

CM's Zupan, Marquette Catholic's Williams Are Harry Gallatin Awards Banquet Players Of Year

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ALTON - Owen Williams of Marquette Catholic and Kelbie Zupan of Civic Memorial were announced as the 2021-22 Riverbend Most Valuable Players at the 75th edition of the Harry Gallatin Awards Banquet held Sunday evening at the Best Western Premier Hotel in Alton.

It was the first time the banquet was held since 2019 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and honored the best players of the Riverbend area during the just-completed season. They're named for legendary player and coach Harry Gallatin, who died in 2015 after a Naismith Basketball Hall-of-Fame career that saw him play at Roxana High School and what is now Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo., then go on to a 10-year playing career for the New York Knickerbockers and Detroit Pistons in the fledgeling days of the NBA post-World War II. He was head coach of SIU-Carbondale, both the St. Louis Hawks and Knicks in the NBA and at SIU-Edwardsville

Williams beat out a great field for boys' MVP, which included Adrian Elliott of Alton, Sam Buckley of CM, Seth Slayden of East Alton-Wood River and Aiden Briggs of Roxana. Williams helped the Explorers to a 19-12 season and IHSA Class 2A regional championship before losing in the sectional semifinals to Teutopolis.

Zupan was named girls MVP from a field that included Alton's Kiyoko Proctor, EAWR's Emily Johnson, Marquette's Chloe White and Roxana's Lexi Ryan. Zupan was one of the leaders of the Eagles' team that finished 32-6 and went on to a fourth-place finish at their first-ever IHSA Class 3A state finals in Bloomington-Normal.



Alton Mayor David Goins served as keynote speaker and gave a passionate speech about success. The former Redbird basketball player used the word success as an acronym to inspire the young basketball players in the crowd, connecting hoops with the game of life.

The boys 110 percent award winner was Evan Wells of Roxana, who was in a field that included Ihzel Brown of Alton, Dalton Buhs of CM, Jakob Gerber of EAWR and Parker Macias of Marquette. The girls 110 percent winner was Abby Williams of the Explorers, who was tops in a field that included Jarius Powers of the Redbirds, Aubree Wallace of the Eagles, Ocean Bland of the Oilers and Knisley Mouser of the Shells.

Cathy Snipes, a former standout player at Alton, was presented with the Special Service Award for meritorious service to area basketball, the team sportsmanship awards went to EAWR for the boys and Marquette for the girls and the free throw award winners were Macias for the boys and Proctor for the girls.

A total of 15 past area MVP winners were also in attendance to celebrate the banquet's 75th anniversary.



