

# Bił Nidahaz'áágo

## Two Native athletes win scholarships for adaptive sports achievements

BY NAVAJO TIMES



Ari Hernandez

**WINDOW ROCK** — Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives and the Tribal Adaptive Organization awarded scholarships to two Native student-athletes with physical disabilities who excel in adaptive sports and academics.

Ari Hernandez, a Mixteca high school sophomore from Albuquerque, and Derek Parrish, a 34-year-old Diné student at Southwest Minnesota State University, received the 2025 Tribal Adaptive Student-Athlete of the Year Awards. Each received \$1,500 and a custom beaded medallion.

The organizations created the scholarship in 2021 to honor top male and female student-athletes with physical disabilities. The awards recognize hard work and perseverance in overcoming

obstacles as athletes and scholars.

Hernandez attends Atrisco Heritage Academy in Albuquerque. She was born with a condition that causes joint and muscle stiffness from the waist down and has played competitive wheelchair basketball for seven years. She excels in math classes and wants to attend a college with strong adaptive athletic opportunities and academics in her chosen field.

Parrish is from Sanostee, New Mexico, and is a junior at Southwest Minnesota State University. A vehicular injury caused by a driver in another car resulted in paralysis below the waist. He has played competitive wheelchair basketball for eight years and enjoys mono skiing and adaptive mountain biking. After graduation, he wants to teach physical education in the Navajo Nation school

system. Parrish also creates Native beadwork as a hobbyist artisan.

Noah Hotchkiss, the founder of Tribal Adaptive Organization, presented the awards at a reception during the organization's residential training camp for advanced wheelchair basketball in Kirtland, New Mexico.

Adaptive sports programs at the college level have grown nationwide but physically and mobility-impaired Native student-athletes remain underrepresented. The two organizations hope the annual awards will inspire Native youth with disabilities to participate in adaptive sports and pursue college programs that support their athletic and academic goals.

The scholarship winners will serve as ambassadors for both organizations and spread awareness of adaptive

sports across Indian Country.

Tribal Adaptive Organization is a nonprofit founded in 2015 by Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss, who was 16 at the time. The organization uses sports to improve the health and wellness of Native Americans with physical disabilities.

Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives is a community-based nonprofit that promotes hope and wellness for Native youth. Dr. Robert M. Crowell and Barbara Crowell Roy founded the organization in 2005 in memory of their daughter, Eve Erin Crowell. Over the past 20 years, the organization has developed community partnerships and created literacy, injury prevention and education programs that have reached more than 79,000 Native children and young adults and their families.



Derek Parrish