

2007 Sportsmanship Awards



CASEY O'CONNOR, Dora (Class A Student) – A three-sport letterwinner for the Coyotes in basketball, golf and baseball, Casey is equally involved in community and non-sports related activities that have made him a well-rounded individual. He has done exceptionally well in the classroom and has maintained a busy schedule away from athletics. Among his accomplishments is serving as president of the local Future Farmers of America, competing in various state and county fairs for livestock, participating in local rodeos, and earning election as president of the National Honor Society. All the while he has held fast to the ideals of teamwork, respect for authority figures and the ability to communicate well with others. Time and again he has been recognized as a leader both on and off the playing field. Said one rival coach: "Casey is one of the few young men that still addresses a question with 'yes sir' and 'no sir'."



DAVID BYRD, Dulce (Class AA Student) – David's resume would seem to read like any other standout student-athlete. What separates him from most, however, is what he does when he's not in uniform for the Hawks. In sports he excelled in basketball and football, being awarded as an all-district and North-South performer for the latter. Teammates often turned to him for guidance when the situation arose. As a student, he tackles his academic responsibilities with the same vigor he challenges opponents. He also assumes the role of leader with ease. He is Dulce's senior class president and has served as a class official since he was a freshman. His teachers hold him in the highest regard for taking ownership of his deficiencies – and there are few of them, mind you – while opponents admire him for his respect for the game and decision to put fair play and sportsmanship above all else.

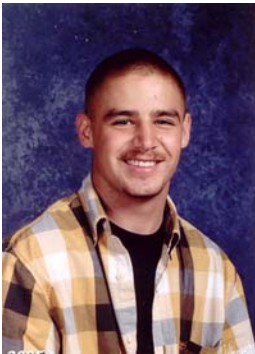


ALICIA D. GARCIA, Mora (Class AA Student) – There are innumerable terms used to describe this multi-sport star for the Rangerettes. Among them: character, citizenship, insightful and assertive, just to name a few. In addition to a 3.75 grade point average and impressive 19 on the ACT, Alicia is unwavering in her commitment to help those around her achieve their goals. In fact, the thing that describes her best on the athletic front is the thing everyone loves most about her, and that's her unselfishness. She'll do what she can to improve, but go that extra mile to make sure everyone else does, too. Over the years she has competed in several sports, such as volleyball, track and basketball for Mora, as well as rodeo, fishing, skiing, club soccer and club softball. Set to graduate in May, she has already earned college credit in several areas and hopes to use her enormous talent to serve herself and her family well.



ESTRELLA LOPEZ, Penasco (Class AA Student) – It's a good thing Estrella is gifted in the subject of math. Given all the accomplishments she has to her credit both on and off the playing field, she'll need that knowledge to count all the positive avenues she has generated for herself. Ranking third in her class with a 3.8 grade point average, she has been a member of the National Honor Society for two years and has challenged herself by volunteering for the toughest academic courses her school has to offer.

Additionally she has willingly donated time and energy to various community related projects such as food and clothing drives for the needy. In regard to athletics, she helped the Panthers basketball team to a No. 1 ranking both her junior and senior seasons while garnering the praise of school officials for persistence in the classroom and her drive to continually improve.



ADAM MARTINEZ, Escalante (Class AA Student) – More than most, Adam understands the value of sports, academics and friendship. After a standout junior year in which he was among the state's top running backs for the Lobos' football team, he nearly lost his life in an ATV accident that left him with a punctured lung and head trauma. Declared medically unfit to don the helmet and shoulder pads for this, his senior season, he instead became the football team's unofficial assistant coach/head motivator. On the sidelines every weekend to cheer on his team, he took several players under his wing as he realized life's biggest rewards are

those most of us take for granted, things like sharing your time and enjoying the moment. While dealing with his adversity, Adam instantly became a role model to those around him. His drive later landed him a starting role on the school's basketball team. This spring he will run track.



MARTIN VISARRAGA, Penasco (Class AA Student) – No one bleeds the Panthers' blue and gold quite like Martin does. An exemplary athlete since his days in elementary, he has become a multi-sport letter winner at the high school level. All the while, he holds one thing above all else when it comes to competition: have fun. By that he means having respect for one's opponent, playing the game fairly and striving for success with class and dignity. He carries that mindset in the classroom and in his community, as well. Realizing he has influence over those younger than him, he takes pride in doing things the right way. This strategy has bode well in

extracurricular activities such as volunteer groups and the school's chess team. Having excelled in that regard, he has become the ideal sportsman for a school that cherishes both athletics and academics.



RYAN GONZALEZ, Pojoaque Valley (Class AAA Student) – Mention Ryan’s name in the northern Rio Grande corridor and the first thing that comes to mind is the senior’s uncanny ability to put a round ball through a round hoop. Basketball skills aside, Ryan Gonzalez is more than just a gifted jock. He carries a 3.7 grade point average, takes pride in knowing he can maintain a high level of off-court success while devoting much of his time to athletics, and is humble about his abilities. Time and again his sportsmanship has been tested as opposing teams have done everything possible to prevent him from scoring. Time and again he has quietly accepted the officials’ role in the game and continued playing. In his time with the Elks, Ryan has played soccer, baseball, track and, of course, basketball. In the end, the only thing that matters to him isn’t the individual praise. Instead, it’s playing the game the right way.



JESSICA MONTOYA, Pojoaque Valley (Class AAA Student) – As a two-year captain for the Elkettes’ basketball team, Jessica has had her biggest impact on the school’s athletic department with her innate ability to lead. “(She) leads our program both vocally and by example, whether on and/or off the court she doesn’t hold back at striving for excellence,” said her basketball coach, Lanse Carter. As a senior she helped the school win the state volleyball championship and she has fared well for the school’s track team in every spring since joining the varsity. In the classroom she carries a scintillating 4.02 grade point average while holding positions in organizations like the student senate, National Honor Society and numerous community and church groups. If that’s not enough, she volunteers with the Pojoaque Elementary after-school program. It is there, some say, that she has her greatest impact: influencing the younger kids about the importance of education and staying active.



RAYLA DOTY, Aztec (Class AAAA Student) – If a quick smile and unyielding enthusiasm are contagious, Rayla could be considered patient zero. Coaches and teachers have marveled at the senior’s ability to brighten those around her by doing little more than being herself. Her positive attitude has won over the staff at Aztec as she has become a leader both academically and socially. She has taken on such tasks as student government and volunteer organizations. In terms of athletics, she is both feared and respected for her play with the Tigers’ volleyball and basketball teams. Understanding that no one athlete can win a game without the help of others, she takes sportsmanship and teamwork to heart. Coaches admire her work ethic and school administrators love her drive and determination.



KEVIN WILCOX, Farmington (Class AAAA Student) – One of the biggest challenges with a student-athlete like Kevin is fitting all of his accolades onto one page. The one thing that there's no room for, however, is the space required to describe his character. Sure, he's a 3.9 student in the classroom, ranking him 12th in a class of 348, as well as a Who's Who and National Honor Society recipient. Yes, he's been on the Scorpions' basketball and baseball teams, as well as its junior varsity golf program. All of those things paint a pretty picture of a young man respected and admired by those responsible for setting goals for student-athletes. What's

lacking – until now that is – is his caring nature that relies heavily on trustworthiness and a willingness to accept responsibility. As one teacher said: "One of the most mature characteristics I observed in Kevin was that he never made excuses.



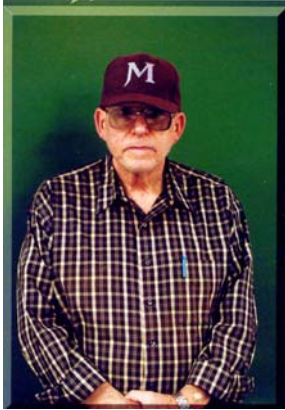
TORI NORTHCUTT, Clovis (Class AAAAA Student) – Arrogance has never been a term cast in Tori's direction. In fact, her competitive nature on the athletic front has never gotten in the way of her ability to hold opponents and game officials in the highest regard. "I have observed her knocking down a rival opponent and always being the first to extend a hand to help them up," said Miles Watters, the Wildcats' basketball coach who has had Tori in his system since she was a freshman. Before and after games she has been known to lead prayer groups for teammates and opponents. In the classroom she carries a 4.1 grade point average, ranking her near the top of the monstrous Clovis senior

class. Her motivation is drawn, in no small part, from a strong family background, as well as her faith. When the dust settles, it's often her ability to remain grounded to her core values that inspires those around her.



CRUZ SEDILLO, Cibola (Class AAAAA Student) – It should come as no surprise that this young man's chosen career path is engineering. As a student at the state's second-most populace school he has built quite a name for himself with a 3.95 grade point average and his ability to stand out as an athlete and citizen. Considering his competition on Albuquerque's West Side, not too bad. He is a four-year letter winner in baseball and basketball, serving as team captain on the hardwood for this, his senior season. In his spare time he has volunteered as a softball umpire and has earned praise from his coaches for his work ethic and respectful manner. Cougars athletic director Phil Schroer said he holds Cruz in the highest regard simply because

of the character he displays everyday. That attitude is prevalent with the many teachers and peers who have come into contact with him.



SID BLACK, Melrose (Adult) – Embodying the workmanlike approach that defines the essence of the state’s eastern plains, Sid is the quintessential leader for a school like Melrose. Placing the needs of the children first, he is gracious to visitors and engaging to all. Having worked in the public school system for 42 years, he has seen and done it all during his time. Several of his former students later went into coaching. That kind of career impact, they say, stems from the very man who best defines Melrose athletics. When people think of the Buffaloes, they often think of Sid. Through the years he has never lost the charm that so many feel is his best personality trait. The one constant about Sid is his down-to-earth approach about school, sports and athletics. Whether he’s rooting for his players or fulfilling his role as a school administrator, his own interests have always come last.



ROBBIE GARCIA, Espanola (Adult) – He’s the first person you’ll meet when you cross through the doors of Espanola Valley High School’s gymnasium. He’s also likely the last one you’ll see before heading home. If all goes well, the only thing you’ll remember about him is his efficiency and attention to detail. As an art teacher, Robbie spends his down time at the school serving as the gym and event manager. He also tends to the event staff, including the management of ticket sales and refreshments for the players. After it’s done he returns the facility to its proper condition with the cleanup crew. If he does his job, the only one who notices is his boss. If he fails, the school will make a bad impression on all those who visit. Thankfully, the word failure is not in Robbie’s vocabulary. Words like hospitality and engaging are.



JOJO PADILLA, Santa Fe (Adult) – It is impossible to live in Santa Fe and not feel drawn to Joseph, known to one and all as “JoJo”. He is quick with a smile, loves to meet new people and is always “doing it for the kids”. A special-needs student during his high school days, he has volunteered almost every waking moment of his free time to various sports teams in town. After leaving work at a local fast-food restaurant, he covers the approximate one-mile commute to Santa Fe High on foot. Once there, he often spends several hours serving as a team manager, gym attendant, volunteer coach and impromptu cheerleader for virtually every sport. If the Demons are playing, he’s usually there – for no pay. Given a small amount of cash for the holidays, he instead used it to buy meals for athletes who couldn’t afford big meals on the road. His response? “I did it for the kids.”

AZTEC TIGERS, volleyball (Team) – It’s easy to celebrate when things are good. The true test of character, however, comes when things don’t go your way. In regards to the Tigers, they showed true poise and sportsmanship this past season during a trip to the Capitán Tournament. Reaching the finals, the Tigers lost a five-set thriller to Elida in a match that could have gone either way. All the while the coaches and players remained positive even in the face of defeat. Tough calls didn’t stir raw emotions of anger. Instead, they drew the team closer and made the players’ determination that much stronger. During the post-match awards ceremony, the Tigers dutifully accepted their second-place hardware while keeping the spirit of competition an enjoyable one for all. And as for those dances the players performed during the tournament? Even those drew applause from rival coaches and administrators.

QUESTA WILDCATS, football (Team) – So much emphasis is placed on winning that the only thing that matters to some is scoring more points than the other team. In Questa the story is different for the Wildcats football team. This season the team was forced to forfeit its first four games, then suffered setbacks of 83-0 and 47-0 later in the year. All the while, the players maintained their spirit. “Our athletes never gave up and showed good sportsmanship by helping their opponent off the ground on many occasions,” said one administrator. The team eventually qualified for the state playoffs – but that’s not the success many will remember about this team. A staple in the community, they helped on numerous projects, including bringing fire wood to the elderly and helping to unveil 1,000 American flags during a tribute to veterans. In addition, they proudly served as role models in and out of school.