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Contact: Todd Edwards
todd@toddedwards.biz
417.839.7000

STRAFFORD STUDENT-ATHLETE AWARDS CHAMPIONS COMMITTED TO KIDS GATORADE PLAY IT FORWARD GRANT

SPRINGFIELD April 24, 2018 — In its second full season, Missouri Basketball Gatorade State Player of the Year, Hayley Frank, awarded Champions Committed to Kids with a grant as a part of the Gatorade Play it Forward initiative.

Sports have seen a double-digit decline over the past decade, largely due to tighter budgets in communities, but young people that participate in sports are found to be happier, healthier and better students. Gatorade Play It Forward aims to assist youth sports programs in funding by empowering Gatorade Player of the Year recipients across the country to award local or national sports organizations with grants that help young athletes reap the benefits of sport.

“Gatorade is proud to award Champions Committed to Kids with a Play It Forward grant on behalf of Hayley Frank” says Forrest Johnson, Assistant Marketing Manager for Gatorade Player of the Year. “We look forward to seeing Champions Committed to Kids continue to positively impact the youth of their community.”

All 607 Gatorade State Player of the Year recipients are awarded a grant to donate to the organization of their choosing. Each Player of the Year is then given the opportunity to submit an essay about why their chosen organization is deserving of a Spotlight Grant, which is a larger monetary award. Gatorade awards twelve Spotlight Grants, one for each sport recognized by the Player of the Year program.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on Gatorade Play It Forward, the Gatorade Player of the Year, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit PlayerOfTheYear.Gatorade.com

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About Gatorade Player of the Year

The Gatorade Player of the Year program annually recognizes one winner in Washington D.C. and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track and field; and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. In addition to athletic excellence, the award recognizes academic achievement and exemplary character on and off the field.

For 33 years, Gatorade has honored more than 15,000 State Players of the Year and 290 National Players of the Year. That list includes many of today’s top professional athletes, such as Peyton Manning, Karl-Anthony Towns, Maya Moore, Jabari Parker, Kerri Walsh and Andrew Wiggins.

Play It Forward is Gatorade’s cause marketing platform, which empowers every one of the Gatorade Player of the Year award winners to choose a local or national youth sport organization to receive a \$1,000 grant from Gatorade.

About Champions Committed to Kids

Champions Committed to KIDS (CCK) was formed with one purpose—to take KIDS who are fighting chronic illnesses and give them a chance to feel what it's like to be part of an athletic team. To know what it means to be a teammate, to have a feeling of fellowship and a chance to build lifelong friendships.

Partnering with Springfield's two local hospitals, Cox Health and Mercy, CCK takes children with medical conditions and disabilities and places them with local athletic programs.

These KIDS become official teammates of the school they are partnered with and develop a relationship with these athletes and coaches. CCK works with children from the age of 5 up to 18 years old. CCK gives these children and their families an opportunity to forget about their illness and all of the medication, doctors visits and therapy they endure and let them focus on something joyful, a feeling of hope.