

2022 Rain City Scholarships Announced

We are pleased to announce the 2022 RCF Scholarship recipients: Claire Archer; Ethan Erickson; Peter Leary; Jill Philbin; Sloane Selenis; and Maja van Zuylen. Congratulations to each recipient!

Claire Archer

Claire Archer came to Rain City Flyers later than most. As a high school freshman playing varsity soccer but not enjoying it she sought out a different athletic environment. She found what she desired in the inclusiveness of Rain City. Claire remembers her first practice: Rain City “wanted to nurture a love of running, of pushing oneself, of being the best you could be. No matter how fast. No matter how old. These were my people.” Running both track and cross-country with the team helped Claire develop confidence, hone the ability to push herself and learn the importance of a tight-knit and supportive group. Her success is reflected in her many RCF meet and team records, highlighted in 2021 with a 1st Place finish in both the 17-18 Girls 1500 and 3000 at the 2021 USATF/PNA JO Championships. She set a new RCF team record in the 1500 and just missed breaking the 3000 record.

Claire took what she learned through RCF and applied it throughout her high school career at Roosevelt where she ran both cross country and track while also participating in soccer, swimming and water polo. She won the Metro League XC Championship meet as a junior. As a senior team captain Claire finished 2nd in Metros, 3rd in Districts, and helped take the RHS team to State for the first time since 2012. The team finished 5th, the highest place in RHS history, and Claire placed 13th individually. She was voted MVP by her teammates after both junior and senior seasons.

Her high school track career was equally impressive. As a junior, Claire finished 3rd in both the 1600 and the 3200 at Metro League Championships. During her senior year she finished 2nd in both these events at Metro, then 4th in the 3200 and 7th in the 1600 Districts, and 6th in the 3200 at State. Claire is only the second Rider to break 5:00 in the 1600 and 11:00 in the 3200 (and first in both since 1986).

Claire is a stellar performer off the track and course as well. She was a class valedictorian and was honored as the RHS Alumni Golden Grad for her academic performance, leadership, community service and involvement in the school and in the community. Claire will attend Yale University and plans to run both cross country and track for the school. She will carry her personal meaning behind the RCF cheer with her: the desire to run for the team, for the group, for the community. Rain City was her start and fostered her love of running. She will forever remain part of the team and looks forward to running for the rest of her life..

Ethan Erickson

Ethan Erickson writes, “If perseverance had an official sport, it would be distance running.” Ethan came to Rain City as a 7-year old through the Meadowbrook track program where, like most newcomers, he was assigned to run sprints and short-distances. When he observed other runners heading off from the track he asked why they got to run farther. With the answer “Because they want to” he decided that he did too. Ethan pushed himself outside of practice by running laps around his house, not stopping until he had met his goal. In making the switch to distance running he learned, “finish lines mean more when I work longer to get there.”

Rain City sparked Ethan’s distance running aspirations and provided him with a community of passionate young athletes. He was homeschooled through middle school and friendships formed during practices continued outside the club and into high school. Ethan credits Rain City with training him to be a capable runner through a supportive and fun environment, with the end-of-practice games instilling a culture of excitement and collaboration that contributed to his team-based mentality. He ran Rain City Flyers through his 10th grade year, experienced traveling to JO Nationals, and was always a strong team contributor.

Ethan went on to run both sports for all four years while attending Nathan Hale High School. As a senior team captain he led the squad to the State XC Meet. Ethan finished up his high school track career as a sprinter! His Nathan Hale 4X400 relay qualified for the State Meet.

Ethan describes “the persistence required to struggle up Woodland Park’s gargantuan hills” as essential to other pursuits. At Hale he helped revitalize the Robotics club and was captain of the FIRST Robotics Competition team. He aided the Mock Trial team to a top ten finish at State. He was up early each morning to play piano in Hale’s jazz band and wrote 40,000+ words for National Novel Writing month. Persistence will also be essential to his chosen profession of computer science where it is needed to decipher problems in code.

With plans to attend Seattle Pacific University in the fall Ethan will run both track and cross country with the school’s teams. His commitment to excellence is clear to see in his own words, “From ascending hills and running through discomfort...the achievement derived from overcoming difficulties is found in the challenge itself. I persist in running because improving myself is worth the momentary pain...I am in it for the long run—literally.”

Peter Leary

Peter Leary was a team member of Rain City Flyers from 2013-2018 and has many fond memories of his time with the team that still make him smile. He remembers hill workouts and huge starting lines; being

nervous before a big meet, but then having a good performance; having a bad day at school, but being able to run it out at practice. He loved getting to travel and winning teams, but his most valued memory came not from achievement but from a lesson learned through complacency.

Running with the Rain City team, Peter discovered he loved running and had a natural talent for it. In 8th grade, however, he became complacent in his running, thinking his talent would be enough to get him the results he was seeking. This attitude, no surprise, led to disappointing results. Peter learned an important lesson and this experience became a turning point. He “realized what it truly meant to be a hard-working person.”

Peter attended O’Dea High School and worked hard both in the classroom and beyond. He ran both cross country and track as well as swam with their team. Here again he had many accomplishments and fond memories but experienced a major setback—an injury that required surgery. Recovery took months, but Peter remembered his earlier lesson and worked his way back. He finished his high school career as team captain and with participation at both the State cross country meet and the State track meet, running the 800 and the 4x400 relay..

Peter will attend Colorado Mesa University in the fall and will be running cross country and track with the school teams. He chose this school, based in part, by the fact that it had, “the type of community that [he] had been embraced in at Rain City Flyers.” He may experience setbacks but he will remember how to work hard. He is packing a Rain City singlet – we hope it reminds him he is still embraced by this community as well. Win! Rain City!

Jill Philbin

Jill Philbin joined Rain City Flyers in the fall of 2017 and has run cross country each year with the team through the 2021 season. When she first joined the team in 8th grade she had run the 200 and 800 and ventured into the mile but was ready to experience something new. She expected to have fun, but she “surely didn’t expect to gain challenges that helped build my competitive mindset, close friends, an intro to the world of running and enduring connections.” That is what ended up happening, though, and she credits Rain City as “... the best introduction to the world of running that she could have asked for. “

In 2017 Jill competed with the RCF 13-14 girls team. She then took this newfound love of running into her high school years at Ballard where she ran both track and cross country. Racing and training with Rain City had laid the foundation for handling the challenging workouts and races that were required for high school. Jill served as a Team Captain for both sports for two seasons. Her Ballard cross country team was the Metro League champion in 2018 and she competed at the State meet in 2018 and 2019. Each year she returned to Rain City after the high school season to run JOs, wrapping up her RCF career in 2021 at the Regional meet at Chambers Bay..

Jill is also an accomplished musician and has played the clarinet since the 4th grade. She feels like, “the grit and rhythm demanded by making music is shared by the qualities that make up a runner like determination and steady breathing.” The musical environment provided opportunities to work through performance anxiety, to develop an ear for what brings happiness, to develop skills and form life-long bonds and a deeper connection to community. She has also volunteered a lot of her time working with kids in local summer camps and sports organizations, where she both gives and receives growth and joy.

Jill will be attending Western Washington University in the fall and is looking forward to continue learning in the academic sense. She also plans to run both cross country and track for the school. Jill will take with her what she learned from running with Rain City Flyers and apply it to her future endeavors, “how to pace myself, how to work off other competitors and teammates, to run hills, and to give my all.”

Maja van Zuylen

Maja van Zuylen started her time with Rain City Flyers when she was 8 years old. From the first practice, she was hooked on running and ran track and cross country with the team through the fall of her freshman year. One of the things that she loved so much about the team was, “all of the coaches and volunteers just wanted to see you make progress in any way that mattered to you.”

Rain City was a place of learning for Maja. She remembers it as a safe space where she wasn’t judged, but rather was always cheered on. Whether it was getting a big PR or just finishing a race, making it to Nationals or just winning a game of capture the flag at the end of practice, you were made to feel capable and to believe in yourself, that you were special and wanted as part of the team. “The strength that I learned to believe in at Rain City taught me to be resilient and helped me to fight back after injuries and tough races.” She carries that strength to tap into with life challenges.

Maja continued her running career at Roosevelt High School, making varsity in both cross country and track her freshman year and was awarded “Top Freshman” by the track team. And, of course she returned to Rain City to run JOs at Woodland Park. She rounded out her 4 years running varsity cross country as one of the captains during her senior year. She also volunteered with Girls on the Run, an experience that made her feel like she was able to give back to the running community which had given her so much. For both her RHS teams and at GOTR Maja focused on supporting social emotional awareness and growth.

Maja will attend Western Washington University in the fall, majoring in psychology. She plans to attend graduate school, as well, with the hope of pursuing a career in clinical psychology and counseling. Maja

credits RCF in part for this aspiration, “The support system I had at Rain City is so meaningful to me and inspires me to be able to be a support system in young peoples’ lives.”

Sloane Selenis

Sloane Selenis ran with Rain City Flyers from 2012-2018, running both track and cross country for the team. The first thing that made her want to join the team was duffel bag envy, but she quickly “fell in love with running and racing, with the feeling of the wind in my hair and my bright green socks pulled up, with the fire in my legs and the determination in my heart, with the friendship formed between teammates and the greater community.”

Sloane notes learning about the value of community as key to her Rain City experience. She had early running success, achieving USATF Junior Olympics All-American status in her first year of cross country competition. Then as is often the case there were injuries and disappointments. But Sloane never let barriers stand in her way or became afraid of failure. Rather she remained determined and kept working and enjoying her teammates. Rain City brought her joy and the realization that “... with community around me hard things became fun.”

Sloane continued to run when she attended Roosevelt High School, running on both varsity track and cross country teams and captaining the cross country team her senior year. As Captain, she “worked hard to create a community where we supported one another, helped each other reach our goals, and celebrated our own personal victories, whether that’s setting a new school record or finishing a 5k for the first time.” She was also a stellar student graduating as an AP Scholar with Distinction and as Co-Valedictorian.

Sloane will attend University of Vermont in the fall as a Presidential Scholar, awarded for her academic merit. She will be majoring in Environmental Science and running for both the track and cross country teams of the school. Sloane will take the lessons she learned running with RCF with her and apply them forward. “One person alone cannot change the world, but when we bring our knowledge and skills together in a community, we can transcend our personal potential and create real change. Whether it’s formed from running or not, community breeds empathy and makes the world a better place because we are connected and care more.”

The Rain City Community joins in a cheer for Claire, Ethan, Peter, Jill, Sloane, and Maya -- the 2022 RCF Scholarship Award Recipients and for all graduating RCF participants ... WIN RAIN CITY!