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PROCTOR CROSS COUNTRY TEAM TO RECEIVE 2023 YAF AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Team Members Have Served as Regular Volunteers at YAF Kids' Events

(DULUTH, MINN.) --- The Proctor cross country team has been awarded the 2023 Young Athletes Foundation (YAF) Award of Excellence, it was announced today.

Members of the team are regular volunteers at the YAF's annual kids' events, primarily the Wednesday Night and Saturday Morning at the Races series.

Lizzy Harnell ran the Wednesday Night at the Races series herself when she was younger, which sparked her interest in joining the cross country team. Now a junior at Proctor, she won this year's Lake Superior Conference (LSC) individual title and is a five-time qualifier for the state meet.

Paisley Kleiman, meanwhile, is also a junior runner for Proctor and has been an all-conference runner since 7th grade. Kleiman and Harnell have become inseparable at the annual Wednesday night events, both serving as pacers for the kids' races held at various venues throughout the area.

"Lizzy and Paisley used to be the kids competing at Wednesday Night at the Races," said Program Director Alivia Nelson, "and now they're a big part of making them happen, so it's fun to see that come full circle."

Joining Harnell and Kleiman as regular volunteers at YAF events are Proctor teammates Della and Rachel Bettendorf and Ian Dobosenski.

The first-ever Award of Excellence was given in 2017, created to recognize and honor dedication, commitment, and service to the development and growth of the Young Athletes Foundation.



YAF Award of Excellence Recipients

2022 – Tortoise & Hare Footwear
2021 – Dana Moore & St. Scholastica Volleyball Team
2020 – n/a
2019 – Jesse Hurtig, Doug Runnoe, & Crystal Boyd
2018 – Eve & Wayne Graves
2017 – Tony Guy & Family, Hector Serrano, Sydney Miller

For any questions or interview requests, please contact Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider via phone at (218) 343-9874 or via email at zach@grandmasmarathon.com.

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ABOUT THE YOUNG ATHLETES FOUNDATION (YAF)

Created in 1990, the Young Athletes Foundation (YAF) works to support the growth and development of youth athletics throughout northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin by assisting community members and local businesses to provide pathways of opportunity for kids to live active and healthy lifestyles.

The YAF offers community support in a variety of ways, including our Grant Program, Running Shoe Program, and UMD Eleanor Rynda Scholarship Fund. The organization also hosts several kids' events throughout the year including Wednesday Night & Saturday Morning at the Races.

The YAF's mission is helped and funded by various road races throughout the year --- the St. Fennesy 4K, Fitger's 5K, Park Point 5-Miler, Minnesota Mile, and North End Nightmare.

Since its inception, the YAF has contributed more than \$1.3 million to area nonprofit youth athletic organizations.

