

Four eighth-grade student-athletes win inaugural awards

Mark Beasley

Following in the footsteps of the Ashley Dearing and Hollis Stacy awards, which are presented annually to the most versatile high school athletes from Savannah, the Exchange Club of Savannah established the DeWitt Award to be presented each spring to the top eighth-grade male and female athletes of the year in both public and parochial schools in Chatham County.

The awards, which were presented recently, were based on three criteria: academics, community service and athletic leadership.

The winners and the nominees excelled in the classroom and won multiple team championships - all while giving back to the community.

The first recipients of the DeWitt Award were Kaden Tuten and Margaret Wade from STEM Academy; Conner Graham of Hancock Day School; and Anna Pollak of Savannah Country Day.

About the four winners:

Tuten, who will be attending Benedictine this fall, contributed on the Ravens' cross country and basketball teams, but baseball is where he dominated. Not only did the standout pitcher earn the school's Cy Young Award, but he also led the team to winning two of three potential titles.

Wade, who will be attending Savannah Arts Academy this fall, led her Lady Ravens cross country team to two district titles as well as being a force on the girls soccer team, which won back-to-back titles.

The standout is also an accomplished ballerina and loves to run in the annual Rock 'n' Roll Savannah Marathon & 1/2 Marathon. This year, Margaret served as president of the Savannah Youth Council while maintaining high honor roll.

Graham, who will be attending Savannah Christian this fall, had a huge hand in leading his Eagles athletic teams to area titles. The Eagles won one in football in 2018, two in basketball in 2018 and 2019, and once in soccer this year, during which he scored 19 of the team's 48 goals on the season. In track, he currently holds two school records in both the 400 meters at 1 minute, 4.22 seconds, and the 1,600 at 5:34.71

While at Hancock, Graham was also a member of the National Junior Honor Society and had accumulated well over 70 hours of community service.

Pollak, who will continue at Savannah Country Day, has also been a humble and quiet leader for her Lady Hornets teams.

Her basketball teams won consecutive championships the last two years, and her volleyball team placed second. Track, however, is where she found her niche, as the standout during her career enjoyed winning titles in both the 200 and 400 races all three years.

Pollak earned high A's and served on Country Day's honor council.

The nominees and the schools they represented:

Male (public schools)

Jordan Bean, Jaden Boone, Akeem Lane and Kaleb Lofton from (West Chatham), Pierce Powell and Terry Simmons from (STEM Academy), Allen Nichols from (Georgetown) and Raheem Tanksley (Isle of Hope).

Male (parochial schools)

Ely Brown and Paulus Zित्रauer from (Savannah Christian), Noah Carney (SCD), Charlie Iannone (Blessed Sacrament), Jackson Graham (Hancock), Tyler Tift (Habersham School), Mason Warren (Memorial Day), and Austin Wiggins and Matthew Winders (St. James).

Female (public schools)

Reagan Aliotta (STEM Academy), Jaiden Braet and Naomi Pechman (Godley Station), Zion Hayes (Isle of Hope), Veronica Sierzant (Coastal) and Francine Smith (Georgetown).

Female (parochial schools)

Alana Beddow and Camryn Woods (St. James), Hannah Cail (Calvary), Abby Kate Daughtery and Stella Heimes (Blessed Sacrament), Emily Haeussler and Olivia Wells (Savannah Christian), Cecilia Manley (Habersham School), and Reese Young (Hancock).