

2021 Rain City Flyers Scholarship Recipients

Olivia Freeman

Olivia Freeman was running track and cross country before she joined Rain City in 7th grade. But she emphasizes that it was with RCF that she began to have fun competing and learned how to race. Rain City taught her the skills and habits plus enjoyment of the sport that motivated her to stick with it when the going gets tough.

RCF taught me how to win through hard work. She writes, “Winners and losers have the same goals, but what I’ve learned through years of hard work is that the difference between winning and losing isn’t about the goals you set; rather it is about what you put into what you do.”

Friendships Olivia made in RCF continued through high school with the RCF camaraderie reaching across different teams. Olivia attended Bishop Blanchet where she was awarded most valuable and most inspirational athlete for Blanchet teams and went to state all four years in XC, finishing 3rd in Metro her senior year. She currently holds the all-time Blanchet 5k record at 18.01 and ranks top 5 for 3A girls in WA.

Olivia wrapped up her high school running at the 2021 Metro League Meet with an ambitious program. She was 2nd in the 3200, 5th in the 1600 and 4th in the 800, scoring points to help her team to the Metro title. Olivia will attend New York University as a cross country and track athlete. Her outlook on life, gained from her experience running, will continue to serve her as she strives to model grit strength and perseverance.

Danielle Jaculewicz

Danielle Jaculewicz has vivid memories of her first RCF practice as a 7-year old on an early Saturday morning in Woodland Park. “... I was immediately welcomed and included by my peers and coaches. I never once felt like an outsider at Rain City Flyers.” This sense of belonging began what grew into eight years of participation for Danielle in RCF cross country and track. She writes, “RCF ... [gave] me a safe environment to grow socially and athletically completely independently at a very young age.”

Competing with RCF opened Danielle’s eyes to the pressure of sports and performance. But RCF demonstrated healthy balance. Through capture-the-flag and the potato chip relay she learned to work hard while having fun, then race hard because she loved the team. In total Danielle attended 10 USATF National XC and track meets. In 2012 Danielle earned All American status at the USATF National Junior Olympics Championship, finishing 10th. That same year she also competed in the Hershey National Championships, where she finished 2nd in her favorite event, 400 meters.

Danielle attended Blanchet High School, where she ran on both the track and cross-country teams. The self-discipline developed from years of structured RCF practices provided the basis for effectively managing high school academics during sports seasons. She finished her high school track career as Metro League champion in the 400 meters, still her favorite event!

Danielle states that Rain City’s “... dedicated self-disciplined, yet lighthearted approach to participating in sports” set a platform for her to excel in high school and beyond. Following a gap semester program

abroad focused on culture, language and service, Danielle will carry these values to her dream school New York University come January 2022. She is keeping the spirit of RCF with her as she enters the next chapter of life.

Peterson King

Pete King started running with Rain City as a 12 year-old. He describes his young self as active, but not “sporty” and jokes that he started running because he couldn’t throw or catch. His perceived lack of talent and comfort with losing led him to limit his participation in sports.

But Rain City and the sport of cross country gave him a new perspective on approaching competition. “Running at Rain City was never about being the best or fearing being the worst it was about working hard to improve your own accomplishments while also supporting your teammates.” He took lessons learned from three years with RCF on to O’Dea High School, running varsity XC from sophomore to senior years.

Pete credits the approach he learned to competition with Rain City as crucial to his overall development both athletically and in other life areas. He continued to strive to improve his personal best times in cross country while accomplishing First Honors academically and receiving National Honor Society recognition.

For Pete Rain City has always been less about competition and more about community. He observed that small groups of people can make a big positive impact through hard work and organization. His participation in the RCF stewardship projects at Woodland Park sparked an appreciation for giving back to the community by maintaining a community space and trail network that all runners and local walkers can use. He will take this RCF model of community action and all that he has gained from Rain City on to Gonzaga University.

Eric Anthony Souza-Ponce

Eric Anthony Souza-Ponce states that Rain City taught him that running is both an individual and a team sport. Before connecting with Rain City as an 8th grader he ran with his mother and participated in middle school track. He understood how to run as an individual. But it was with Rain City that he first ran cross country and learned about teammates pushing each other and competing to success for the each runner as well as the team.

His first year as a Flyer Eric Anthony’s team advanced to regionals. It was his first time traveling to race and the race did not go as planned. He lost a shoe in the mud halfway through but finished the race. While the team didn’t advance, Eric learned a lesson-- no race is wasted as long as you learn something. He still has that muddy shoe as a reminder that things won’t always to as planned – but you can still finish the race.

Eric Anthony took this learning into high school where he had a standout career as a member of the Ballard High School cross country and track teams, including serving as captain of the XC team. He

competed at the State XC meet three years. He also returned to Rain City his freshman year to help the 13-14 boys qualify for Nationals.

When the pandemic hit in 2020 Eric Anthony found ways while his family was in strict lockdown to train by himself and stay committed to running. In the absence of a track season he also took advantage of zoom meetings to delve more deeply into his passion for racial equity. He worked with many programs addressing those issues and was the recipient of numerous awards related to that service work, including the Stim Bullitt Civic Courage Award.

Eric is an exemplar of citizen/athlete. He will attend Western Washington University where he will continue his running career as recruit to their highly respected cross country and track programs. And he will continue to pursue his passion for racial equity through his major of American Cultural Studies.

The Rain City Community joins in a cheer for Olivia, Danielle, Pete and Eric Anthony -- the 2021 RCF Scholarship Award Recipients and for all graduating RCF participants ... WIN RAIN CITY!