

# Alton Road Runners honors area cross-country athletes with annual banquet

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**ALTON** – Compared to other athletes, cross-country runners sometimes don't get the recognition that athletes in other sports get.

It can be a difficult, grueling sport, however – running in all kinds of weather and on terrain that can vary in many ways.

The **Alton Road Runners Club** recognized the achievements of the area's high school cross-country runners with the club's annual Runner of the Year Banquet Sunday night at Alton's Bluff City Grill in downtown Alton. The restaurant also catered the event with what Alton Road Runners club president and East Alton-Wood River cross country and track coach Russ Colona called a "wonderful meal."

Two runners from each of 14 area schools were honored at the banquet as well as runners who took part in the club's Summer Running Series events – the Alton Memorial Hospital Family Run, the Hit-N-Run Pee-Wee Run and the Dash-N-Splash – for youths.

“These guys deserve all the recognition you can give them; it's a lot of work to compete in this sport,” said **Colona**. “They work all year long, all summer long, running a lot of miles in the heat and the cold and the hills – it's tough and it's great to give them some recognition. They deserve it.

“The club appreciates doing this for the kids; it's a nice thing to do for them.”

“Russ Colona and his wife (Kathy) – as (it was said at the end of the banquet) are outstanding people. Not only do they do the Alton Road Runners, they do a lot of things for kids,” said Jersey cross-country coach Harold Landon.

“This is just awesome because cross country is not one of the most recognized sports; for the cross-country kids to be recognized here as a group is just great,” he said. “Cross-country is not one of those sports where you have an arch-rival or an enemy; basically, all these runners know each other, they push for each other. It's a great event to see all these great runners and all coaches show up; it's just an awesome event.”

“Cross-country runners don't get the recognition that other sports get,” said former Litchfield runner Victoria Quarton, who was the keynote speaker for the event, “ so it's awesome you do this every year. I remember being in your shoes and being really nervous and excited about running in college (Quarton ran for Eastern Illinois after graduating from Litchfield), so you guys have a lot of exciting times ahead.”

Area runners who were recognized at the banquet included **Jessica Martel and Evan Rathgeb (Alton); Lily Baumgartner and Olivia Richey (Carrollton); Zoey Lewis and Cohl Callies (Civic Memorial); Kaylee Dailey and Brenden Springman (East Alton-Wood River); Riley Vickrey and Adam Sanders (Marquette Catholic); Kate Muravjova and Javon Watkins (Metro East Lutheran); Michaela Tarpley and**

**Cree Stumpf (Roxana); Isabelle Wolff and Caden Both (Piasa Southwestern); Abby Schrobilgen and Franky Romano (Edwardsville) and Kaleigh Grace and Ben Flowers (Jersey).**

Youth runners recognized included **Grace Carter, Gabrielle Emmons, Kate LaFlamme, Savannah Scheffel, Ben Gehrs and Nicholas Ritchie**; **Mike Cleary** was honored with the Road Runners Club's Allen Tuetken Service Award.