

2025 Tribal Adaptive Student-Athlete of the Year Scholarship Awards announced

By Independent staff

FARMINGTON — Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives and Tribal Adaptive Organization, two non-profits dedicated to promoting health and wellness among young Native Americans, have announced the winners of the fourth Tribal Adaptive Student-Athlete of the Year Award. The two partnering organizations introduced this scholarship in 2021 to recognize a top male and a top female student-athlete with a physical disability.

The number of adaptive sports programs offered at the college level has increased nationwide, but physically and mobility-impaired Native American student athletes remain an underrepresented group. Eve's Fund and Tribal Adaptive hope that these annual awards will inspire Native youth living with a disability to engage in adaptive sports during their school years and to seek out adaptive sports programs at the college level.

Recognition

The awards recognize the two students' hard work and perseverance in overcoming obstacles to achieving their goals, both as athletes and students, redefining

the possibilities for young people with physical disabilities. The 2025 awardees have demonstrated resilience, a drive for achievement in the classroom and in the competitive athletic arena and have shown promising potential as future leaders in their communities. These individuals, one a high school student, and one a non-traditional college student, are inspiring examples for others to follow. They will be considered ambassadors for the missions of Tribal Adaptive Organization and Eve's Fund, in Indian Country and wherever their bright futures take them.

The students selected this year will each receive a \$1,500 scholarship from Eve's Fund and a customized hand-crafted beaded medallion, made possible by Tribal Adaptive Organization.

Diné scholar

Derek Parrish is the 2025 Tribal Adaptive male student-athlete honoree. The 34-year-old from Sanostee, is a Southwest Minnesota State University junior. Derek



Derek Parrish



Ari Hernandez

sustained a vehicular injury, caused by a driver in another car, that resulted in paralysis below the waist. A versatile athlete, Derek has played competitive wheelchair basketball for eight years and enjoys mono skiing and adaptive mountain biking. Derek's post-graduation goal is to be a gym teacher in the Navajo Nation school system. Derek, who is Diné, is also a talented hobbyist artisan, specializing in Native beadwork.

The 2025 Tribal Adaptive female student-athlete honoree is Ari Hernandez, a Mixteca high school sophomore from Albuquerque, who attends Atrisco Heritage Academy. Ari was born with a condition that causes joint and muscle stiffness from the waist down. She has been playing competitive wheelchair basketball for the past seven years. Ari excels in math classes and hopes to attend a college that offers top-notch adaptive athletic opportunities and an excellent academic program for her chosen field of study.

Noah Hotchkiss, founder of Tribal Adaptive, will present the awards at a reception to be held at the

organization's residential training camp for advanced wheelchair basketball in Kirtland.

About Tribal Adaptive

The Tribal Adaptive organization is a 501(c)(3) (founded in 2015 by then-16-year-old Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss). Its Mission is to use sports as a tool to improve the health and Wellness of Native Americans with physical disabilities. For more information, visit www.tribaladaptive.com.

About Eve's Fund

Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives is a community-based 501 (c)(3) organization promoting hope and wellness for Native American youth. The late Robert M. Crowell, MD, and Barbara Crowell Roy founded Eve's Fund in 2005 in memory of their daughter, Eve Erin Crowell. Over the past twenty years, the organization has developed strong community partnerships and created literacy, injury prevention, and education programs that have touched the lives of over 79,000 Native children and young adults and their families. For more information, go to www.evesfund.org.