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**CHELSEA COHEN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT NAMED**

**NORWALK HIGH’S STEPHANY ESCALANTE AWARDED $5,000
 FOR COLLEGE EDUCATION FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Fairfield County Sports Commission announced today the recipient of its 2019 Chelsea Cohen Memorial Scholarship, which recognizes a female scholar/athlete who is a graduating senior from Norwalk’s high schools with a financial award toward higher education.

Norwalk High’s Stephany Escalante was named as the winner and she will receive a $5,000 grant as support for her college freshman year this fall.

The scholarship is awarded to the candidate that best exemplifies the spirit and qualities of the late Chelsea Cohen, a graduate of NHS who passed away after a long bout with cancer in 2006 and whose name is memorialized through FCSC's annual Courage Award. Criteria for nomination included academic honors, participation in one or more varsity level sports, community service and displaying high levels of sportsmanship, leadership and character. UnitedHealthcare sponsors the scholarship along with the Courage Award and Fitness Academy named for Chelsea.

Last year’s recipient was McMahon’s Savannah Buzzeo. The award was started by FCSC in 2017 with two winners, one each from McMahon (Bella Bean) and Norwalk High (Sarah St. Surin), who both received $2,500 grants.

“It was a very difficult choice again this year. The candidates were all extremely accomplished young women, top scholars, well rounded athletes and involved in their communities,” said Chelsea’s mother Barbara Rittner. “Stephany stood out with her emotional maturity, attitude towards life, insightfulness, and best exemplified the character that rallied a community behind Chelsea in her battle and that continues to honor her memory. Stephany is a natural leader, has a sense of humor and strives to be the best she can be. I am so pleased to have such a wonderful young woman win this award in my daughter’s name. “

Escalante, who will be attending Albright College in Reading, PA, is a four-year high honors student and two-year member of the National Honor Society. She played four years of soccer for the Bears and was captain her senior season. She plans to continue her soccer career at Division III Albright. Stephany also was a sprinter in the dash events on the varsity outdoor track team her junior year.

Spending time giving back to her community has been a focus for Escalante. She volunteers at the New Beginnings Community Church and especially enjoys her meaningful work at Malta House, which provides care for babies of single mothers, who also need a home and employment. In addition, she holds a part-time job serving ice cream at one of Norwalk’s shops.