the soccer field, Brody is willing to take on any challenge where he took the challenge to become a outside defender, because the team needed him to do so and to the current day, a position he stills plays on the field. His high school soccer coach, Michael Argenziano was so impressed that he became the kicker of the high school football team in 10th grade, while fulfilling his requirements with practices and game with the soccer team as the high school as well. He stated, " Aside from learning a new skill, he showed dedication and commitment to others by often leaving right after soccer practices or games and heading right to football practice or a game. As other players head home to rest, your day just got longer."

In the classroom, Brody is a exceptional student with a weighed GPA of 96.78 and getting a score of 1440 of his SAT. While at Islip High School, he took 8 AP classes and was a member of the National Honor Society, National English Honor Society and the National Spanish Honor Society.

Another thing that should be noted about Brody, was that he volunteered his time with the East Islip Soccer Club "Just for Kicks" program. The director of the program, Louis Pepe had high praise for Brody. He wrote, " He takes time to connect with each child individually and works tirelessly to help them fell included and confident. What sets him apart is his proactive effort to interact with parents, listening carefully to better understand each child's personality, motivators, and the strengths that produce the most positive outcomes."

In the fall Brody will be attending the Central Florida University.

BRITTNEY WALSH MEMORIAL FUND SCHOLARSHIP



Brittney Walsh was a proud graduate of the class of 2012 from the Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School. This is where she would challenge herself and her friends to make everything she was involved with just a little bit better. Being ranked number 22 in her class, captain of her winter track team, and three-year captain on the girls varsity soccer team, she was often the one to follow. Her passion for track came when she lost a close friend in the 10th grade due to a brain aneurysm. She made a promise to her friends that she would continue running for him. Making the spring track team in 11th grade she quickly pranced her way to Penn Relays where they placed third in the 4x4 (never done in Copiague). Her track coach and fellow runners would comment on her constant talking when running. "How could she do that?"

Walsh's longtime passion was for soccer. She started at the age of five and played for Lindenhurst early on and finished her club career in Massapequa.

One of her dreams was to go to college. She was accepted to York College of Pennsylvania where she planned to study sports management, run track, and play soccer. But her dream was cut short.

On June 24, 2012, she was killed by a drunk driver, just two days after her high school graduation. She was coming home from her summer job. Her loss shook the community island wide.

To tell you what kind of person she was, her yearbook quote read:

"Be a Fruit Loop in a World of Cheerios."

Cailyn Talt

Recipient



Cailyn Talt graduated from East Islip High School, where she was a three-sport athlete. She played her entire youth soccer career for the East Islip Soccer Club, where she was one of two original players for the very successful East Islip Red Devils United 2008/2009, where they were finalists in the LI Cup U19 (Spring 2025) and Eastern NY State Cup Championship U18/19 (Spring 2026). Cailyn anchored the back 4 on both teams, as she was captain of the varsity for 2 years and her club team as well.

In soccer, Cailyn excel on the field. She is a true leader, a talent that never left East Islip, as many of here teammates did throughout the years. Her loyalty to her club team is a testament on why it was able to survive the past few years. Cailyn never missed a game and when she stepped on the field, you knew that you were going to get 110 percent from her. The one aspect that Cailyn bring to any team she was on, is her character, there is not a nicer young lady you will meet. Polite and always has a smile on her face, she loves just to play the game of soccer. As her club coach, as well her high school varsity coach for East Islip, Ben Diallo summed up Cailyn this way, " From the time I met her to where she is today, Cailyn has been nothing short of being an exemplary person. Her growth not only as a player, but most importantly as a person, is what any parent or coach would want for their child or player," It should be noted as well, the awards that Cailyn received through the game of soccer: 10th grade: High Minds in Motion Award, 11th grade, All League and High Minds in Motion Award, and 12th grade All-Division Award, High Minds in Motion Award, White Award (Highest GPA during sports season) and the Carey Award (Senior on team that displays a strong work ethic and caring personality towards their teammates).

As much success Cailyn had on the soccer field, she was as successful in the classroom. With a Weighted GPA of 107.42 and a SAT score of 1300, she was acknowledged by numerous awards and achievements during her tenure at East Islip High School. The list of student activities and awards goes on and on, but here are some of her accomplishments. Cailyn was part of 3 different Honor Societies: National, World Language, and Tri-M Music and she was a member of two Unified Sports (basketball and bowling). Also, she was an AP Scholar, getting a 4 or 5 score on least three AP Exams. She was part of the Buddies Club, Leaders Club , Mentor Me Program and the President of the East Islip Athletic Club.

It be noted that Cailyn still had time on the weekends for the past six years, she was an important member of the successful Just For Kicks Program for Special Needs Children that want to play soccer for the East Islip Soccer Club. For the past three years, Cailyn was a Senior Instructor, where she gave back with her love and compassion for the game of soccer to others.

In the fall, Cailyn will be going to Seton Hall University in New Jersey, majoring in biology on a pre-med track.

John Yuli

Recipient



John Yuli is a graduate from Bay Shore High School and graduated with an Advanced Regents Diploma with mastery in math and science. While he played soccer for the boys program at Bay Shore, he played his club soccer

since 2023 with the East Islip Soccer Club, most recently with the East Islip United. When he was at Bay Shore High School, John participated in the following sports: Winter Track, Spring Track and Crew.

In the classroom, John is an exceptional student. With a GPA Weighed Average of 99.61, he was ranked 23rd in the class of 2026 at Bay Shore High School, which put him in the top 5% of his class. His teachers at Bay Shore High School all stated the same qualities about John: dedicated to his studies, commitment to discipline, and hard-working. His school counselor summed up John best: “I have found him to be incredibly versatile, equal parts “sponge” eager to learn and absorb new ideas, “courageous” open and welcoming of new experiences, and “workhorse” he has incredibly positive work habits.” While at Bay Shore High School, John was part of the National Honor Society and was part of their Environmental Club.

On the soccer field, John played for various clubs on the island during his time in LIJSL. When he started his travel experience, he played for his hometown club, the Bay Shore Soccer Club and the Avengers. Then for the 2020-2021 year, John’s club team moved to the North Babylon Soccer Club. Before he made his final stop at the East Islip Soccer Club in 2023, he played two years at the Babylon Soccer Club. What kept John going from club to club was to find a team that wanted to play soccer. That was he wrote in his essay. John stated, “It was not always easy. There were times it would have been a lot simpler to just stop playing. But I did not, because soccer is not something I do. It is something I care about.”

In the fall, John will be attending upstate to Binghamton University.

Thank You

**To all the families that graciously donated to the scholarship program
in memory of their loved ones.**

To our sponsors for their generosity year in and year out.

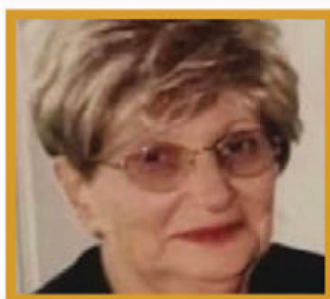
**To the scholarship committee who dedicate their time to review each
and every application from so many wonderful student athletes.**

To all our league volunteers for your dedication.

**To each and everyone of you who believe in our youth and realize that
they are the future.**

**We believe the recipients we honor today prove that the future is in
good hands.**

CAROLYN PAGE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Carolyn Page of the Massapequa Soccer Club left behind a tremendous legacy. Page passed away after a fourteen-year battle with cancer, but she remains in the hearts of her husband Lincoln Page and her three daughters, Lorraine, Cynthia, and Pamela as well as all who knew her.

Page began coaching her daughter when she was told, "If you don't coach, there will be no team for your daughter to play on." She coached for the Massapequa intramural program and later in the travel team program. She was involved with the Massapequa Memorial Day Tournament, specifically taking care of the trophy presentations.

She later became an administrator for Girls Select and was a chaperone for the distant tournaments and overall was totally supportive of her husband and daughters, and took on any job necessary to help.

Lincoln mentioned that he could not have gone on to be President of Massapequa Soccer Club, Tournament Director, State Cup Commissioner, LIJSL Arbitration Board Chairman, only to name a few jobs he held, without the support of Carolyn. In fact, she used to say in jest, "I did all the work and he took all the glory."

She will always be remembered as a true soccer mom/wife and consummate volunteer.

Kylie McElwee

Recipient



Kylie McElwee graduated from W.C. Mepham High School, in Bellmore, NY. A member of the East Islip Soccer Club for the past two years, playing with the Red Devils United 08/09 team. While in LIJSL, Kylie also played for the Syosset, Bellmore and Plainedge Soccer Clubs. She also spent time in the PDP (U10 and U11)

and ODP (U12 through U15) programs as well. At W.C. Mepham High School, she participated in soccer: JV 9th and 10th grade and played varsity lacrosse for the past three years.

At W.C. Mepham High School, Kylie was a very busy student. With a GPA of 90, she was part of the National Honor Society and the National Art Society. She took numerous AP classes, but Kylie's talents were in art and drama. With art, she was awarded All-County in 2026 and her work was displayed this past May in the Annual Art Show at Mepham High School, where Kylie did a live drawing presentation. She also had a special talent in drama, where she was part of the Skull and Bones Program for the past 4 years. If not acting on stage in a production, she was behind the scenes, designing the props that were used in the various shows. Also, her classroom teachers took notice of this special talent with Kylie as she implemented these skills in activities within the classroom. Her chemistry teacher Lee Mattes said this about her in his class. "One of her most memorable experiences was during our tie-dye t-shirt lab, where she found joy in the hands-on, creative aspect of the experiment." He goes on to add, "Beyond the classroom, Kylie's artistic and creative talents have also impressed me....Her passion for the arts is evident and it's clear that she aspires to pursue both psychology and art in college."

On the soccer field, Kylie played for many teams during her LIJSL experience, but found the most joy playing with the East Islip Red Devils United 08/09 the past two years with Bennie Diallo. When her team Syosset team was folding after the spring 2024 season, this was Kylie's first choice, even though other teams approached her about coming to their team, because of the position she plays: goalkeeper. What Kylie stated about Bennie was this and playing for the Red Devils United 08/09, "My coach, Bennie, holds us accountable, practices are fun, and games are close, but they don't decide how our coach treats us at the next practice. It's how I like soccer. You can forget all your worries while you play the sport." She goes on to state that Bennie held them to high-standards, however, in Kylie's words "You are not perfect," and Bennie just wanted them to love the game as much as he loves it. In the past two years, this team has had great success: finalists in 2025 for LI Cup and 2026 Eastern NY State Championships and division champs for LIJSL this past fall season.

This fall, Kylie is off to SUNY Buffalo and will play lacrosse for the Bengals, majoring in psychology with a minor in art.

FRANK GORMAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



According to Newsday's article, "Everybody Loved Him", Frank Gorman was a Brentwood resident for 26 years who had recently moved to Farmingville. He was hit by a car and died on January 5, 2003. Those who knew him said he didn't merely strive for perfection, he achieved it. The former Brentwood High School track and soccer star ran more than a thousand miles a year to keep in peak condition.

He was an All-American in the 3200 meter run after earning third place in a 1994 national competition while attending Brentwood High School. Gorman began playing soccer at 3 ½ years old in Brentwood where he later served as a referee, assistant soccer coach, and trainer of youth teams. He later played for Hofstra University where he was known as "Stormin' Gorman." He graduated from college in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. After graduation, Gorman divided his time between a job at his mom's All-State Insurance office in Bay Shore, coaching junior varsity at his high school alma mater, and playing soccer. He also worked with Adelante, where he enjoyed being able to talk to the kids one-on-one about their future plans. A tribute to Gorman given by Hofstra University soccer coach Richard Nutall said, "Frank had a fantastic ability to bring people together. He was more instrumental than anyone in bringing the men's soccer squad together as one. He was a major catalyst for team harmony, the "foreigners" and the "Americans" were made to mix by his constant Gorman social diplomacy.

"We always thought of him as "Little Frank" to distinguish the difference between his Dad, "Big Frank" but "Little Frank" wasn't small, but just how grand was he?" The answer to the question of how grand was "Little Frank" is easy, his impact remains massive in our hearts and minds forever.

Karina Alvarez

Recipient



Karina Alvarez graduated from St. John the Baptist High School in West Islip, NY. Karina

also attended Our Lady of Mercy Academy in Syosset in 9th and 10th grade before they shut their doors in 2024. While there, she played soccer on the varsity team for those two years, before heading to St. John the Baptist High School. In LIJSL, Karina played her travel soccer with the Commack Sparks of the Commack Soccer Club.

While at St. John the Baptist, after transferring there in September 2024, the past two years have been successful for Karina. Graduating with a GPA of a 99, this is a testament to her focus on her studies. With her previous school closing, Karina entered St. John the Baptist, knowing no-one, but still was able to leave her legacy there in only two short years. She earned Summa Cum Laude honors, as well as being a member of the National Honor Society and also the National English and Spanish Societies. As John P Connors, from the Social Studies Department, stated, "Karina is the type of person that comes around once in a career. I hope that my daughter embodies similar characteristics that Karina possess."

In High School at Our Lady of Mercy, Karina was making a name for herself on the soccer field in her first two seasons on varsity before they closed. With an injury in the fall of 2024 that required surgery, which left her unable to walk for over a month, she put her focus into recovery and this effort made her a stronger person and player for the Commack Sparks, her club team. As a leader of that team, her team finished up their last season this spring playing in U19 premier for LIJSL.

In the fall, Karina will be attending Hunter College.

JERRY & SALLY MARINAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Jerry and Sally Marinan were members of the Levittown Soccer Club for over 35 years. After a short but hard battle with cancer, Jerry passed away in July 2016. Sally continued to volunteer for the club at various events including Opening Day and fundraisers and sadly passed away in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his years, Jerry held many positions including Coach, Travel Director, Social Activities Director, and President. He was also very involved with LIJSL serving as a Supervisor, Coordinator for the league and the LI Cup, and was a member of the Registration Committee and Games Committee. In 2004, Jerry was inducted into the LIJSL Hall of Fame, an honor he was extremely proud and humbled by.

Sally was also very involved with Levittown SC. She was an intramural and travel coach and would always volunteer at the annual picnic, help with registration, and checked players in at our holiday parties. She too served as a Supervisor and Coordinator for LIJSL league play and the LI Cup.

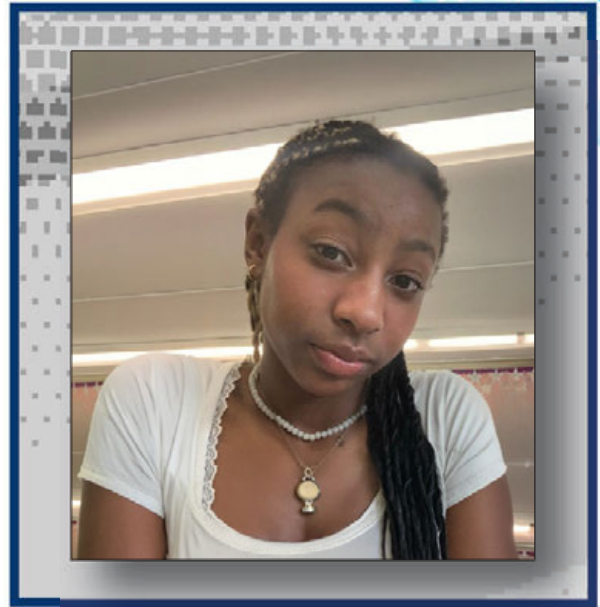
Both Sally and Jerry continued to stay very involved with Levittown SC even after both of their daughters moved on to other clubs. They always maintained true fairness and caring for all players, coaches, and volunteers until the end. It is with great pleasure that we honor them with this scholarship in their name. We know they are always watching over all of our players including their grandchildren who play up in Westchester. We want to wish everyone the best of luck as they enter a new phase of their lives.

May you continue to always reach your "GOALS!"

-The Marinan Family

Raven Birch

Recipient



Raven Birch is a graduate from Thomas A Edison Career and Technical Education High School in Queens, New York. While she played soccer for the high school and coach Christopher Holt, she ended her 2025-2026 LIJSL year with the Levittown Soccer Club and the Reign, also coached by Christopher Holt. Her soccer talents also earned her a spot in the

ENYYSA ODP program for 2024-2025, where she was invited to the East Region 2008 ID camp.

On the soccer field, Raven can play any position on the field. On the high school level, playing for the Lady Inventors, in a total of 40 games, she accumulated 31 goals and 6 assists. For her high school talents, she was selected for the 2025 PSAL Senior Showcase. Her club coach and high school coach gave Raven the upmost praise stating, "She is one of the strongest young ladies that I have had the privilege of coaching. She is willing to put the hard work in to make her game better." This is for a young lady who gave up the game of soccer at age 6 and started playing again at 11. What is most impressive about Raven is that even though she is a talented soccer player, she was always not treated that way by others. In her essay, she wrote "As captain of my school team for two years, I made a promise to never treat anyone the way, I had been treated. I never get made at someone for making a mistake or being new, because I know exactly how that feels." These traits were evident this past spring season when her Levittown team took on the East Islip Red Devils United. Raven that day was the Levittown's entire defense tracking player after player that got through for East Islip. While doing all of this, she had a smile on her face, telling her teammates that they were doing a fantastic job.

In the classroom, Raven had a GPA of a 3.3 and an average of 95. What was impressive about Raven was that she was a sports photographer for her high school. She took photos for the following sports: Boys and Girls Varsity and JV, Boys Soccer, Boys Baseball, Girls Softball, Girls Badminton, Boys Track and Field Media Day, thus she quite busy the past three years. Also, she was a student leader in the high school's "Peer-Group Connection" club, where Raven mentored 9th graders at the High School. Finally, she was a student volunteer at PS 175-The Lynn Gross Discovery School, where Raven supported classroom instruction and assisted young learners. Her mathematics teacher, Douglas Lee said this about Raven, "She approaches challenges with determination and a problem-solving mindset, often going beyond expectations. Her ability to balance academic responsibilities with her many extracurricular and community commitments speaks to her discipline and desire to succeed."

In the fall, Raven will be off to Rochester, NY and Roberts Wesleyan University.

JOHN PINEZICH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



John Pinezich was born in Astoria, Queens in 1933 to immigrants from what is now Croatia. He was a graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School in 1951 and was awarded a scholarship to Pennsylvania State University where he played on the varsity soccer team for four years. As a freshman, he was part of the first U.S. diplomatic mission to Iran as the youngest member of the Penn State Soccer team. They played a series of goodwill games with Iranian teams throughout the country. In 1954, he captained the NCAA Championship team for Penn State and received First Team All-American honors. He was a member of the U.S. National Team in 1955, and had one cap in a game against Iceland. He also traveled the world as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces soccer team.

Throughout his youth, beginning in the early 1940s, he played soccer for Eintracht Soccer Club in the former German-American League. His team won the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup in 1955, the highest achievement in soccer at the time. He scored two goals in the last six minutes to lead his team to a 2-0 win in the championship game against the Los Angeles Danes (one with his left foot and one with his right, as he liked to point out.)

In 1958, he met the love of his life, Evelyn Reis, and they were married for almost fifty years. They moved to Northport, Long Island in 1962, and raised three children, John, Lyn, and Karin, all of whom played soccer. His love for the game led him, in 1971, to help found the Northport Soccer Club. He spent the first five years as Club President and remained on the Board of Directors for many years. He was actively involved in coaching teams for Northport and the Long Island Junior Soccer League for almost 30 seasons, even after his children were no longer playing. He coached the Long Island Region gold-medal-winning Scholastic Girls teams for the Empire State Games in 1983 and 1984, and the Open Women's team to a gold medal in 1982. He was also a USSF Region 1 Girls Select Staff Coach in 1983 and coached the LIJSL Boys Select in 1975-76.

He passed away in 2008 at his winter home in Stuart, Florida of a stroke. He lived a very full life pursuing his endless interests: soccer, landscaping and bonsai, history, sailing, airplanes, architecture, design, travel, his Croatian community, and his wonderful extended family. Throughout his life, he touched us all with his strength, modesty, dignity, curiosity, and passion. His openness of emotion, love, and generosity embraced us all. We are honored to establish this memorial fund in his memory.

Paul “PJ” Scheiffele

Recipient



PJ Scheiffele is a graduate of Mount Sinai High School and played his club soccer with the Mount Sinai Soccer Club for the past 3

years. Prior to that, he was a member of the Terryville Soccer Club. While at Mount Sinai High School, he was a member of the varsity program for 4 years and captain and selected to the All-Conference team his senior campaign. With his club team, the Mount Sinai Everton, he led his squad to a first place finish this past spring.

In the classroom, PJ was a very good student focusing on his studies. With a GPA of 96 and a SAT score of 1190, PJ made sure to be involved with many activities at the high school. Some of the activities that he was involved in was Best Buddies, a group that promoted inclusion and friendship by helping build meaningful connections with peers. Also, he was part of FBLA for 3 years, which focused leadership, communication and business skills through competitive service-based experience. Plus, he was part of the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society.

On the soccer field, PJ shined. He was a member of the Mount Sinai Everton, and coach Nick Gordon, who also is the Director Of Coaching, spoke highly of PJ Scheiffele. He did speak about how he was a outstanding representative of the club, but was more impressed of his giving back to the club. “What truly distinguishes PJ is his dedication to mentoring younger players within our program. He consistently takes the time to encourage, guide, and support them, whether through advice during training, helping build their confidence, or simply being a positive role model they can look up to.”

In the fall, Paul “PJ” Scheiffele will be going to SUNY Martine and he will continue to play soccer on the collegiate level.

JOSEPH LOMBARDO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Joseph Lombardo was born and raised in Astoria, Queens, where he met his wife, Mary. They were blessed with two children, Joey and Michelle. The Lombardo Family decided to move and raise their family on Long Island. Not long after moving to South Huntington, Lombardo began coaching soccer. He started off coaching Joey's team and then Michelle's team to many first place wins and NY State championships.

He loved the sport. In addition to coaching, he helped start the HBC TOPSoccer Program and Special Olympic Soccer League, organized and managed the HBC Peter Renzulli Labor Day Tournament, and was a champion of sportsmanship.

Lombardo became president of HBC Soccer Club and in 1989 was inducted into the LIJSL Hall of Fame. He could always be found on a soccer field, whether it was watching a game, lining fields, or handing out trophies.

Lombardo was a man who touched the lives of so many people. He was a kind, generous, and loving husband, father, and grandfather. He was a man of integrity who always saw the good in everyone.

Lombardo passed away on June 26, 2014, from pneumonia complications.

Joseph DePalma

Recipient



Joseph De Palma is a graduate from Oceanside High School. He spent time athletic time at Oceanside High School participating with the

soccer program and he played his youth travel soccer with the Oceanside United Soccer Club.

In the classroom, Joseph is a top student, holding down a Weighed GPA of 102.27, Unweighted GPA of 96.442. He received a New York State Advanced Regents with a designation in Mastery in Mathematics. In high school, Joseph took 10 AP Classes overall and was awarded AP Scholar with Honor (11th grade) and AP Scholar with Distinction (12th grade). The Honor Societies (6) that he achieved are as follows: World Language, National, Mu Alpha Theta, Rho Kappa, English, and Science. To put into words what Joseph was like with academics, his Mathematics teacher Rocio Sabordio put it best. "What sets Joseph apart is not only his intelligence and work ethic, but his character. He is kind, humble, and mature, with a genuine love of learning that inspires those around him."

On the soccer field, used his knowledge from the classroom and brought it to the team. In the 12th grade he was awarded the Nassau County Soccer Scholar Athlete for Oceanside High School. For his club team in Oceanside, what stood out with the coaches was his great interest in the game within the game. Another important aspect about Joseph was his availability. They knew that he would always be there and would play where ever he was needed. His coach Dave Maloney stated about his Soccer IQ, "He would ask the coaches questions about how we set up, when we would press, and how he could make us a better team. He didn't just want to know what to do. He wanted to understand why we were doing it."

In the fall, Joseph will be heading to the state of South Carolina to attend Clemson University.

MARC STEIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Marc Stein's sudden, unexpected passing in October 2022, left the LIJSL soccer community with a huge hole. For over 25 years, he was a "larger than life" persona both within our league and game. He left his mark wherever he went, with his passion and enthusiasm to serve for all to see.

"We have lost a valued friend and colleague, who's decades long contribution to his local community, to Bellmore (JFK HS) Varsity soccer and LIJSL were immeasurable," LIJSL President Andrew Seabury said following Stein's passing.

Stein was a vibrant and active member of the LIJSL family. He served as a member of the LIJSL Board of Directors from 2012-2021, first as a trustee and then as secretary. He was involved with the Waldbaum's/LI Cup for 20 years and held roles on LIJSL's Registration Committee, Rules Committee, and Games Committee.

His presence was always visible and well-spirited. Whether it was at the LIJSL Convention conducting coaches' meetings, handling club and player registration at the League office, or directing and emceeding the trophy ceremony at the Long Island Cup Finals.

He also served at the member-club side, coaching numerous teams, first in the Bellmore, and then the Merrick/South Merrick PAL soccer club programs.

"Marc was a well-respected man who enjoyed life. The volunteer work he performed for LIJSL was greatly appreciated and he will never be forgotten. He was a role model for many people and his contagious smile and laughter will be sorely missed," said Anthony Maresco, former LIJSL President, who worked together with Stein on the Cup for nearly two decades.

Stein's dedication to LIJSL was one of a kind, serving not only as a volunteer, but as a mentor, teacher, and friend to so many. His contribution to the Long Island Junior Soccer League both on the field and off the field has left an everlasting impact.

Michael Karcher

Recipient



Michael Karcher graduated from Garden City High School. As a keeper, he was the backbone of the high school program being the keeper of the past two state Class AA New York Public School State Champions and he has led his club team the Garden City Centennials Vipers to the 2025 LI Cup U17 Champions.

Michael is a team player on the soccer field as he plays one of the most difficult positions on the field, goalkeeper. Through hard work and practicing on his own, he has developed into a top keeper in this area. As being the starting goalkeeper with Garden City High School, national final ranking of 11th, he was awarded this past year for all the hard work he had put in. As well as being a 2X State Champion, he was named Nassau County Conference 2 Goalkeeper of the Year, All-County Honorable Mention, and most important, from the coaching staff, the Will to Win Award. These awards were great, but what was most important to Michael was the state championship game, as Garden City came back from a 1 to 0 deficit, to defeat Cornwall 2 to 1. In his words, as some of his teammates were fearful that they would lose, not Michael. He stated he had been in this situation many times before, so he knew that the game was not over and their squad would rally back to win.

With his club team, the Vipers, he led them to the 2025 LI Cup Championship for U17 boys. More important than this championship, what Michael is doing within the club is more important. With the help of Joey Tavernese, a club trainer, Michael is using his talents to teach the future goalkeepers of the Garden City Centennials Soccer Club and Garden City High School. As a parent from the Garden City Centennial Soccer Club wrote, "Michael has a natural ability to connect with young athletes. He demands effort, but he also builds confidence. He knows how to push kids in the right way-holding them accountable while making them believe in themselves."

In the fall, Michael will be heading to upstate New York to Union College, where he will continue his soccer journey on the mens soccer team.

MATTHEW SCARPATI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Glory, Glory, Man United! His favorite team was Manchester United. It pained him greatly that his cousins are Chelsea fans. With his first nephew born on June 1, 2009, he looked forward to teaching him how to wear the appropriate jersey and cheer for the appropriate teams. That will never happen because a drunk and speeding motorcyclist left the Wantagh State Parkway, at approximately 100mph and collided with him while he was out for a bike ride and had stopped to fix a flat on the Wantagh State Bike Path. He attended the 2009 LIJSL Scholarship Awards on 7/19/09.

He is the youngest of four boys, all of whom played soccer. Soccer was a passport to many places from Italy and England to Maryland, California, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New Jersey. He was a 2008 graduate of Half Hollow Hills High School East and had completed a vigorous academic freshman year at the University at Buffalo. He made friends easily, but he always seemed to have a center compass. He loved all sports soccer, lacrosse, tennis, golf, basketball, and cycling. He made excellent choices in his friends.

Scarpati started with Northport Soccer Club, since they had a program for four-year-olds. He played travel for Northport, Brentwood United, Auburndale Supersonics, and East Meadow Jets. He was selected as an alternate for the ENYYSA ODP team and played with LIJSL ODP team. He played varsity soccer for Half Hollow Hills East and was a co-captain in his senior year. He played JV and varsity lacrosse as well. He wanted to play soccer in college. However, the schools that were thinking of him were not the schools he wanted to attend. A fractured and dislocated ankle in his senior year of high school made that decision a sound one. When he had completed two surgeries and physical therapy at the end of October 2008, he was able to play some intramural soccer at the University at Buffalo. He said he had forgotten how much he loved playing and he was determined to get back in the game, working out with a friend from his dorm.

He was an economics major at UB, loved Disney World, video games, music, fun, and cooking. Yet he could be serious about politics, faith, and fashion issues. He was a Renaissance Man. He was a Sunday evening regular at the UB Newman Center for mass and pledged Pi Lambda Phi. He was a wonderful blend of curiosity and generosity. He was a best friend to his family and friends. He had just finished reading "Liberty and Tyranny" and "The Three Musketeers" and had "Wealth of Nations" on deck for the next read. He was working as a doorman at 24 Gramercy Park South during the summer of 2009 and was enjoying the eclectic group of people that he met.

Jack Darlington

Recipient



Jack Darlington is a graduate of South Side High School in Rockville Centre. While at South Side High School, he was a member of the varsity soccer program for 3 years and Jack was a member of the Rockville Centre Soccer Club and the RVC Red Devils for the past 4 years.

With soccer, Jack has been a top player on his team, both on the high school level and with his club team. Jack was recognized by Newsday this past year as a Top 100 Long Island Soccer Player and followed that up with All-County Honors his senior season. Also, he led South Side High School to the team first semi-finals appearance in Nassau County in 6 years. With his club team, the RVC Red Devils, this current spring season, they lost in the championship game for the LI Cup and finished 2nd by one point in a competitive U19 Premier division. Coach Joseph McLaughlin spoke about Jack's leadership, one of the main reasons why this team played at such a high level. He stated, "His influence extended well beyond the field, and the success of the team is a direct reflection of his character as a leader and teammate."

In the classroom, Jack was an exceptional student. His grade point average, weighted 99.7 and unweighted 95.5 was impressive, but his score of 1440 on the SAT (710 Reading/730 Math) was as good. He was a member of the National Honor Society, Math Honor Society, Science Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. He also earned honors with the College Board Recognition Program Award, NYS Seal of Biliteracy, and NYS Seal of Civic Readiness. Also, at South Side High School he was President of the Italian Club and he was part of the Biology Club.

This fall, Jack will be attending the University of Virginia.

MICHAEL SCARPATI MEMORIAL GK SCHOLARSHIP



Born at 9 lbs. 12 ½ oz and happy, Michael Scarpatti embraced life and people with arms wide open from that moment and all of the moments of the rest of his life. His bear hugs became legendary in his family.

He began to play baseball, tennis, and soccer at the age of six and later became one of the youngest competitors on the Half Hollow Hills Swim Team. Somewhere along the way, soccer became the sport he was most passionate about.

About the age of 10, his abilities as a goalkeeper began to show. He understood the game, loved the people he met, and enjoyed the places soccer took him - Columbia, MD; Springfield, VA; Coco, FL; as well as State Cup Finals, Regionals, England, Chaminade High School, and Bryant College. He was the biggest supporter of his two younger brothers and always shared the goalkeeper's perspective with his field-player brothers.

Scarpatti enjoyed working with the younger players, trying to give them the benefit of some of his hard-won experience. Paul Riley said that Scarpatti had something no one could teach, he had passion and heart.

He died suddenly on May 14, 2001, the day after Mother's Day at the age of 20. There is a void for all who loved him that can never be filled. We had a glimpse into his future and only saw promise.

**Brianna
Farrell***Recipient*

Brianna Farrell graduated from Hampton Bays High School, where she was a member of the high school soccer program and was team captain for the past two seasons. On the club level, Brianna was a standout soccer player for the Manorville Soccer Club Bulldogs, where she has been a member since the fall season of 2023. Prior to that, she has stints with the Southampton Town United and with Hamptons United.

With Brianna, what stood out was the high praise that she received from her club coach for Manorville, Michael R. Brynes, retired 1st Grade Detective for the NYPD. The thing that stood out about Brianna was that she had no “EGO” according to him. He stated that she always gave he all at practices and games and she left nothing undone. What meant the most to him was the fact in his words, “Brianna not only motivated her teammates to be better, but she also motivated me to want to be a better coach.” In his words he felt privileged to have the honor to write the recommendation to LIJSL for her.

Off the field, Brianna had time to be a Girl Scout, earning the Girl Scout Bronze Award (25 hours of service time), the Girl Scout Silver Award (50 hours of the service time) and the Girl Scout Gold Award (80 hours of service time). For the Girl Scout Gold Award, Brianna created 85 reusable menstrual kits, including sewing instructions, supplies and underwear donations all sent to women in the Dominican Republic.

This fall, Brianna will be heading off to SUNY Cobleskill, where she will continue her soccer career on the college level. Her focus for her studies will be in the veterinary field.

MICHAEL SECKO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Some people make a difference by being who they are. That was Michael Secko. He touched many lives in all areas of his life - family, work, soccer, and community. The ultimate volunteer, he shared his wisdom and set a good example to those under his care, and he put great emphasis in work done well, especially pertaining to the sport he loved most, soccer. Never did he guess that his involvement would take him places both domestic and abroad. A positive person, he looked for the good in everyone he met and every challenging situation that arose along the way.

Starting his career in the Father Joe Basel Sports Program through St. Mark's Roman Catholic Church, Secko volunteered as a Munchkin League soccer coach for his eldest son, Michael III. Soon after, he became the program director and he remained in this position for 20 years. Looking for a solid soccer program in which to enroll his children, he discovered the Sound Beach Soccer Club. As a committed father and fan of the sport, he took on the role of head coach for two teams, the Sound Beach Wildcats, Michael III's team, and the Sound Beach Breakers, Matthew's team. For many people, this would be enough, but not for Secko. He went on to become the Club Vice President, and later President.

In addition, his affiliation with LIJSL led him to serve on the Games Committee, Convention Committee, and Waldbaum's/LI Cup Coordinator. He also helped with presentations for the College Bound Player Committee and was on the Exceptional HS Senior Soccer Game Committee. On a state level, he coordinated for the State Cup Tournament and was team administrator for the State Olympic Development Program.

Over the course of his life, many admired Secko's overwhelming accomplishments, including a number of Waldbaum's Cup wins, out-of-state titles, several sportsmanship awards, taking the Sound Beach Wildcat team from 9th Division in 1987 to 1st Division in 1992, and a personal highlight, winning the State Challenge Cup in 1994 with the Sound Beach Breakers. Aside from the medals and trophies, however, his most cherished accomplishment was being an assistant coach and administrator for the Terryville Fire in which his youngest son, Mark, was a member. In 2007, the Terryville Fire won the State, Region I, and National Championships. It was a proud journey to have shared with his son.

Beyond soccer, he was a kind, loving, and generous man. His love of family knew no bounds. Soccer was about spending time with family, and all three of his sons will forever remember their biggest fan, the man who supported their entire journey.

Sadly, in December 2012, Secko lost his battle to cancer, almost one year to the day that he discovered his diagnosis. The void left behind can never be filled by the ones who loved him most. For them, he was the one who made this world a little bit better and a little bit brighter. In his memory and in celebration of his life, we hope that his legacy continues. After making a significant difference to those around him, we hope this scholarship will make a difference, too.

Samantha Witz

Recipient



Samantha Witz is a graduate from Plainview Old Bethpage JFK High School and played her club soccer for her entire travel tenure with the Plainview Old Bethpage Soccer Club and was

coached by her father Scott Witz. While in high school, Samantha played two years of soccer of the JV program, but she her soccer talents and brought them to very successful POB JFK Flag Football program for the past 3 years, where she was captain of this successful this past spring.

While at Plainview Old Bethpage JFK High School, Samantha was an excellent student with a GPA of 95. Her academic awards are many, some of the awards she received were: AP Scholar Award 2025, National Art Honor Society, Business Honor Society, and VP of the DECA program and was the art director of the Creative Patterns Club. Her time spent at POB High School was spent wisely with the DECA program. In 11th grade she was the Competition Committee Member and in 12th grade she moved into the position of Vice President of Competition, where she led the Competition Committee and oversaw the regional competition at POB JFK High School. With be part of the DECA program, she took those skills at invested them within the POB Soccer Club and the Snack Bar at the Long Island Junior Peter C Collins Soccer Park for the past 3 years.

With soccer, Samantha played for her father, Scott Witz for the past 10 years and found time to help out the club in 2 of their outstanding programs. The first program is their Little Nuggets program, where she worked the past 3 years as a head trainer, working closely with the future POB soccer players. The other wonderful program that Samantha was part of was a coach for the TOPSoccer program. For the past 4 years, she would coach children with special needs, providing them the opportunity to play soccer in a safe, fun, supportive and inclusive environment. Finally, when she found the time, she was an Assistant Referee for the LISRA for the past 3 years as well.

In the fall of 2026, Samantha will be heading to the University of Maryland at College Park.

PAT GRECCO SCHOLARSHIP



Pat Grecco is the quintessential volunteer and LIJSL players, parents, and leadership have often been the beneficiaries. Grecco joined the Scholarship Committee in 1991 and was Committee Chair from 2000 through 2013, leaving this post only because of her relocation to North Carolina. Pat is a 30+ year volunteer within the soccer community and was inducted into the Eastern New York State Soccer Hall of Fame in 2008 and the LIJSL Hall of Fame in 1998.

Grecco has been the Director of College Bound Player Program for the LIJSL, as well as serving as Director of Girls LIJSL ODP, Exceptional Senior Games, and Scholarship Committee. Grecco and her husband Frank Sr. have three children; Ellen Grecco-Gilmore, who played club and varsity soccer and graduated from Fordham University, Beth Grecco-Gothers, who was a National Pool Player and received a full scholarship to The University of Connecticut and was a 3x All-American Selection, and Frank Jr., who played collegiately at The United States Naval Academy where he was a four-year varsity soccer player and later served six years in the United States Marine Corps. A genuine soccer family, Frank Sr. was a longtime soccer referee.

Grecco has personally helped countless players get to college, many with full scholarships, volunteering thousands of hours of her time and always available to help a disadvantaged family with a difficult problem. She is currently working to identify Hispanic players in her region who need help with the college-search process, sometimes offering pro-bono help to anyone who asks. However, in recent years, a spinoff of her volunteer work came about. In addition to soccer, lacrosse and football, she has worked with numerous student athletes, representing nearly every sport, as well as lesser-known sports such as fencing, rifle/pistol, crew, cheerleading, and even chess. It gives her great pleasure to help others be the best athletes and best students. She has worked with a diverse group of student athletes, including a home-schooled soccer player from Florida, to many international soccer players, placing a female soccer player from Bangkok, Thailand to Hofstra University on scholarship. Best of all and it is true, she does boast a 100% success rate. "There is a school for everyone to play at as well as to study, that's what makes America such a great country."

When asked the true value of her work, Grecco continually replies, "My most important offering is to find the very best academic opportunities for the student athletes I work with. Using their sport to open the heavy door of the admissions process and finding money to pay for it."

Jacqueline Vinas

Recipient



Jacqueline Vinas graduated from Smithtown High School West, where she played varsity soccer for the past two years as an outside defender. Also, while she was there she had time to participate in JV Volleyball (9th grade), Basketball (Varsity 10th through 12th grade), Track and Field (9th through 11th grade) and finished up by playing flag football this past spring. For her club soccer experience, Jacqueline was a member of the Village of the Branch Lightning (past two years), coached by Suzanne Akerberg. She also has stops with VOB with the teams Victory, Liberty and Rampage and spent time with the Smithtown Kickers Soccer Club.

On the soccer field, Jacqueline is a player that any team would love to have. On the club level, her coach Suzanne Akerberg, stated that she is the player that every coach wants on their roster, because Jaqueline is fearless, tireless, and entirely selfless. She goes on to state that she doesn't fill a gap, she masters it. Finally she states that her consistency is her greatest asset, "you know exactly what you are going to get from her every single game: 100% effort." In her essay, Jacueline wrote about the lack of playing time she was getting in 11th grade and the beginning of the season in 12th grade. In her words, "she was so determined to make it impossible for the coaches not to see me as someone who deserved to see the field." By the third game of the season, Jacqueline got her opportunity and them never saw the sidelines again. For her efforts she was rewarded by her great grades as the recipient of the Academic All County Award in soccer and as well as in basketball in the winter.

In the classroom, Jacqueline had a GPA weighed: 4.20 and GPA unweighted: 4.04. With all the hard work she put into her studies, she was awarded with numerous achievements. She was a AP Scholar with Honors and was in 5 National Honor Societies. Also, Jaqueline was part of the Girl Scouts of America and she was a member of DECA, Tri-M, Athletes helping Athletes, Student Council, and Chamber Choir. Robert Warner (Biology/Environmental Teacher at WEST), stated, "One thing I would like to point out is what a sweet and caring person with a great sense of humor Jackie is. She is an extremely tenacious individual. "

In the fall, Jacqueline will be heading off to further her studies at SUNY Cortland, where she will focusing on physical education and coaching.

PETER C. COLLINS MEMORIAL PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Peter Collins became LIJSL President in 1977 and stepped down from that position on January 1, 2004. Under his inclusive leadership, significant achievements occurred.

The LIJSL quadrupled in size and now sports more than 1,500 teams. In 1978, the LIJSL became the first formal soccer league to begin a Special Children's Program. In that same year, an annual springtime cup competition was created for all LIJSL teams. Originally named the Long Island Cup, it morphed into the Chase Cup in 1982 and became the Waldbaum's Challenge in 1996 and is currently known as the LI Cup. Collins began the esteemed LIJSL Sportsmanship Program in 1980, now copied around the world, and he was influential in starting the high school all-star competition, known as the Exceptional Senior Games, which also has been copied across the United States by other soccer leagues. The LIJSL Convention was created in 1983, and it quickly became America's largest soccer convention. The creation of the Long Island Soccer Park in Plainview, which now bears his name, soon followed in 1985 and has been used by the LIJSL's TOPSoccer Program and other teams on a rotational basis.

As a coach, Collins led the Hicksville Minutemen to the McGuire Cup Finals in both 1979 and 1980.

Collins has been inducted into the LIJSL, Eastern New York, and National Soccer Hall of Fame, and is a lifetime member of the United States Soccer Federation. The LIJSL Board of Directors changed the name to the Peter C. Collins Soccer Park on May 22, 2004 in honor of the legendary figure who had given his life for youth soccer.

He did a very rare thing indeed. He made us dream of all the possibilities when people work together for the good of the game.

Collins passed away December 2018 at the age of 87.

Oliver Ko

Recipient



Oliver Ko graduated Cum Laude from Northport High School, and was an integral member of the team that won their first Suffolk

County Class A Championship in 43 years, where he was captain. A two- year starter on attack (three-year member), he earned All-League status in 2024 and All-Conference in 2025. Also, Oliver played his club soccer with the Northport Cow Harbor United Soccer Club and been in their travel program for the past 10 years.

On the soccer field, Oliver has been an exceptional athlete, where his talent has been noted by many coaches. Mark Lugris his club coach for the Northport Cow Harbor United squad talks about Oliver's maturity on and off the soccer field. He said, "His work ethic and focus set a standard for his peers, and his ability to lead by example has made him a natural and respected leader." Oliver stressed in his essay, about how proud he was of himself about how he was able to develop his game through hard work. Oliver also felt that playing in the LIJSL benefited him for being a better player and will take the values that the league had to offer to him as he moves onto college.

In the classroom, Oliver strives to be the best he could be. With a SAT score of 1390 (680 reading/710 math) and a weighted GPA of 98.96, he took a highly academic courseload all 4 years. He earned an International Baccalaureate Diploma and he was part of 5 different Honor Societies. Being part of the National, Math, English, Business, Foreign Language Honor Societies, Oliver still had time to be part of the Northport High School Student Union, being Co-President. Finally, he was part of the Italian Club, the Academy of Finance Program, DECA and was a peer tutor in math for other students at the high school.

In the fall, Oliver will be attending the University of Georgia Terry School of Business, majoring in finance.

ROCCO AMOROSO MEMORIAL SPORTSMANSHIP SCHOLARSHIP



Rocco Amoroso was born in 1926 in Brooklyn, N.Y., but spent most of his childhood in his cherished hometown of Rapino, Italy. It was in that small rustic town that he first developed his love for soccer. At the age of 13, he returned to America, living in Richmond Hill, Queens. After serving in the US Army, he graduated from City College in 1950 where he was a member of their soccer team. He settled in Huntington in 1963 where he and his wife, Rosemarie, raised four children.

Amoroso is a member of the Hall of Fame for LIJSL and Eastern New York, as well as a US Soccer Life Member since 2014. He became involved in the LIJSL in the late 1970s, recognizing an opportunity to spread his passion for sportsmanship and fair play. He founded the LIJSL Sportsmanship Program, "Building Character Through Soccer" in 1980, the first official sportsmanship program in youth sports. The concept of fair play continues to reach all corners of the state and around the world. Each season, a sportsmanship award is granted to teams in every division to recognize fair play among players, coaches, and spectators.

In addition, every June, the Eastern New York State Open Cup Championship is held in LaGrange, NY. The Rocco Amoroso Sportsmanship Award is presented to the most deserving teams. When reflecting on the program in 1987, he said, "I began to think there's got to be something more valuable to gain from sports than just winning and losing. I wanted to bring about a change in people's attitudes through sports."

This award is presented to a soccer player who has demonstrated exemplary qualities of sportsmanship, teamwork, and character, attributes that Amoroso promoted throughout his life. As he once said, "In this beautiful game of soccer, let us all reinforce ethics into the game and make it even more beautiful."

He was a man of admirable character and spirited personality. He was devoted to his family and his strong faith in God. Always looking to engage with others, he never missed an opportunity to spread his message and share a smile wherever he went. In his own words, he reminded us that "Character building is a compass that guides us on our path. It is the strongest thread in the fabric of a good life." Amoroso would truly be proud to see the ideals of sportsmanship and of character continue in LIJSL today. He is not here today, but his spirit lives on. He was a blessing to all who knew him.

Jason Haley Jr.

Recipient



Jason Haley, Jr. graduated from West Islip High School. He was a member of the West Islip High School varsity program for 3 years

and was a member of the West Islip Soccer club since he has been 5 years old. Plus, he was a member of the bowling program and spring track for West Islip High School. While with the West Islip Soccer Club, Joseph has a true help with running the Adam Novellano West Islip Annual Indoor Soccer Tournament, first playing in the event as a player, then volunteering his time since 2019, helping out make the tournament the success it is.

Jason and the West Islip Soccer Club have had a wonderful partnership for the past 13 years. Starting out in their intramural program at 5 years old until finishing up this past spring with the Resistance (Boys U19), the club will miss him dearly on and off the field. It is hard today to find a player that stays with their local town club team, but it more important to give back to your club as a volunteer. That is a trait that most clubs are searching for. By helping out each winter on the weekends with the Adam Novellano Indoor Soccer Tournament, kids and team against Long Island get to spend time honing their skills on the gym floor. With the high school team, Jason was a two-year starter, where in 11th grade, made it to the Class AA Suffolk County Finals. Plus, he was recognized for his combination of skills on the field and in the classroom, while being recognized as a scholar-athlete.

In the classroom, Jason achieved great success, even though academics did not come easy to him, according to his school counselor, Allie Ragin. Through his hard work, Jason consistently made the Principal Honor Roll with his GPA over 90, plus he was a member of the National Honor Society. Allie Ragain, his school counselor, stated that his success in the classroom was based on this fact, "Jason is not one to take shortcuts, seeking out the needed support and asking questions to build deeper understanding.... Jason is a young man who approaches challenges with a strong sense of purpose."

In the fall of 2026, Jason will be going to the University of Albany.

SANDRA ATLAS BASS SCHOLARSHIP



This scholarship award was established through the generosity of the Sandra Atlas Bass and Edythe & Sol G. Atlas Fund, Inc.

Bass, a real estate executive and philanthropist, involved with many charities in the Long Island region, especially health care, youth development, and animal welfare, founded the fund.

Madeline McCullough

Recipient



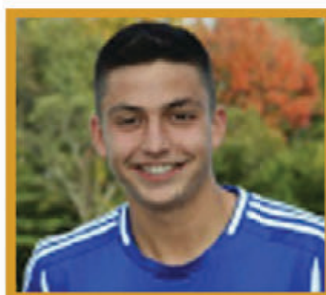
Madeline McCullough graduated from Smithtown High School East, where she was a two sport athlete in both soccer and track and field (winter and spring). She was a member for club soccer for the Village of the Branch Soccer Club, where she played for coach Suzanne Akerberg and the Lightning. It should be noted that Madeline played her entire youth soccer with this club as well.

In the classroom, Madeline academics awards and honors are numerous. It started with here GPA (Weighted 4.68/Unweighted 4.39), it continues with a score of 1490 on the SAT and score of 35 on the ACT. With AP exams, she earned a score of 5 on the following subjects: Chemistry, English Language and Composition, US History, Biology, and World History. She was a part of 7 different Honor Societies at the high school and played Clarinet in the band. She earned a score of 97 (level 6) in 2025 to earn All-State Honors. Plus, she was the secretary of the Class of 2026 Student Council for Smithtown High School East. Some of the other important things that she was part of during her time at Smithtown High School East were being part of Athletes Helping Athletes, being on the school district Anti-Bias Task Force and being part of the Robotics Club. To put it best, Jaclyn Grebosz kept it quite simple. She stated, "Madeline is all around an amazing individual, not just an above average student. Without hesitation, she considers those around her and puts the needs of the others far above her own. She is a natural caretaker and is confident in her decisions and trusts her gut."

With soccer, Madeline is as gifted as she is in the classroom. She is a team player first, making everyone around her better. From her high school team, being recognized as Suffolk County All-Academic Soccer and receiving the White Letter Award, to playing on her club team the VOB Lightning each Sunday and being acknowledged by her coach as a "player's player", playing keeper is one of the most difficult positions to play for 90 minutes. Her coach Suzanne Akerberg stated how privileged she was to coach Madeline and she puts it in simple terms: she was the backbone for the team.

In the fall, Madeline will be attending Clemson University (Honors College), with the goal on going to medical school in the future.

SEAN URDA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



On January 26, 2015, in his senior year at John Glenn High School, Sean Urda tragically lost his life in a sledding accident. He was one of those special people that lived every day as if it were his last. He knew that a smile made a difference and that laughter could warm your heart. He touched everyone he came in contact with in a special way. "Work hard, play hard" is a phrase that applied to the way he lived his life. He was always aiming higher and working to become better whether in school, on the field, or in life. Above all else, Urda loved his family, friends, and soccer, and he was loved in return.

As a one year old, Urda got his first soccer ball and it never left his side. By three years old, he was a soccer dynamo and the Elwood Soccer Club allowed him to begin playing early. By eight, he was playing on both his team and his older brother's team, when they needed subs. Later, he went to play for Northport Soccer Club and his tournament team, Score FC. He was recognized as a leader on his teams and named captain. In high school, Urda was a three-year varsity player and awarded All-League in his senior year. The #14, his jersey number, has become very important to his family and friends. His high school will retire his number once his younger brother graduates. The #14 has become a symbol of Urda to many that cared about him.

He was an all-around athlete and enjoyed lacrosse, skiing, snowboarding, and his favorite gym sport - pickle ball - but his passion was always soccer. In addition to high school athletics, he was a member of Natural Helpers, National Honor Society, the marching and jazz band, and a counselor at the Huntington Playground Camp. His dream was to play soccer at a collegiate level and he hoped that his academic achievements and goals would align with a school that he would attend and competitively play for. He was accepted to all 14 schools he had applied to but unfortunately, he never got the chance to choose.

What we would like you to know of him is that people always came first - family, friends, teammates, classmates, everyone. He went out of his way to listen, to make someone smile, and to help anyone when they were down. He was 100 percent genuine and a true friend to all.

Christopher Janal

Recipient



Christopher Janal is a graduate of Bethpage High School. A member of the Bethpage PAL Soccer Club, Christopher started his travel soccer in LIJSL in the fall of 2017 and finished

up this spring with the Bethpage Falcons on the U19 level. Even though he excelled with his club team in Bethpage, Christopher participated in volleyball and winter/spring track for the high school.

At school, Christopher was an excellent student in the classroom, with a weighed GPA of 105.52, plus a SAT score of 1480: 740 English/740 Math, and an ACT score of 34: 32 English, 34 Reading, 34 Science and 34 Math. His list of accomplishments achieved at Bethpage High School is stunning: AP Scholar with Distinction, a member of the National Honor Society, and being in the following Honor Societies: Science, Math, Social Studies, Italian and English. In addition to his studies, he found time to be part of the Orchestra, being part of the viola section and volunteered his time with Athletes helping Athletes. His school counselor, James Benjamin puts it best in his own words about Christopher. He writes to the committee, "Chris Janal is among the best our school has to offer. I am proud to have been given the opportunity to know this 'man built for others.' As I watch my own son grow into adolescence, I hope he possess many of the exceptional qualities that define Chris."

On the soccer field, Christopher thanks LIJSL for being able to continue his soccer journey throughout high school. Facing a difficult decision entering 9th grade, Christopher needed to choose a sport: soccer or volleyball, he chose volleyball, but he still had his club team to fall back on. His coaching staff stated that even though he is a talented soccer player, but his positive attitude he brings to practices and games is 2nd to none. His club coach goes on to say, "He plays with heart, humility, and a genuine love for the sport. When the team faces challenges, Chris Janal is the one who steps up, offering encouragement, focus, and a steady presence."

In the fall, Christopher will be attending American University majoring in Political Science.

TANIA BONILLA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Tania Bonilla used to call the soccer fields her second home. Win or lose, she always had a smile on her face because she knew she had given her all and she was doing what she loved most. Some days, she would go from varsity soccer to club soccer to pick-up soccer and then coach youth soccer. There was no denying how much she loved soccer.

It wasn't always like that. When she was five years old, she wasn't thrilled about playing. Her dad had to bribe her - a dollar per goal which she would later use for ice cream. Kids are so literal at that age. She held him to it - there were times when she would even score own goals because "a goal was a goal" and after the games, her dad had to pay up. She made sure she got a dollar for each one.

As she grew older, it was no longer about ice cream or money. Bonilla had developed a passion for the sport like no other. She started playing at the Brentwood Youth Soccer Club and was the only girl on an all-boys team. Her talent and skills with the ball spoke for itself and led the team to be called "Tania's Team." From that point forward, everyone knew she was going to dominate the field.

Bonilla showcased her talent while playing for the Brentwood Firecats. She made lifelong friends and they were inseparable. Her family often supported her at games and her mom's cheering could be heard from fields away. She did what she could to score and to stop the opposing team from shooting the ball. When the team graduated, she continued to join teams and did what she could to keep playing.

When Bonilla played varsity for Brentwood High School, the momentum continued, and she became captain of the team. Even with a few injuries, she did not give up. She worked hard and showed how dedicated she was to the sport. She was a leader - she wouldn't tear anyone down and did what she could to motivate her team to work hard and, most of all, have fun.

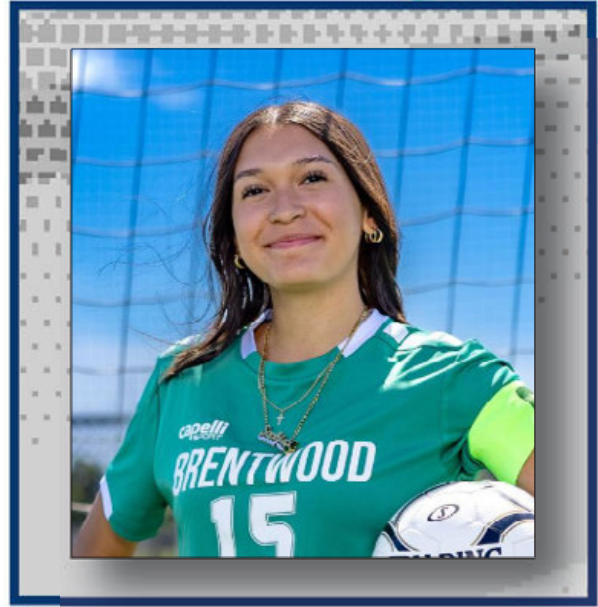
As a college student, Bonilla's season at SUNY Old Westbury was also unforgettable. She developed a close relationship with her teammates and they spent anytime they could together. They'd often grab lunch and play ball on campus. Their bond easily translated onto the field and ultimately led the team to the first round of playoffs; something that hadn't been done in years.

When she wasn't on the field, she'd still find a way to kick a soccer ball around wherever she could. She and her family would play well after the sun had already set or until someone ended up hurt or crying. She also wasn't afraid of competition - there were times where she'd play pick-up coed soccer with men twice her age, height, and weight. She was resilient, a team player, and a hard worker.

Bonilla left her mark on the field and in our hearts. She will always be remembered by her contagious giggle, how talented she was on the field, and how loving and caring she was towards everyone.

Sofia Chavez

Recipient



Sofia Chavez graduated from Brentwood High School. She was a member of the Brentwood Soccer Club for the Brentwood Elite coached by

Jorge Martinez. Plus, she was a member of the Brentwood High School high school program.

Sofia with the Brentwood Soccer Club was an important member of the club on and off the field.

She is a determined to make a difference, thus it was her passion to work with the future young girls of the club. She took her time to volunteer the past 4 years to work with them to become better players on and off the field by being a great role model for them to look up to. As Gene Vargas stated, "Sofia's personal qualities of leadership and here compassion for children further distinguish her as a deserving candidate for this scholarship." On the field, playing on her club team, the Elite, she has been their team captain for the past six years. Her motivation, hard work and being willing to be a great teammate, got her this acknowledgment from the coaching staff.

The greatest show of respect for Sofia came from Jorge Martinez. These are his exact words about her, "I've been at the Brentwood Soccer Club for over 25 years, and I can say without a doubt Sofia has been one of the top players I have coached and trained. It's been a pleasure watching her grow up from a little girl to a young mature confident young lady."

In the fall, Sofia will attend Suffolk Community College.

COLLEGE ATTENDING

NAME	CLUB	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE ATTENDING
Jasmine Canales Luna	East Islip	Central Islip High School	SUNY Old Westbury
Brody Deutsch	East Islip	Islip High School	Central Florida
Paul “PJ” Scheiffele	Terryville	Mount Sinai High School	SUNY Maritime
Karina Alvarez	Commack	Lady of Mercy Academy/ St.John the Baptist	Hunter College
Raven Birch	Levittown	Thomas A Edison CTE High School	Roberts Wesleyan University
Sofia Chavez	Brentwood	Brentwood High School	Suffolk Community College
Jack Darlington	Rockville Centre	South Side High School	University of Virginia
Joseph DePalma	Oceanside	Oceanside High School	Clemson University
Brianna Farrell	Manorville	Hampton Bays High School	SUNY Cobleskill
Abigail Gunner	RVC	South Side HS	University of Virginia
Jason Haley Jr.	West Islip	West Islip Senior High School	University of Albany

COLLEGE ATTENDING

NAME	CLUB	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE ATTENDING
Christopher Janal	Bethpage	Bethpage High School	American University
Michael Karcher	Garden City	Garden City High School	Union College
Oliver Ko	Northport Cow Harbor	Northport High School	University of Georgia
Madeline McCullough	VOB	Smithtown High School East	Clemson University
Kylie McElwee	East Islip	Wellington C. Mepham High School	SUNY Buffalo
Carolena Passeggiata	Smithtown	Smithtown HS West	Binghamton University
Ella Schwartz	POB	Plainview Old Bethpage JFK HS	University of Connecticut
Cailyn Talt	East Islip	East Islip High School	Seton Hall University
Jacqueline Vinas	VOB	Smithtown High School West	SUNY Cortland
Samantha Witz	Plainview Old Bethpage	POB John F Kennedy High School	University of Maryland at College Park
John Yuli	East Islip	Bay Shore High School	Binghamton University



Be Kind,

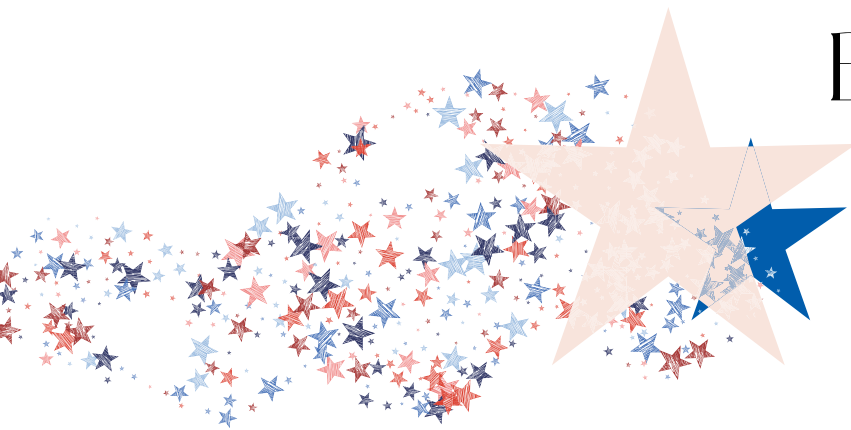
Be Generous,

Be Comprehensive

But Most of all,

Be thankful

- Erling Haaland

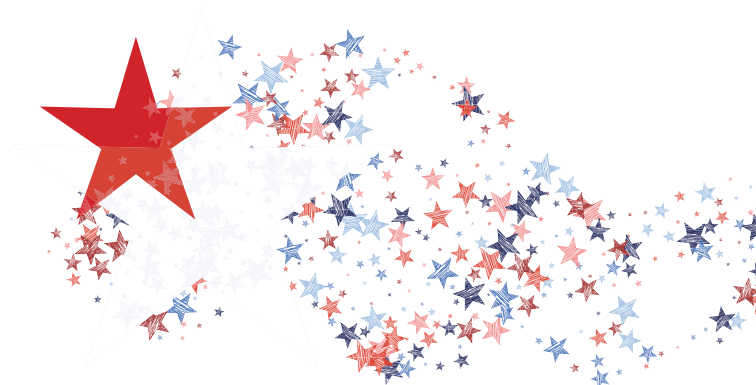


THE REASON I SUCCEED

IS BECAUSE

I'VE NEVER BEEN
AFRAID TO

FAIL



- DAVID BECKHAM



Failure Happens All the Time
It Happens Every Day In Practice.

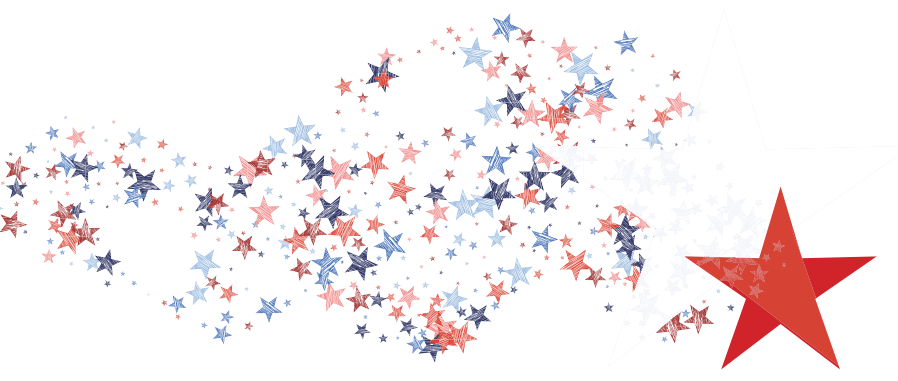
What Makes You Better

Is How You

React

To It

- Mia Hamm



You Can Overcome
Anything

If and Only If

You Love Something
Enough

- Lionel Messi





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**"The Future Belongs To Those
Who Believe In The
Beauty Of Their Dreams."**

-Eleanor Roosevelt



BUILDING CHARACTER
THROUGH SOCCER

