

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**



NEWS RELEASE

Indiana Athlete Selected as Section 4 Recipient of NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: John Gillis

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 29, 2012) — **Alysia Bennett**, a three-sport athlete at Sullivan (Indiana) High School, has been selected as the 2012 Section 4 recipient of the “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The National High School Spirit of Sport Award was created by the NFHS to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the spirit of sport that represent the core mission of education-based athletics.

Bennett, who is a senior at Sullivan High School, has earned three varsity letters in soccer, one varsity letter in basketball and will earn her fourth varsity letter in softball this spring. She has earned Academic All-Conference honors and has been a team captain in all three sports. In addition, she helped instruct youth clinics in softball and basketball, and is a member of both the Beta Club and National Honor Society.

During Bennett’s sophomore soccer season in 2009, she was struggling with what was thought to be a hip injury. The hip continually worsened during the ensuing

weeks and interrupted her basketball season. Further testing was done and she was diagnosed with Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma Stage 4 Non-Hodgkins.

Bennett had surgery to remove a cancerous lymph node, but after still experiencing pain upon her return home, she went to St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis, where the doctors learned that the cancer had spread to her hip, stomach, a lung, both neck glands and under her arms.

She went on to endure 15 months of chemotherapy, including an extremely aggressive treatment during the first eight weeks in which the medicine was injected directly into her spine. The chemotherapy created the need for blood transfusions, followed by intense physical therapy on her hip.

While the cancer kept Bennett from participating in the sports she loved, the community came together to support her in the recovery efforts. Numerous benefits and fundraisers were held in her name to help defray medical expenses.

At a Sullivan High School girls basketball game in February 2010, nearly the entire crowd wore yellow t-shirts that read "Livestrong Aly," team members wore pink uniforms and pink socks, and the game was played with a pink basketball. Although Bennett was unable to attend the game, she was given a DVD of it.

While enduring the physical toll of the cancer treatments, Bennett was able to both maintain her 3.6 grade-point average and return to athletic competition in all three sports. During that same time, she was able to give back by designing a sports chest protector for cancer patients. The chest protector covers the port where chemotherapy is injected and helped speed up her return to the softball diamond. She is currently trying to get the chest protector patented.

Bennett has been very active within the Sullivan community. She volunteers at the Humane Society and at the Sullivan County Animal Hospital. She has done charity work

for The Friends of the Library, and has spoken on the radio for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The NFHS divides the nation into eight geographical sections. The states in Section 4 are Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Nominations for this award were generated through NFHS member state associations and reviewed by the NFHS Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee composed of state association staff members.

While the national winner will be recognized July 8 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, the section winners will be recognized within their respective states and will receive awards before the end of the current school year.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and Rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.6 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

MEDIA CONTACT: John Gillis, 317-972-6900
National Federation of State High School Associations
PO Box 690, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206

jgillis@nfhs.org