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State Media Release

CIF State Office, 4658 Duckhorn Drive, Sacramento, CA 95834

Phone: 916-239-4477

Fax: 916-239-4478

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Contact: Quwan Spears, Sports Information Officer

qspears@cifstate.org

***TYLER POLASEK (CREAN LUTHERAN SOUTH HS, IRVINE) AND ZOE KISLING
(GRANITE HILLS HS, PORTERVILLE) NAMED FALL 2009 CIF SPIRIT OF SPORT AWARD
WINNERS***

SACRAMENTO – Tyler Polasek of Crean Lutheran South High School, Irvine, and Zoe Kisling of Granite Hills High School, Porterville, has been selected as the fall 2009 recipients of the CIF Spirit of Sport Award, CIF Executive Director Marie M. Ishida announced. The statewide winners will receive an award and \$500 at the CIF State Federated Council dinner on Friday, May 7, 2010. The CIF Spirit of Sport Award recognizes student-athletes who have demonstrated the 16 principles of Pursuing Victory with Honor, operating standards of CIF and its 1,494 member schools statewide are active in school and community service, and exhibit leadership qualities regardless of athletic ability.

“The award seeks to recognize student-athletes who have showcased the great sportsmanship, the purest form of competition,” says Ishida. “These recipients understand that a positive attitude and teamwork should exist throughout sports, and they realize that winning at all cost is not really winning. The same spirit they show in athletics carries over into all aspects of their lives.”

Tyler Polasek – Crean Lutheran South High School, Irvine

Polasek has found a way to make a difference, despite suffering from Cystic Fibrosis, a disease which impairs his respiratory and digestive systems. The senior has been a member of the cross-country and track and field teams at Crean Lutheran South since his freshman year in 2006. He received the Scholar Athlete award during every season of competition, and was selected as captain of both teams numerous times. Additionally, Polasek was named Most Valuable Player of his cross-country team in 2007. Polasek is currently serving as Senior Class Vice President at his school and has performed many community service jobs at his school and also served with the Children’s Ministry Team at Saddleback Church.

“Not allowing my Cystic Fibrosis (CF) to take over my life has been mentally and physically challenging,” says Polasek. “While running can be a challenge for many people, it can be especially difficult for me. Through my determination and hard work in cross country, the daily challenges of CF have become easier to accept and deal with. Determination has played a role because when it is hard to breathe, I have to remember that just because something is hard does not mean it will go on forever. When I get past this moment, I will have made my lungs that much stronger and more prepared for the next time when something comes along.” One moment included helping others during tough circumstances in cross country competition.

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“The temperature that day was well over 90 degrees by the time the boys’ races occurred,” Crean Lutheran South vice Principal Brian Underwood said. “But in typical Tyler fashion, he ground his way to a late pack finish, despite his diminished lung capacity. As soon as Tyler finished, however, he immediately began to retrace the course to encourage other teammates—one in particular, an autistic boy named Scott. What amazed me was the sight of Tyler running back up the course to specifically guide Scott to the finish—and he did. From the point he found Scott, he walked and ran with him for two miles to see him through the finish line. I cannot think of a finer example of servant leadership that I’ve personally witnessed.”

Zoe Kisling, Granite Hills High School, Porterville

Kisling’s love of sports and quilting helped her emerge as a key figure on Granite Hill’s campus. She also started her own community service project called “KNOTS OF LOVE”, where she and her volleyball teammates make blankets for Child Protective Services and other local agencies.

“The blankets provide more than warmth, but also something the kids in (CPS) can call their own during a very traumatic time in their lives,” says Granite Hills volleyball coach Rich Lambie. “Zoe’s blanket project has been so successful that she has found a younger player to take over project next year. Zoe realizes there is more to life than winning a volleyball game. She understands that every act of kindness not only builds her own character, but helps instill good values around her.”

Sports have provided a foundation for Kisling, a member of the volleyball, soccer, and softball teams at Granite Hills since her freshman year in 2006. She has been named captain in all three sports, and received many honors, including The Coach’s and Academic Athlete awards. Kisling served in the Associated Student Body for three years holding many offices, including ASB secretary, during her senior year. She holds key positions in campus organizations like Key Club, Interact Club, and Grizzly Gazette News.

“Being a leader has taught me more than just trying my hardest to help my team succeed,” says Kisling. “It has also taught me that winning is not everything, and that I myself need to make sure my teammates keep their composure at all times.”

“Yes, everyone knows there are times when it is hard to find good things about losing. But I believe I have gained the respect from my teammates in order to keep a positive attitude flowing, whether it is in the gym, on the soccer field, or softball diamond. I became the one person who always yelled out to my teammates to hold their heads up and be proud to be a Grizzly.”