

# IHSAA NEWS RELEASE



Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.

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April 16, 2024

## **Cato Memorial Scholarships to be presented to 13 seniors** **Student-Athletes to be recognized May 7 at Indianapolis Colts Complex**

The Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. is pleased to announce this year's group of 13 senior student-athletes who will be honored with the 2024 IHSAA/C. Eugene Cato Memorial Scholarships.

To reward the efforts of Indiana's complete student-athletes, Forté Sports Medicine, Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, Indianapolis Colts, Indiana Fever, Indiana Pacers, Sport Graphics, Inc., and Franciscan Health Systems have all partnered with the IHSAA and the IHSAA Foundation to sponsor the program. These well-rounded, positive role models have demonstrated excellence in academics, school and community involvement, character, sportsmanship, and citizenship.



Each individual will receive a \$2,500 scholarship for their prep accomplishments and be recognized at this year's inaugural **[IHSAA Foundation Impact Awards](#)** at Gridiron Hall, within the Indianapolis Colts Indiana Farm Bureau Football Center on Tuesday May 7, 2024.

This year's recipients of the 2024 IHSAA/C. Eugene Cato Memorial Scholarships are:

### **2024 IHSAA/C. Eugene Cato Memorial Scholarship Recipients**

Mary Bellia	South Bend Saint Joseph
Mary Cox	Monrovia
Ava Decker	Elkhart
Ashton Elpers	North Posey
Jacob Harker	Shelbyville
Whitman Horton	Crawfordsville
Ava Lehmkuhler	Lebanon
Ethan Popp	Harrison (West Lafayette)
Emma Schipp	Jasper
Jack Steadham	Indianapolis Bishop Chatard
Kyah Streeval	Edinburgh
Jake Tippman	Fort Wayne Snider
Erin Zhu	Culver Academies



Each student completed and submitted a formal application and had to meet certain criteria to qualify including: 1) be enrolled and participating in interscholastic athletics at an IHSAA member school during this school year; 2) be a senior at an IHSAA member school who will graduate this school year; 3) win a varsity letter as an athlete in at least one of the 22 IHSAA-sanctioned athletic programs; 4) be nominated by the school's principal or athletic director; 5) carry a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale or the equivalent and; 6) have no violations of the school's athletic code of conduct.

Over 100 completed applications were received from across the state and a blue-ribbon panel of individuals decided upon the final recipients:

**Bill Benner**, Retired Vice President, Pacers Sports & Entertainment

**Bobby Cox**, Commissioner Emeritus, Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc., and member of the IHSAA Foundation Board of Directors

**Phil Eskew, Jr., M.D.**, Emeritus Professor, OBGYN, IU School of Medicine and member of the IHSAA Foundation Board of Directors

**Bob Gardner**, Commissioner Emeritus, Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc., and Retired Executive Director, National Federation of State High School Associations

**Frank Hancock**, President and CEO, Sports Graphics, Inc.

**Andy Matis**, Senior Manager of Football Development, Indianapolis Colts

**Paul Neidig**, Commissioner, Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc., and member of the IHSAA Foundation Board of Directors

Since 2003-04, the IHSAA has recognized 266 outstanding student-athletes with scholarships totaling \$627,500.

Recognized alongside the Cato Scholarship Recipients at the IHSAA Foundation Impact Awards, Forté Sports Medicine Research and Education Foundation will honor Indiana high school student-athletes who have overcome injury or hardship with the Brady Comeback Award. Additionally, graduating members of the IHSAA's Student Advisory Committee will be recognized for their contributions and work as a voice for today's student-athletes.

The IHSAA Foundation Impact Awards serves to recognize the accomplishments of our next generation of leaders in competition, in the classroom, and within their communities. Those interested in celebrating these accomplishments at the banquet can find more information at the [event's webpage](#).

## **Who was C. Eugene Cato?**

The scholarship program is named in tribute to the late Commissioner C. Eugene Cato who led the IHSAA from 1983 to 1995 and served as assistant commissioner from 1976 to 1983. “Gene’s” passion for athletics and his belief in the intrinsic value of athletic competition on the formation of a child’s character enabled Gene to positively impact generations of young men and women with his well-known “Firm, Fair, and Friendly” approach to caring for others. He passed away in 2008.

Biographies for this year’s Cato recipients are listed below:

### **Mary Bellia (South Bend Saint Joseph)**

**Mary Bellia** of Saint Joseph High School in South Bend ranks first in her senior class of 200 students, maintaining a weighted GPA of 4.46, all while competing at the varsity level in tennis all four years of her high school career and cross country for the past three years. Mary was appointed team captain for both her tennis and cross country squads during her senior season. She has excelled on the tennis court, earning All-Conference, All-District, and All-State Honors in each of her years as a Husky. Mary finished as singles state champion as a freshman and singles state runner-up as a junior. Saint Joseph finished as team state runner-up in each of those years. She’s received numerous academic accolades during her time at Saint Joseph, including girls cross country academic all-state during her junior and senior year, High Honors in each of her semesters, and teacher awards for Best Performance in numerous subjects. Mary is a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, and works as a peer tutor for math and chemistry. She volunteers her time as a cellist and pianist at church and school masses, organized and led a free tennis clinic for local youth called the Community Children’s Tennis Clinic, and helped organize numerous Smash Cancer fundraisers that raised over \$8,400 for cancer research. Mary will be attending the United States Naval Academy in the fall.

### **Mary Cox (Monrovia)**

Monrovia High School’s **Mary Cox** ranks third in her class of 113 students, obtaining a 4.12 weighted GPA. Mary has participated in four sports during her time as a Bulldog, earning varsity letters in Basketball (3 times), Golf (2 times), Track & Field (4 times), and Volleyball (once). She is the captain of Monrovia’s Basketball, Golf, and Track & Field teams and has earned All-Conference honors in Basketball, while earning Academic All-Conference in each of the four sports she has participated in. Mary is a member of the IHSAA Student Advisory Committee, where she assists with State Finals events throughout the year and serves as an ambassador to student-athletes throughout the state. She serves as Senior Class Vice-President and DECA Chapter President, while also participating in National Honor Society, Sunshine Club, Girl’s Leadership at Monrovia (GLAM), and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She is also very involved in the community, helping with Monrovia Youth Basketball Camps, Champions Together Basketball Games, Peer Tutoring, Monrovia Beautification Day, and being a Grace Kidz Sunday School Teacher. Mary will be furthering her education at DePauw University this Fall.

### **Ava Decker (Elkhart)**

Three-sport student-athlete **Ava Decker** of Elkhart High School is a nine-time varsity letter winner, earning four in Track & Field, three in Volleyball, and two in Swimming & Diving while also serving as Team Captain her Senior season. She has earned All-Conference honors for Volleyball and Track & Field, while earning Academic All-State and All-Conference honors in each of her sports. Ava sits at the top of her Senior class of 748 students, posting a 4.0 unweighted GPA. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Student Government, the Student Athletic Council, Chess Club, and serves as Lead Senior of Rotary Interact. Ava is very active in the community, ringing bells for Salvation Army during the holidays, participating in Elkhart Clean-up, peer tutoring at her local library, helping with local NIVA volleyball practices, and much more. She will be continuing her academic career at Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan this fall.

### **Ashton Elpers (North Posey)**

North Posey High School senior **Ashton Elpers** is a 12-time varsity letter winner, competing in Basketball, Softball, and Volleyball in each of her four years as a Viking. She has served as Basketball and Volleyball Team Captain and has earned All-Conference and All-State honors for Volleyball. Ashton helped North Posey reach the 2A Softball State Championship game in back-to-back years, finishing as Runner-up her sophomore year and as State Champion her junior year. Academically, she is at the top of her class, earning an unweighted 4.0 GPA. Ashton has served as Class President in each of her four years at North Posey and currently serves as Student Council President, Health Occupation Students of America President, and National Honor Society President. She is also a member of the IHSAA Student Advisory Committee, where she assists with State Finals events throughout the year and serves as an ambassador to student-athletes throughout the state. Ashton was one of six females in the nation to be named a finalist for Heisman National High School Scholarship. She is active in her community, volunteering time with Big Brothers-Big Sisters, Special Olympics Indiana, Rescue Mission, and Knights of St. John. She plans to continue her academic career in Bloomington at Indiana University.

### **Jacob Harker (Shelbyville)**

Shelbyville High School's **Jacob Harker** is a three-sport student-athlete, competing at the varsity level in Football and Wrestling in each of his years as a Golden Bear while also earning one varsity letter in Track & Field. In the classroom, he ranks fourth in his senior class of 228 with a 4.58 weighted GPA. He was named Academic All-Conference three times and All-Conference once in football. As a wrestler, Jacob won the team MVP award twice, was a two-time Semi-State qualifier, a conference champion, three times Academic All-Conference and All-Conference once. Additionally, Jacob has served as Team Captain for both Football and Wrestling. Academically, he has been on the Superior Honor Roll, nationally commended by the National Merit Scholarship Program, and named an AP scholar with distinction. Jacob is a member of Shelbyville's National Honor Society, Student Athletic Advisory Council, and the Student Leadership Council. Jacob also spends time participating in 4-H, volunteering at various community outreach events at his church, and working on his family's farm. He will be attending Purdue University in the Fall.

### **Whitman Horton (Crawfordsville)**

Crawfordsville High School senior **Whitman Horton** ranks second in his senior class of 151 students, posting a 4.51 weighted GPA. Whitman is a four-time varsity letter winner in Swimming & Diving, where he has also served as Team Captain, and one-time letter winner in Soccer. He has been designated as an AP Scholar with Distinction, Indiana Association of Principals Rising Star, and commended by the National Merit Scholarship Program. Whitman co-founded the Recycling Club, which brought Recycling back to Crawfordsville High School after it was removed during COVID. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Student Council, and Treasurer for his Senior Class. He is also the President of the IHSAA Student Advisory Committee, where he assists with State Finals events throughout the year and serves as an ambassador to student-athletes throughout the state. Additionally, he has spent time volunteering with the Crawfordsville Boys and Girls Club, Indiana Swimming House of Delegates, and Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church. Whitman will be attending Williams College in Massachusetts in the Fall.

### **Ava Lehmkuhler (Lebanon)**

Three-sport student-athlete **Ava Lehmkuhler** of Lebanon High School is a 12-time varsity letter winner, participating in Soccer, Basketball, and Tennis in each of her years as a Tiger. She has served as Team Captain and earned Academic All-State honors for Soccer and Basketball. Additionally, she has earned All-Conference honors in Soccer and Tennis. In the classroom, she ranks second in her Senior Class of 217 students, posting a 4.67 weighted GPA. Ava is a member of DECA, Key Club, Lebanon Ambassadors, Student Council, Class Council, and the Yearbook staff. Additionally, she was honored as an Indiana Association of Principals Rising Star for the Class of 2024. Ava spends time volunteering at various community outreach events at her church, assisting

with soccer and basketball camps throughout the year, leading tennis lessons to younger players, and working as a Lifeguard at the Seashore Waterpark. She will be attending DePauw University in the Fall.

### **Ethan Popp (Harrison-West Lafayette)**

**Ethan Popp** of Harrison High School in West Lafayette is a two-sport student-athlete, earning four varsity letters in Wrestling and three varsity letters in Football. He served as Team Captain for both Football and Wrestling and has earned Academic All-State Honors and All-Conference honors in both sports. Ethan spends countless hours volunteering as a coach for several wrestling clubs and teams, including Hammer Down Wrestling Academy, Battle Ground Middle School, and Red Hawk Wrestling Club. He even helps coach his teammates in some of their Junior Varsity matches. In the classroom, Ethan holds a 4.0 unweighted GPA. He's a member of Harrison's Student Council, Student Athletic Leadership Council, and co-chair of Harrison's Champions Together program. He plans to attend the United States Air Force Academy in the Fall.

### **Emma Schipp (Jasper)**

Jasper High School's **Emma Schipp** is a three-sport student-athlete, earning four varsity letters in Cross Country and Track & Field, and three varsity letters in Basketball. She has earned Academic All-State honors in Basketball and Cross Country, while earning All-Conference honors in Cross Country and Track & Field. Emma has earned a 4.4 weighted GPA thus far, which ranks fourth in her senior class of 237 students. Emma holds numerous leadership positions, currently serving as President of Jasper's National Honor Society, President of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, President of Business Professionals of America, and Vice President of Key Club. Additionally, she serves as Vice President of her Senior Class, and Head of the Homecoming Committee. Emma is also active in the community, volunteering at the Dubois County Community Food Bank, the Optimist Club of Jasper, and assisting with community outreach events at her church. Emma plans to continue her academic career at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology this fall.

### **Jack Steadham (Indianapolis Bishop Chatard)**

**Jack Steadham** of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis has earned a 4.5 weighted GPA in the classroom, while participating in Swimming & Diving (four varsity letters), Football (two varsity letters), Track & Field (one varsity letter), and Basketball during his time as a Trojan. He's served as Team Captain in Football, as well as Swimming & Diving. Jack is a member of Chatard's National Honor Society, Peer Ministry, Student Council, and Investment Club. He stays active in the community by coaching and mentoring athletes with Special Olympics Indiana, assisting with events at St. Augustine's Home for the Aged, planting fruits and vegetables at Gleaners Food Bank, and serving breakfast to those in need with Miracle Place. Jack is undecided on his college choice.

### **Kyah Streeval (Edinburgh)**

Three-sport student-athlete **Kyah Streeval** of Edinburgh High School is a 12-time varsity letter winner, competing in Basketball, Softball, and Volleyball in her time as a Lancer. She has earned All-Conference honors for her play in Volleyball and Softball and has served as Team Captain in all three of her sports. Kyah ranks first in her senior class of 60 students, holding a 4.4 weighted GPA. She currently serves as President of Edinburgh's Student Athletic Leadership Council and as Secretary for her senior class. Kyah is also a member of their National Honor Society, Spirit Club, and Student Council. Her volunteer work includes setting up Edinburgh's Festival of Lights, passing out food at the Edinburgh Food Pantry, assisting teachers who need extra assistance at Eastside Elementary, and raising money for the Polar Plunge for Special Olympics. She works part-time as a referee/umpire and concession attendant with Edinburgh Parks and Recreation. She will attend the University of Evansville in the Fall.

### **Jake Tippmann (Fort Wayne Snider)**

**Jake Tippmann** of Snider High School in Fort Wayne has earned three varsity letters in Football and served as Team Captain this past Fall for the Class 5A State Champion Panthers. He ranks first in his senior class of 453 students, posting a 4.93 weighted GPA. He has earned Academic All-State honors for his work in the classroom and was named to the Indianapolis Colts Academic Team, awarded to 24 football players each year. Jake was also named an Indiana Association of Principals Rising Star for the Class of 2024. He currently serves as Vice President of the IHSAA Student Advisory Committee, where he assists with State Finals events throughout the year and serves as an ambassador to student-athletes throughout the state. Jake has been a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters for three years, meeting with younger football players in his school district each week. He's also a member of Snider's Student Council and Biomed Charity Council. Jake works part-time as a Swim Instructor and Team Leader for Emler Swim School. He will be attending Purdue University in the Fall.

### **Erin Zhu (Culver Academies)**

Culver Academies senior **Erin Zhu** has earned a 3.86 unweighted GPA thus far, while participating in Swimming & Diving (four varsity letters), Volleyball (two varsity letters), Unified Track and Field, and Tennis. She currently serves as Admission Co-Chair for Culver Girls Academy, overseeing and acting as a liaison for all prospective and enrolled students. In this position, she provides training, arranges student tours, recruits other ambassadors, and organizes committee meetings with other Admissions ambassadors. Erin is also a part of the Campus Activities Board, promoting, planning, and regulating all the activities and events at Culvers Girls Academy. Additionally, Erin created Sin Fronteras, a Spanish Club that promotes awareness and appreciation for the cultures of Spanish speaking countries through cultural activities and weekly meetings. She has served as Prefect in numerous departments, something unique to those who attend a boarding/military school. Working as Prefect, Erin worked to ensure rules were followed and that the other students were aware of what's expected of them and the standards they must follow. Erin works part-time as a Lifeguard with the City of Elgin Aquatics. She will be attending Tulane University in the Fall.

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### **About the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA)**

*The IHSAA is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization that is self-supporting without the use of tax monies. Since its founding in 1903, the Association's mission has been to provide wholesome, educational athletics for the secondary schools of Indiana. Its 407-member high schools - public, institutional, parochial, and private - pay no annual membership fee or incur entry fees to play in the Association's tournaments. A state tournament series is conducted annually in 22 sports, 10 for girls, 10 for boys and two co-eds (unified flag football, unified track and field). A 19-person board of directors, elected by member school principals, governs the organization.*