

Dear Scholarship Selection Committee,

I have had the pleasure of coaching CR South senior, Kristen Wandling, since her freshman year. I refer to Kristen as a 4 X 4 runner. She runs the 4 season cycle of cross country, winter track, spring track *and* pre-season summer training and is in her 4th year of high school running at the varsity level. Kristen is the quintessential distance runner. She grew up in a household of runners so it was only natural that she would follow in the footsteps of her Mom, Dad and big sisters, Maura and Cara. The foundation was set at a young age and Kristen realized running was rewarding and fun. Running helped Kristen get through a difficult period in 6th and 7th grade when she had to wear a back brace to treat a curvature in her spine. The only time Kristen was free from the confinement of the brace was when she ran track/XC for CYO or slept at night. Thankfully, Kristen's strict adherence to wearing the brace during those pre-teen years mitigated further damage. Over the many years and the many miles since that time, Kristen continues to love this demanding sport. She was selected as co-captain for the 2017 cross country team for her dedication.

Early in her high school career, Kristen made a big impact on the cross county team. Within a few meets, Kristen raced her way onto the varsity lineup and has been a consistent top 7 harrier ever since. As a freshman, she was awarded the 2014 Cross Country Newbie Award for her strong performances. She is a strength based runner and can run long and strong for many miles. Teammates look to Kristen to pace them through tough workouts and competitive races. She leads by example and has been instrumental in elevating the team to a higher level of training. During winter track, Kristen uses the season to put in mileage at Tyler Park and interval workouts on the track. She competes in the occasional 3000M indoor race to keep sharp but recognizes that the big push is always the upcoming spring track season. She is diligent and patient and has goals for setting her personal best in the 3200M this spring. Throughout her high school career, she has scored critical points for the Lady Hawks in the 1600M and 3200M in dual meets. Last spring track season, Kristen's 6th place finish in the 3200M contributed to CR South's 2017 SOL Championship Title. She's a true distance runner that will grind out the laps regardless of the wind, rain and cold temps that often accompany winter and spring track. Her good humor and positive spirit helps lighten the team's mood during those tough workouts and races.

Kristen's leadership goes beyond her role as captain of the cross country team. She is events coordinator for the West African Vision Club, an officer for the Breast Cancer Awareness Club and an active member in clubs for Autism Awareness and ALS. This bright student is a member of honor societies for English, Spanish and Rho Kappa. Kristen also volunteers as a CARES peer mentor and school yearbook editor. In the running community, she has worked with novice runners on Holland Middle School's Track Team and most recently volunteered for meet director, Mike Gross, at the CCCNYC East Regional Meet in Tyler Park. Kristen plans to further her undergraduate studies as a business major and is exploring options at Penn State University, Fordham University and Fairfield University. She plans to continue running at the club level in college. The Great Strides Scholarship Award would certainly validate her contribution to the sport help support her academic pursuits. Perhaps this devoted runner will one day become a member of the BCRR community as well.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joan Thornton  
CR South Head Coach Women's Cross Country

CR South Assistant Coach Women's Winter & Spring Track