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Bryana Cielo of Sacred Heart University and Kurt Rawlings of Yale University Named Hartford HealthCare Connecticut Courage Award Winners

HARTFORD, Conn. – APR. 28, 2020— The College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA), in association with Hartford HealthCare, Connecticut’s most comprehensive healthcare network, have selected **Bryana Cielo**, a senior swimmer at **Sacred Heart University**, and **Kurt Rawlings**, a senior football player for **Yale University**, as recipients of the **Hartford HealthCare Connecticut Courage Award**. In recognition, \$1,500 will be donated to their schools’ general scholarship funds in their names to help future students achieve their dreams.

Each month, two inspiring student-athletes who have demonstrated courage in the face of adversity—such as overcoming injury, illness or other challenges—are recognized as **Hartford HealthCare Connecticut Courage Award Winners**. A panel of writers, editors and sports information directors from CoSIDA, AP and *College Hoops Illustrated*, as well as the program’s ambassador, Rebecca Lobo, select the honorees. Hartford HealthCare is donating a total of \$15,000 to the general scholarship funds for the student-athletes being honored throughout the year.

Previous winners this year have included: **Taylor Herd**, a senior guard on the **Quinnipiac University** women’s basketball team; **Chris Liggio**, a senior running back for the **University of New Haven** football team; **Samara Johnson**, a member of the **Eastern Connecticut State University** cross-country and track & field teams; **Ace McAlister**, a member of the **Trinity College** cross-country and track & field teams; **Sam Kramer**, a senior point guard for the **Fairfield University** women’s basketball team; **Eli Thomas**, a senior football player for the **University of Connecticut**; **Katelyn Mann**, a senior swimmer at **Central Connecticut State University**; and **Jacob Anderson**, a sophomore lacrosse player at **Mitchell College**. Their full stories are available at www.HHCCourageAward.com

Cielo, a senior from Montville, N.J., earned all-conference honors at Montville High School and a scholarship to swim for Sacred Heart. During the 2016-17 season, she was an NEC Academic Honor Roll member as well as a member of the Pioneers 200-medley relay school-record-setting team. Unfortunately, following two grand-mal seizures and a diagnosis of juvenile myoclonic epilepsy during the summer heading into her junior year, she was forced to end her 13-year swimming career due to the stress that training would put on her body and the risk of drowning. Despite having to sit on the sidelines for her junior and senior seasons, she served as a valuable member of the team by motivating and inspiring her teammates. In January 2020, after one year of being seizure-free, her doctors and coaches permitted her to swim one final race—the 50m freestyle at the NEC Championships. As if pulled from the pages of a Hollywood script, she swam the best time of her life and finished sixth in her heat. She chronicled her journey in a blog at <https://swimswam.com/author/bryana/>.

Rawlings began his career as the quarterback for Yale in grand fashion, winning an Ivy League title in his sophomore season and passing for 2,320 yards and 19 touchdowns. Unfortunately, the Bel Air, Md., native saw his junior season end after just six games when he fractured his leg during the Bulldogs 23-10 win over the University of Pennsylvania. The timing of the injury could not have been worse, as it came shortly after his mother Kathy was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer. She underwent 24 rounds of chemotherapy, 21 rounds of radiation, surgery and experimental drugs every three weeks. In July she received a diagnosis that the cancer was in remission. As Rawlings prepared for the 2019 season, not only did he need to come back from an injury, but he also had to overcome 2018 Ivy Rookie of the Year Griffin O'Connor at QB for Yale. By the time the season started, Rawlings had regained his starting job, using the same perseverance as his mother in reaching new heights. He completed his career by setting every career passing and total yardage record at Yale and was recognized as the Ivy Player of the Year. He led the Bulldogs to a 9-1 record and the 2019 Ivy league Championship with a thrilling 50-43 double-overtime win over Harvard by passing for 417 yards and three touchdowns and rushing for 62 yards and another score in his final collegiate game.

“Hartford HealthCare is excited to recognize these two remarkable young student-athletes, who despite setbacks, have overcome challenges to continue to perform their best as both scholars and athletes,” says Jeffrey A. Flaks, president and chief executive officer of Hartford HealthCare. “Our organization’s purpose is to help people live their healthiest lives, and both Bryana and Kurt’s courageous stories of recovery and perseverance are an inspiration to all.”

“We thank Hartford HealthCare for helping us create a platform to share the personal stories of courage for student-athletes at colleges and universities throughout Connecticut,” says Doug Vance, executive director of CoSIDA. “We hope the stories of the personal challenges that these remarkable young men and women have battled can inspire other young people to show courage in the face of adversity in their own lives.”

As the **Hartford HealthCare Courage Award Ambassador**, Ms. Lobo attended award ceremonies with several of the honorees and helped raise awareness for their inspiring stories of courage. Ms. Lobo retired in 2003, is a member of the National Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame, the

Naismith National Basketball Hall of Fame and the CoSIDA Academic All-America Hall of Fame. She has served on the Board of Directors for Hartford Hospital, where she was born. She currently works as a television analyst, author and motivational speaker and lives in Connecticut with her husband and their four children.

About Hartford HealthCare: With 30,000 colleagues and total operating revenue of \$4.3 billion, Hartford HealthCare has cultivated a strong, unified culture of accountability and innovation. Its care-delivery system, with more than 360 locations serving 185 towns and cities, includes two tertiary-level teaching hospitals, an acute-care community teaching hospital, an acute-care hospital and trauma center, three community hospitals, the state's most extensive behavioral health network, a large multispecialty physician group, a clinical care organization, a regional home care system, an array of senior care services, and a large physical therapy and rehabilitation network. Hartford HealthCare's unique, system-wide Institute Model offers a single, high standard of care in crucial specialties at hospital and ambulatory sites across Connecticut. The institutes include: Cancer, Heart and Vascular, Ayer Neuroscience, Orthopedics and Tallwood Urology. Visit Hartford HealthCare at www.hartfordhealthcare.org.

About CoSIDA (College Sports Information Directors of America): CoSIDA was founded in 1957 and is a 3,000+ member national organization comprised of the sports public relations, media relations and communications/information professionals throughout all levels of collegiate athletics in the United States and Canada. The organization is the second oldest management association in intercollegiate athletics. For more than 60 years, CoSIDA has recognized student-athletes as part of its Academic All-America awards program. The Hartford HealthCare Courage Award is the third CoSIDA award specifically for student-athletes. Approximately 5,000 student-athletes are recognized each year for their excellence in the classroom and in competition. To learn more, visit cosida.com.

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Media Contact: Doug Drotman (631-462-1198 doug@drotman-pr.com)