



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### Tennessee's Wyatt Family Selected as 2022 National High School Spirit of Sport Award Recipient

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Chris Boone

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 14, 2022) — **The Wyatt Family**, a family of four from Medina, Tennessee, has been selected the 2022 national recipient of the “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” was created by the NFHS to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the spirit of sport that represent the core mission of education-based athletics.

In January 2021, Chris and Carla Wyatt’s 14-year-old son, Brett, was diagnosed with T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia after rushing him to the hospital one morning. Doctors told the family that Brett’s leukemia was aggressive and particularly hard to treat. After being told that he may not survive, the family began a year-long journey to help Brett attack the disease.

The Wyatt family is well-known in the South Gibson school community. At the time of diagnosis, Brett was playing basketball for South Gibson County Middle School and Carla was teaching and a head coach of the South Gibson High School girls basketball season. Her husband, Chris, was Carla’s assistant coach and a teacher and coach at South Gibson Middle School. And oldest son, Bond, was a member of the South Gibson High School boys basketball team.

With the prospect of a lengthy hospital stay for Brett, Carla and Chris stepped down from their coaching duties to be by his side. It was one of many sacrifices the family made to help Brett.

While Brett began treatment of chemotherapy and radiation, the community rallied to help the family. The South Gibson High School boys basketball coach Mark Wilkins and other assistant coaches stepped in to help with the girls team in the Wyatts' absence. Several local schools collected donations and officials returned their game checks to the school to help the family with expenses as they traveled back and forth from the hospital in Memphis. Carla was able to rejoin the team and complete the season but resigned at the conclusion of the year.

As Brett continued to receive treatment throughout the summer, doctors were not optimistic about a recovery. In fact, it was determined that he would need a bone marrow transplant to survive.

Brett's older brother, Bond, was found to be a perfect match for the bone marrow transplant, a fortunate and unexpected turn of events since siblings usually only have a 25-percent chance of being a match. After finishing his junior year, Bond sacrificed a summer of camps, practices, games and time with friends to save his younger brother's life.

Brett experienced two setbacks before his bone marrow transplant that pushed the procedure into the start of the school year. Finally, on August 13, the transplant was completed successfully and both brothers began their recoveries.

"I'm glad I could do it. I don't see it as much as being a hero," Bond told the Jackson Sun. "I just did the bare minimum —probably what anyone would do to help someone in their family. Especially, someone as close as their little brother."

As Bond recovered from the procedure and was able to rejoin his friends and teammates back at South Gibson, Brett continued his recovery in the hospital through the fall. Finally, after 320 days in the hospital, he was able to go home on December 10.

Brett continues to battle and has regular doctor's visits to monitor his recovery. But, it's clear that he and his family will do whatever it takes to make sure he has a full recovery.

## **About the Award**

In addition to the selection of the Wyatt Family as the national award recipient, the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee chose seven other individuals for section awards. Following are the 2022 National High School Spirit of Sport section winners:

### **Section 1 – Bridget Wright, student-athlete, Derby (Connecticut) High School**

Despite enduring open-heart surgery as a one-year-old and continuing to live with pulmonary stenosis, Wright excels as a four-year member of the Derby cheer team and a three-year member of the track and field team. She also serves on the school's student council.

### **Section 2 – Katie Switzer, student-athlete, Carlisle (Kentucky) Nicholas County High School**

Switzer has overcome a diagnosis of congenital fibulae hemimelia at birth to use a prosthesis on her lower right leg and participate in multiple activities. A 2021 graduate, she was a member of the school's basketball, volleyball, golf, tennis and track teams, as well as a member of the KHSAA Student Advisory Group.

### **Section 3 – The Wyatt Family, South Gibson (Tennessee) School**

### **Section 4 – Landis Sims, student-athlete, Elizabeth (Indiana) South Central High School**

Sims was born without both hands and the lower part of both legs. Nonetheless, he has persevered to play both basketball and baseball in high school. During the 2021 season, Sims batted .400 for the baseball team. He is also an honor student with a 3.74 GPA.

### **Section 5 – Megan Johnson, coach, St. Michael-Albertville (Minnesota) High School**

Johnson, the head coach of the school's girls soccer team, became aware that one of her athlete's mothers needed a kidney transplant and applied to be a donor. It was determined that Johnson was a match and was able to surprise the mother as her kidney donor before the procedure last July.

### **Section 6 – Laila Charley, student-athlete, Farmington (New Mexico) Navajo Prep School**

A few months after leading the Navajo Prep girls basketball team to a state championship in 2020, Charley suffered a near-fatal ATV accident, fracturing bones in her head and suffering a traumatic brain injury. Even after 2½ months in the hospital, multiple surgeries and procedures, weeks without even speaking, Charles continued to fight her way back to participate in sports again.

### **Section 7 – Jaclyn Jones, coach, Sparks (Nevada) Spanish Springs High School**

Diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma in 2019, Jones, who was a teacher and coach at Spanish Springs, continued to devote time to her students and athletes even after multiple treatments and the left side of her body becoming paralyzed. After working from home for a year, Jones returned to the classroom in the fall of 2021, but unfortunately lost her battle with cancer and passed away last December.

### **Section 8 – Bryson Quinney, student-athlete, Lyman (Wyoming) High School**

Born with just half a heart, Quinney endured a lifetime of surgeries before a heart transplant in the seventh grade. Finally cleared to participate in sports and activities in the ninth grade, Quinney has made the most of it. He was a member of the golf and football team this fall, and participated in drama, choir, pep band and orchestra.

Nominations for this award were generated through NFHS member state associations and reviewed by the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee composed of state association staff members. While the national winner will be recognized June 29 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, the section winners will be recognized within their respective states and will receive awards before the end of the current school year.

The National High School Spirit of Sport Award was started in 2008. Including this year, 15 individuals and three teams have been chosen national award recipients.

The previous award recipients follow:

2008 – Tammy Dufford, cheerleading coach, Evergreen (Colorado) High School, and Megan Bomgaars, cheerleader, Evergreen (Colorado) High School

2009 – Dakota Dana, student-athlete, Afton (Wyoming) Star Valley High School

2010 – Tori Clark, student-athlete, Roselle (Illinois) Lake Park High School

2011 – New Kensington (Pennsylvania) Valley High School Softball Team and Umpire Bill Dithrich

2012 – Jacob Goldberg, student-athlete, Fort Lauderdale (Florida) Pine Crest High School

2013 – Magoffin County High School, Salyersville, Kentucky, and Logan County High School, Russellville, Kentucky

2014 – Zach Pickett, student-athlete, Shingle Springs (California) Ponderosa High School

- 2015 – Grace Cummings, student-athlete, Madison (Connecticut) High School
- 2016 – Ashley Carson, student-athlete, Ord (Nebraska) High School
- 2017 – Danny Lilya, student-athlete, Moose Lake (Minnesota) High School
- 2018 – Marissa Walker, student-athlete, Waterford (Connecticut) High School
- 2019 – Amanda Merrell, student-athlete, Huntingtown (Maryland) High School
- 2020 – Noah Lambrecht, student-athlete, McCool-Junction (Nebraska) High School
- 2021 – Hayden Holton, student-athlete, Elmore County (Alabama) High School

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#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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