

Iain Wilson Character Through Competition Award Winners Announced

■ Graeme Wilson & Marc Balcer

Tyra Christopherson (COC) and Ethan Childs (GMOC) are this year's Iain Wilson Character Through Competition Award winners. Tyra and Ethan will each receive a \$1,000 travel grant.

While thousands of miles separate this year's winners who hail from Washington and Vermont, they have much in common. Both winners were introduced to the sport through their families and have expanded this legacy by introducing others to orienteering, and by supporting their peers. In selecting Tyra and Ethan for the award, the committee felt that each of them will serve as a positive role model and ambassador for the sport for years to come.

Tyra is caring yet competitive, a perfect combination for this award that requires a strong desire to win along with an understanding that fellow competitors also share this feeling. One of Tyra's references described her as a "servant leader" who has the "ability to motivate, relate to and empathize with others", while managing to avoid calling attention to herself or seeking recognition.

As a long-time member of the organization Serving Our Society, Tyra has distinguished herself as a leader in engaging with individuals and families, and recently began working with Athletes for Kids which seeks to change the lives of children with disabilities and special needs.

A recent selection to the U.S. Junior National Team, Tyra has won several events in the Washington Interscholastic Orienteering League. A local orienteering leader describes her as someone who "just loves being out in the woods" and "is the first to help her teammates and opponents."

Like Tyra, Ethan has been orienteering for as long as he can remember. It is his commitment to mentorship, teamwork and learning that led to his selection for the Iain Wilson Character Through Competition Award. Ethan is a certified level one coach who



Bruce Christopherson



Ken Walker, Jr.

serves as a role model for numerous juniors. A junior team administrator describes Ethan as having "an excellent moral compass." The enthusiasm Ethan's presence produces is clear whether he is doing course reviews with younger juniors or courting corporate sponsors for junior programming.

In his application, Ethan demonstrated a key contribution to his orienteering growth by describing how he came to understand that "when my pace slowed down to something I could control, my races become faster. I learned to find the balance between speed and skill." Ethan is the embodiment of one of his favorite catch phrases: "Make

good choices."

Ethan has been inspired by junior orienteering trips at national and international levels. He qualified for the U.S. WOC team and was recognized as the 2014 Junior Orienteer of the Year.

The Award is presented in memory of Iain Wilson who is remembered for helping and supporting his family, friends and colleagues.

This year's winners demonstrate these very characteristics. We hope the travel grant that comes along with the award will enable each of them to grow, learn and inspire. Each of our awardees is uniquely developing character through orienteering, while at the same time providing support for others.

The generous support of the Wilson Family, Iain's track and cross country teammates at Haverford College, and other friends, have made The Iain Wilson Character Through Competition Award possible. To learn more about the Award, including application for future years and how you can support the Award into the future, please visit us at www.orienteeringusa.org/wilsonaward.

The IWA committee is inspired by the international nature of our sport and wants to encourage shared experiences with orienteers from other lands. Last year's awardees were able to compete outside their home States and even in Europe. Orienteering challenges the body and at the same time requires the mind to interpret symbols that are not dependent upon verbal language. Native speakers of English are only a small group of total orienteers. For example, a brief search of orienteering biographies on the internet suggests that fewer than 5% are native speakers of English. Although we might not understand the native speech of most of the world's orienteers, the meaning gleaned from the map transcends the spoken word and unites us all. On a map field-checked by a Russian, one can peruse a course designed by a Norwegian, and be beaten by a Finn – all of whom speak very different languages.

The World Orienteering Championships this year will be held in Scotland, the Wilson family's country of origin. Participants in the Scottish 6 Days will be able to run over the same terrain as those competing in the WOC. Who knows, maybe some of our awardees will be there running through countryside in which Iain Wilson was very much at home. The running and navigational problems are varied, including pine and beech woods and wild hillsides such as Glen Affric. The committee is delighted that the IWA helps encourage participation in such international events.