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Mars quartet honored Receive scholarships from the lacrosse program

By [Mike Kilroy](#)
Eagle Staff Writer

ADAMS TWP — Camille Cipkins wasn't exactly excited about the prospect of playing lacrosse. But her mom, Lori, who grew up in the lacrosse hotbed of Syracuse, N.Y., encouraged her to give it a try.

"I was very wary about it at first," Cipkins said. "Then I found out a few of my friends were going to try it, too."

That was more than five years ago when Cipkins was just entering the seventh grade. The Mars youth program had just begun to feature this strange new sport.

Cipkins immediately took to it.

"I definitely did. I fell in love with it," Cipkins said. "I played soccer, but I developed more passion for lacrosse."

Cipkins graduated from Mars High School earlier this month and will attend Ohio State University in the fall.

Cipkins, teammate Kelly O'Connell and Mars boys lacrosse players Zac Sicher and Nicolas Cimini were each awarded \$1,000 scholarships.

The money was raised by the boosters and by a mattress fundraiser by the boys and girls players. "We had a company that sells all different kinds of mattresses set up a temporary store in the high school and they sent all of us players to different parts of the community with signs and costumes to tell people where and when they could buy the mattresses for a discount off of the normal price," Cipkins said.

That made receiving the scholarship even more rewarding for the four recipients because they had a hand in raising some of the money used to dole them out.

"I'm extremely grateful for it," Sicher said. "It will help a lot. I'm honored and humbled by it."

Both Mars lacrosse teams enjoyed a successful season this spring.

The Mars boys blitzed through the regular season with impressive, blowout wins and claimed the Division II WPIAL title with a 15-10 victory over Hampton.

The Mars girls also rampaged through the regular season and the playoffs before ultimately falling to Blackhawk, 7-5, in the WPIAL Division II final. Sicher, a team captain during his junior and senior seasons, will attend Liberty University.

He won't play lacrosse there, however.

He carried a 4.42 GPA during his academic career at Mars.

"What I probably learned from playing lacrosse is that you have to give it your all," Sicher said.

"You never know when you're going to be injured. You never know when it's all going to be over, so give your all."

Cimini, also a team captain on both the lacrosse and soccer teams at the school, will attend Westminster College where he will play lacrosse.

O'Connell graduated with a 4.51 GPA and will attend Notre Dame.

She said her experience playing lacrosse at Mars for the first three years of the program's existence has been unforgettable.

"It was really special playing with the same group of girls," O'Connell said. "All the girls mixed together well and we had such a tight bond."

She said while she plans on trying to play intramural lacrosse at Notre Dame, the realization that her competitive lacrosse is over has hit her hard.

"It's definitely very bittersweet," O'Connell said. "I got to meet a lot of people that I wouldn't have without lacrosse."

Cipkins, who graduated with a 4.54 GPA, plans on majoring in health and rehabilitation science and minor in Spanish.

She wants to do missionary work in Central and South America.

"I want to help people down there," Cipkins said.

She is also proud of where she and her senior teammates have left the still relatively young Mars girls program.

"We really set our sights at the beginning of the season on making it to the WPIAL championships," Cipkins said. "Lacrosse really taught me how to have a strong work ethic."

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