

HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUTS ON AND OFF THE FIELD



Exceptional High Schoolers Recognized as Standouts

Northeast Ohio boasts a wealth of exceptional high school students, and to recognize their achievements, Advance Ohio—encompassing cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer—is honoring their commitment with the 2024 High School Standouts Awards.

Nominations for the awards were provided by educators, coaches, counselors and others, through early March. The recognition commends the accomplishments of students, musical groups, educators, athletic teams, and mentors across 17 distinct categories. A committee of judges determined the recipients of the High School Standouts accolades, who are celebrated throughout this section.

While each of our awardees are worthy of special recognition, a few are particularly noteworthy.



Category Winner 'Best Media Mind'

Aidan Booker
Twinsburg High School

Aidan Booker, recognized as the Best Media Mind at Twinsburg High School, has been a pivotal figure in his school's daily news program. His insightful coverage and analysis of current events reflect his deep understanding of the media landscape. Aidan's consistently high performance on news quizzes and his skillfully composed reports are a testament to his talent. His exceptional abilities led him to be awarded the first scholarship from the cleveland.com Media Academy. More

coding expertise to analyze national health databases. His investigation into the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines for cancer patients with compromised immune systems was featured in JAMA Oncology. Furthering his research, William examined the effects of a new category of anti-obesity drugs, known as glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs), on colorectal cancer. His significant findings were published in JAMA Oncology and were highlighted as one of the journal's top publications for the year.

Upon discovering concerns that these drugs could potentially increase suicidal thoughts, William embarked on a comprehensive study using national databases. His research revealed that GLP-1RAs might actually have a mitigating effect on suicidal ideation. These groundbreaking results were published in the renowned journal, Nature Medicine, leading to a revision of the FDA's advisory on suicide ideation for this medication class.

William's research contributions, particularly in



They boast talented forwards like 6-foot-2 sophomore Jakayln Brown and 6-foot-6 senior Tayja Mims, who are proficient at rebounding and frequently secure second-chance points. Their selfless play and excellent ball movement are noteworthy. Additionally, their defense is formidable, both on an individual level and as a cohesive unit."

The Lady Arcs benefit from seasoned players such as senior guard Brooklynn Vickers, who has been starting for four years and expertly controls the game's tempo. Freshmen Chaniyra McDowell-Isaacs, an outstanding point guard, and Tati Mason, equally adept at long-range shots and post plays, contribute over 30 points per game and lead in rebounds and assists. Head Coach Demarris Winters has crafted a rigorous schedule to ensure the team is battle-ready for the playoffs. Their victories, whether at home against Walsh, Gilmour, and Warrensville Heights or away against STVM, Riverside, and Lutheran East, underscore their determination.

my travels across Europe with a deeper understanding and appreciation of its rich heritage."

Mr. Chordas' impact extends beyond academics; he is a compassionate mentor and a proactive leader. Nominators reported his role transcending that of a traditional educator; nurturing and protecting his students. Having been nominated 12 times, it's clear that Mr. Chordas is an outstanding candidate worthy of recognition.

Category Winner 'Against All Odds'

Dagian Lee
MC2STEM High School

Dagian's story is truly inspiring. Despite the challenges she faced from a life-changing surgery, she has emerged as a top student and an active participant in her community. Her determination and zest for life are evident in her regular attendance on field trips, her engagement in City Club forums, and her willingness to perform in front of her peers. Dagian's proactive approach to life, exemplified by her performance at the semester awards ceremony, showcases her resilience and spirit. Her achievements are a testament to her strength and dedication.

Read more about Dagian's experience in this 2009 article by cleveland.com.



https://www.cleveland.com/medical/2009/02/pittsburgh_doctors_discuss_sep.html

Category Winner 'Top Teacher of the Year'

David Chordas
Orange High School

Mr. Chordas, a beloved educator at Orange High School, has been an exceptional guide both in and out of the classroom. His effective teaching methods not only helped students excel academically but also instilled a love for the subjects he taught. "It was his psychology class that sparked my interest so profoundly that I chose to pursue a degree in psychology at university."

"His European history course was ... influential, enriching



than just reporting the news, Aidan critically examined editorial decisions, such as the prioritization of certain stories.

Furthermore, Aidan embraced a role with the PBS Student Reporting Lab, becoming part of their inaugural advisory group. Leveraging his experience from recording school sports events and contributing to local film ventures, he has honed his craft. The advisory team, including Aidan, produced national stories for aspiring journalists, covering events like Twins Day and the Nobska Lighthouse. His narration of the lighthouse story earned him a Congressional Award of Special Recognition from U.S. Rep. Emilia Sykes.

Category Winner 'Top Scientific Mind'

William Wang
Orange High School

William Wang, distinguished as the Top Scientific Mind at Orange High School, has skillfully applied his

influencing public health policy are remarkable. His work is a testament to his extraordinary capabilities in the scientific field.

Category Winner 'Top Female Athletic Team'

The Lyndhurst Brush Lady Arcs Basketball Team
Charles F. Brush High School

In mid-February 2024, the Lyndhurst Brush Lady Arcs ascended to the top spot in the cleveland.com top 25 rankings, overtaking Magnificat. This achievement was a fitting tribute to their impressive 19-3 record during the regular season. cleveland.com reported, "The Lady Arcs are a complete team. Their shooting accuracy is remarkable, and they have a knack for driving to the hoop effortlessly.

As we conclude our celebration of the 2024 High School Standouts, we are reminded of the incredible talent and dedication each nominee has demonstrated.

Their achievements have not only enriched their own lives but have also inspired their peers, educators, and the community at large. We extend our heartfelt

congratulations to all the winners:

Their hard work and perseverance are a beacon of hope for the future, and we eagerly anticipate the remarkable paths they will forge in the years to come. Here's to the bright young minds of 2024—may their journeys be as extraordinary as their spirits.



Dagian Lee

MC2STEM High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'AGAINST ALL ODDS'

Dagian Lee, a resilient individual, defies limitations with a boundless spirit. Though confined to a wheelchair due to life-saving surgery as a conjoined twin, Dagian's thirst for knowledge and exploration knows no bounds. Excelling academically, she embraces field trips with enthusiasm, fearlessly navigating the world around her via RTA or

yellow school buses.

Beyond academics, Dagian actively engages with her community, attending City Club forums and fearlessly posing questions to speakers. Her boldness extends to performance, as seen in her memorable rendition of "All I Want for Christmas Is You" at the first semester awards ceremony. Dagian Lee's story serves as a testament to the

power of determination and joy in overcoming adversity, inspiring all who encounter her.



Keira Coyle

James A. Garfield High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'ARTIST OF THE YEAR'

Keira Coyle stands out as a rising star in the world of design, garnering recognition as the artist of the year. A self-taught seamstress with an innate creative vision, Keira's talent shines through in her ability to execute patterns flawlessly. This year, she astounded peers and mentors alike by single-handedly drafting, sketching, and constructing a dress

for a friend, showcasing her impeccable craftsmanship and attention to detail.

Beyond her solo endeavors, Keira collaborates seamlessly with others, as evidenced by her creation of a King and Queen stuffed frog for Homecoming decorations. Despite her remarkable skill, Keira exudes quiet humility, demonstrating a genuine joy for creating. With her sights

set on a future in set design, construction, and costume design, Keira's unique talent and passion for fabric art foreshadow a bright and promising journey ahead as she prepares to embark on her college career.



Euclid High School Marching Band

Euclid High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'BEST BAND IN THE LAND'

The Euclid Marching Band has been a beacon of excellence, consistently rising to the top of every competition they enter. With a trophy case brimming with top-ranked awards, the Euclid Marching Band exemplifies dedication, talent, and sheer determination. Their performances captivate

audiences and leave a lasting impression of excellence. Receiving the Best Band in the Land award shows the hard work and achievements of the Euclid Marching Band, showcasing their extraordinary talent and contributions.



Aidan Booker

Twinsburg High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'BEST MEDIA MIND'

Aidan Booker stands as a shining example of exceptional talent and dedication in the realm of media. From his early days as the anchor of his high school's daily newscast to his involvement in the Cleveland.com Media Academy, Aidan's prowess in media has consistently set him apart. With an acute understanding of current events and a keen eye for presentation, Aidan excelled in quizzes and storytelling. His analytical

approach and eagerness to delve into media work earned him recognition as the Media Academy's inaugural scholarship winner.

Beyond the classroom, Aidan's passion for media led him to seize opportunities with organizations like PBS Student Reporting Lab, where he served on the Inaugural Student Advisory Team. Drawing from his experiences filming games at Twinsburg High and contributing to

local movie productions, Aidan collaborated on stories that resonated with student journalists nationwide, earning accolades such as the Congressional Award of Special Recognition from Congresswoman Emilia Sykes for his outstanding contributions. Aidan Booker's media acumen and unwavering commitment make him a standout figure in Cleveland's high school media landscape.



William Wang

Orange High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP SCIENTIFIC MIND'

William Wang is a remarkable young scientist whose groundbreaking research has left an indelible mark on public health policy. His journey began at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), where he utilized programming to analyze national databases, investigating COVID-19 vaccines' efficacy for immunosuppressed cancer patients. His findings, published in JAMA Oncology, significantly influenced CDC policies

regarding COVID-19 vaccination strategies, demonstrating the profound impact of his work on mitigating the pandemic's spread.

William delved into researching the effects of glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs) on colorectal cancer, garnering acclaim for his contributions to JAMA Oncology's leading publications of the year. Not content with conventional boundaries,

William further probed into the potential link between GLP-1RAs and increased suicidal ideation, ultimately revealing through a national database study published in Nature Medicine that these drugs, in fact, reduce suicide ideation. His groundbreaking findings prompted the FDA to revise its warning policies, underscoring William's exceptional scientific acumen and his extraordinary intellect.



Noah Restivo

Revere High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP STAGE PERFORMANCE'

Noah Restivo is a beacon of talent within the Revere Players community, captivating audiences with his remarkable performances year after year. In his senior year, Noah fearlessly embraced the daunting role of John Proctor in The Crucible. Despite the weightiness of the role and the complexity of Arthur Miller's text, Noah rose to the occasion, embodying Proctor with a rare authenticity

and vulnerability that left audiences spellbound. From swiftly mastering his lines to delving into the depths of Proctor's psyche, Noah's portrayal was a masterclass in characterization, infusing the character with humor, hurt, and humanity. His leadership within the program was exemplary, demonstrating responsibility, dedication, and commitment to his craft and fellow castmates.

His performance not only showcased his immense talent but also his ability to transform a character into a fully realized individual, complete with shifting motivations and intentions. Noah's portrayal of John Proctor in The Crucible stands as a testament to his exceptional talent, his unwavering commitment to excellence, and his impact on the Revere Players community.



David Chordas

Orange High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP TEACHER OF THE YEAR'

David Chordas is more than just a teacher; he's a catalyst for inspiration and personal growth. As a favorite educator at Orange High School, Mr. Chordas has left a mark on countless students, by instilling a love for learning and fostering a deep appreciation for the subjects he teaches. From his dynamic psychology classes to his captivating lessons in European history, Mr. Chordas has a remarkable ability to make learning

engaging and meaningful. His influence extends far beyond the classroom, as he serves as a mentor and leader. Whether it's advocating for students' well-being or inspiring them to pursue their passions, Mr. Chordas makes sure his students are supported. Beyond his role as an educator, Mr. Chordas' impact reverberates through the lives of his students, shaping their academic journeys and personal development. His

unwavering advocacy for his students, as exemplified by his intervention in a bullying incident, speaks volumes about his character and dedication to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Mr. Chordas' legacy extends far beyond the confines of the classroom and has left an imprint on the hearts and minds of all those fortunate enough to have been his students.



Naisha Chopra

North Royalton High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'COMMUNITY STANDOUT'

Naisha Chopra is the compassionate founder and president of Share a Smile Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing joy to low-income families through the celebration of birthdays. With a fervent belief that every child deserves to feel special on their special day, Naisha and her team work to provide birthday boxes filled with decorations, treats, personalized gifts, and party activities, all free of cost. Partnering with youth

shelters, hospitals, and libraries in impoverished areas, Share a Smile Initiative organizes monthly birthday parties for children, ensuring that economic hardship does not rob them of the joyous moments that mark childhood. Under Naisha's leadership, Share a Smile Initiative has expanded its impact, collaborating with libraries to offer take-home party kits and venturing into hospitals to provide intimate family

celebrations through party-in-a-box kits. With a dedicated team of volunteers who share her passion for uplifting communities and nurturing the well-being of children, Naisha Chopra continues to champion the cause of celebrating milestones and creating cherished memories, recognizing that these small gestures can have a profound impact on the mental and emotional health of the next generation.



Lukas Kucera

St. Edward High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'DEBATE CHAMPION'

Lukas Kucera emerges as a leader in the realm of Model United Nations, showcasing an exceptional prowess in diplomatic discourse over his four-years in the program. Comprehending agenda topics and articulating arguments, he has represented Northeast Ohio on international platforms in England and The Netherlands. His remarkable achievements within the MUN circuit, marked by numerous awards,

culminated in his appointment as the Joint Secretary-General of the esteemed Cleveland International Model United Nations Conference 2024 (CLEIMUN24). This conference, boasting over 300 delegates, bore witness to Lukas's strategic leadership, contributing significantly to its resounding success. Lukas also played a pivotal role as the Student President of St Edward High School's

Model United Nations Program. His dedication and vision took the program to new heights, fostering a nurturing environment where students could hone their diplomatic skills and global awareness. Lukas's impact extends beyond mere accolades; his leadership exemplifies a commitment to fostering dialogue, understanding, and collaboration among young minds.



Toni Kincaid

Euclid High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'MATH HERO'

Toni Kincaid is a standout student in the realm of mathematics, earning accolades and recognition from her college credit plus math instructor. With a remarkable academic trajectory, Toni's journey showcases her exceptional aptitude and dedication to the subject. By the end of her junior year, Toni had already secured her associate degree

from Tri C, a testament to her academic prowess and commitment to excellence. Undeterred by her achievements, she seamlessly transitioned into her senior year at Cleveland State University, continuing to pursue advanced coursework in mathematics. Since the age of 7th grade, Toni has been enrolled in honors high school math

courses, progressively advancing to college-level mathematics by 10th grade. Her rigorous curriculum includes College Algebra, College Trigonometry, Calculus I, and Calculus II, underscoring her insatiable thirst for knowledge and her unwavering determination to excel in her academic pursuits.



J.P. Zimmer

Cuyahoga Falls High School

CATEGORY WINNER 'RISING ENTREPRENEUR'

J.P. Zimmer is the founder and owner of his landscaping company since 2018. J.P. has demonstrated entrepreneurial acumen and a knack for cultivating outdoor spaces with precision and care. Simultaneously, he serves as a Pilot and Aircraft Manager at Avit Flight Academy, showcasing his passion for aviation and his adeptness in

navigating the skies. Beyond his thriving professional endeavors, J.P. is an active member of the athletic and academic community at CFHS. His leadership shines through as the Editor-in-Chief of the Yearbook and Vice-President of the Business Professionals of America, where he spearheads initiatives and fosters a

culture of excellence. J.P.'s achievements earned him the role of CEO in his Entrepreneurship class, overseeing the operations of the school spirit store. With his admission to The Ohio State University Fisher School of Business, he will continue his journey of innovation and leadership in the world of business and beyond.

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP COACH OF THE YEAR'



Rich Williams

Avon Lake High School

Rich Williams, head coach of the boys bowling team at Avon Lake High School, stands as a paragon of coaching excellence. With a distinguished USBC Silver Rate accreditation, a distinction held by only a select few worldwide, Coach Williams exemplifies a level of skill and expertise that is unparalleled. Under his guidance, the boys' team has achieved remarkable success, clinching victories in tournaments such as the NSBC 1st place tournament

and securing impressive placements in Sectionals and Districts, ultimately earning a coveted spot at the State Championships. Coach Williams's passion for both the sport and mentoring young athletes shines through in his dedication, spending countless hours on the lanes honing the skills of his players. His commitment to their development extends beyond practice sessions, as he readily offers assistance to anyone

in need, fostering a culture of growth and excellence. His selfless devotion to his players, staying long after practice to provide individualized support and encouragement, exemplifies his unwavering dedication to their success. Rich Williams embodies the essence of a true mentor and coach, a silent force behind the scenes whose influence reverberates far beyond the lanes.

CATEGORY WINNER 'COMEBACK OF THE YEAR' (ATHLETIC)



Brooke Largent

Olmsted Falls High School

Brooke Largent's journey is a testament to resilience and determination in the face of adversity. While playing center field for Olmsted Falls HS varsity softball, she endured a harrowing collision that nearly cost her life. In a courageous pursuit of a shallow fly ball, Brooke and her teammate collided, resulting in severe injuries, including a nearly severed kidney, a grade 3 laceration of the liver, and a

partially collapsed lung. Against all odds, Brooke underwent lifesaving surgery and embarked on a grueling journey of recovery. With unwavering perseverance, Brooke defied expectations and made a remarkable comeback. Today, as a sophomore member of the OFHS varsity basketball team, she embodies the epitome of resilience, showcasing her indomitable spirit on the court.

Her triumphant return to athletics is a testament to her strength and determination. Looking ahead, Brooke's courage and leadership will once again shine on the softball diamond as she assumes the role of team captain in 2024. Her story serves as an inspiration to all, a reminder that with unwavering determination and resilience, one can overcome even the most daunting of challenges.

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP FEMALE ATHLETE'



Tessa Knapp

Bay High School

Photo
AF Photography

Tessa Knapp, junior at Bay High School, is more than just a women's soccer player—she's a force to be reckoned with on and off the field. Over the past three years, Tessa's remarkable talent has shone through, with an impressive record of 149 goals and 37 assists, culminating in a career points total of 333. Breaking school records that have stood since 1999, Tessa's accolades include holding titles such as Top Goal Scorer, Most

goals in a career, and career points leader. Tessa has earned the distinction of being a 2-time All-American and has proudly represented the Youth Women's National Team. Tessa maintains an outstanding academic record with a 4.1 GPA, proving her dedication both on and off the field. Tessa's humility and unwavering determination set her apart. Despite her numerous accolades and recognition, she

remains grounded, embodying the true spirit of a team player. Tessa's leadership extends beyond scoring goals; she has a knack for uplifting those around her, making everyone better both on and off the soccer pitch. With her boundless heart and relentless drive, Tessa Knapp continues to inspire others as she strives for excellence in everything she pursues.

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP FEMALE ATHLETIC TEAM'



The Lyndhurst Brush Lady Arcs Basketball Team

Charles F. Brush High School

The Lyndhurst Brush Lady Arcs have emerged as a dominant force in high school basketball. With an impressive 19-3 record in the regular season, they have showcased their all-around skills and depth on the court. Led by a dynamic roster, including standout players like senior shooting guard Brooklynn Vickers and talented freshmen Chaniyra McDowell-Isaacs and Tati Mason, the Lady Arcs boast

a balanced offensive attack and formidable defensive prowess. Head Coach Demarris Winters has meticulously prepared the team with a challenging schedule, ensuring they are primed for success in the postseason. With their collective talent, experience, and determination, the Lady Arcs are poised to embark on a remarkable journey this season.

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP MALE ATHLETE'



Marquise Davis

Cleveland Heights High School

Marquise Davis is an exceptional athlete and demonstrates immense leadership qualities, making him a standout player in high school football. Standing at 6 feet tall and weighing in at 200 pounds, this junior running back and linebacker has left an indelible mark on the field. In the recent season, Marquise showcased his skills by rushing for an astounding 2,405 yards and scoring 34

touchdowns, propelling his team, the Tigers, to claim the title of Greater Cleveland Conference Champions. Not only did he excel on offense, but Marquise's defensive skills were equally impressive, recording 91 tackles, three interceptions (one returned for a touchdown), and forcing three fumbles. Marquise has earned a several of prestigious awards and recognitions, including

the GCC Offensive Player of the Year, the OHSAA Division I Offensive Player of the Year, and the esteemed title of Gatorade Ohio Player of the Year. With his exceptional skill set and national recognition as the No. 106 recruit in the Class of 2025, Marquise Davis is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with on the football field.

CATEGORY WINNER 'TOP ATHLETIC MALE TEAM'



Olmsted Falls Lacrosse Team

Olmsted Falls High School

In just their seventh year as a high school program, the Olmsted Falls Lacrosse Team shattered expectations and captured the State Championship, marking the school's first boys' team state title in 23 years. What began as a fledgling squad in a public school system blossomed into a formidable force fueled by determination and

community support. Led by dedicated coaches and united by unwavering camaraderie, they exemplified the resilience and spirit of their town, etching their names into the annals of history with their remarkable achievement.