



WEDNESDAY NIGHT LAUNDRY RUNNERS

WNLR Distance Runner Scholarship Award Recipients Class of 2021

Thanks to the donations from our club members, from Bassetti Farms, from D'Arrigo Brothers, and from Race the Commons (supported by Greener Bay Landscaping and by Driscoll's), WNLR provided \$5,000 in scholarship awards this spring to outstanding track and cross country student-athletes in Monterey County's High School Graduating Class of 2021. This brings the total scholarship money awarded to Monterey High School Seniors since the inception of this program to a whopping \$155,575, much of which has come from the Big Sur Marathon Foundation. To receive this award, eligible student-athletes must have some of the most competitive track and cross country times in Monterey County, must have a GPA of at least 3.0, must demonstrate good character and leadership qualities as described in a letter of recommendation by a coach and in an interview, must be actively involved in community service, and may demonstrate financial need. Eligible students are assessed on their personal-best times for the 3-mile cross country distance, and for the 3200m, 1600m, and 800m track distances. Demonstrated improvement and dedication to the sport is crucial. As such, eligible student-athletes must also intend to continue their running careers at the collegiate level.

This year, six award winners were chosen from a county-wide pool of eligible student-athletes. Many of these student-athletes you may soon find running local races.

High School
Alisal
Gonzalez
King City
North Monterey County
Pacific Grove
Stevenson

Recipient
Jose Velasquez
Ashley Ochoa
Mario Avila
Andrea Villegas
Sam Coutts
Anna Watson

Alisal High School – Jose Velasquez

As a passionate runner, good student, and committed community volunteer, Jose Velasquez has made the most of his COVID-restricted junior and senior years in high school. As a promising junior, Jose's 3-mile time was a zippy 15:58 and his 1600m time was a brisk 4:32, both of which he achieved before COVID-lockdowns went into effect. But that didn't stop him; Jose kept-up with his running through lockdown. But just in case you think that competitive running isn't enough, you should know that Jose likes to squeeze in some extra running as a recreational soccer player. Jose's favorite part of track is its competitive spirit, and his favorite part of cross country is the team camaraderie and the ability to just enjoy a run with friends. Jose will attend Hartnell in the fall to run with the track and cross country programs. His long-term goal is to pursue a career in criminal justice.



Gonzalez High School – Ashley Ochoa



With a passion for competing on the track, for academic excellence, and for community service, Ashley Ochoa proudly represents Gonzalez High School as the district's first-ever WNLR Scholarship recipient. Although Ashley is a multi-sport athlete, track and cross country are her favorite ways to be athletically competitive. As a mere sophomore, Ashley achieved impressive times for both the 1600m and the 3200m track events (5:36 and 12:34, respectively) before COVID-related precautions cancelled her junior and senior track seasons. Not to be outdone by a global pandemic, Ashley's high school resume also includes membership in the California Honor Society, an impressive GPA, and community service activities that span interests from recycling to educational outreach. Ashley will attend Hartnell in the fall, where she will study psychology with the aim to transfer to a four-year university.

King City High School – Mario Avila

Mario Avila is a passionate team leader who – through COVID – continued to encourage his teammates to stay healthy and keep up their running. Part of his core personality is to be an empathetic ear for struggling teammates and guide them towards athletic success. But he’s more than a good heart. As only a junior, Mario ran an impressive 2:04 in the 800m track event and was set to have a competitive senior Year as both a cross country and a track athlete before COVID-related restrictions cancelled the end of his junior-year track season and both of his cross country and track seasons for his senior year. His passion for running (and for other sports such as soccer), coupled with his natural talent for encouraging and inspiring his teammates, has led Mario to pursue his post-secondary education at Hartnell this fall where he hopes to start his path towards a career as a PE teacher.



North Monterey County High School – Andrea Villegas



Andrea’s drive for mastery of both her academic and athletic pursuits is evident in the way she conducts herself. A true team-player, she provides continual support to her teammates and is always looking for a way to improve her performance on the track and on the trails. Starting her running career as a track athlete, Andrea excels in the 800 (PR of 2:35). But as she grew into the sport, she also grew to love cross country and the unique experience that each trail can provide (3-mile PR of 19:57). Andrea has a passion for using her many talents to help the public. As such, she will attend Hartnell in the fall to pursue a career in nursing. She looks forward to being able to give back to her community and to making her parents proud.

Pacific Grove High School – Sam Coutts

Of Sam Coutts, Pacific Grove High School track and cross country coach Steve Watkins says the following: “out of hundreds of athletes over the past 15 years, [Sam] is the only one to exhibit the highest level of commitment to the sport.” If that superlative statement isn’t enough, it should also be known that when COVID hit the Central Coast, Sam took the opportunity to lean further into his running and hit solo time-trial personal bests of 15:15 for the 5k distance, 9:23 for the 3200m distance, and 4:21.5 for the 1600m distance by waking up early before class and following-through with his training plan despite not having any formal races to participate in. With his exceptional accomplishments as an athlete – combined with a cornucopia of exceptional achievements in other extra-curriculars and academics – Sam will attend and run cross country for MIT in the fall, where he will pursue a degree in chemical engineering with a minor in business and will run for MIT’s cross country and track teams.



Stevenson School – Anna Watson



Anna Watson is this year’s all-around fastest female nominee. With a compassionate and humble personality and a very impressive set of PRs (2:23 time for the 800m, 5:14 for the 1600m, 12:13 for the 3200m, and 19:42 for the 3-mile), Anna has inspired other classmates at her school to join cross country and track, substantially boosting the team size at her school. As a multi-talented young woman, Anna’s dedication to excellence is not limited to track and cross country. Indeed, her desire to be a well-rounded individual shines through her many academic accomplishments and in her varied list of extracurriculars and volunteer activities. Anna will attend and run track and cross country at the University of Chicago in the fall.



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The purpose of the WNLRL Scholarship Program is to recognize local excellence in athletic and academic achievement and to help our Monterey County student-athletes achieve broader success. We hope to continue using the WNLRL Scholarship Program to ease the financial burden of college for exceptional Monterey County student-athletes who may otherwise find college prohibitively expensive. Your donations are welcome and encouraged.

For more information about the Wednesday Night Laundry Runner Scholarship Program, please visit www.wnlr.org/scholarships

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