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Kyle Richard of SUNY Cortland Wins 2018 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award

MIAMI LAKES, FL. (www.orangebowl.org) SUNY Cortland linebacker **Kyle Richard** is the winner of the **2018 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award**. Richard, a 6-foot, 230-pound senior has become an outspoken advocate for victims of sexual assault and bystander intervention after being shot twice in the summer of 2017 while interrupting a sexual assault.

"I knew the story itself was one that (affected) a lot of people, but the story is not even really the one I want to be ended with, with a shooting," Richard said. "It's more: I want my story to really be about me trying to help other people out. It's been tough this past year trying to spread as much awareness as possible while being a great teammate and making sure everything is right on the field, but it's something that I really do take pride in because I get to help so many people. And I know that people out there need a man to really be talking about this stuff and spreading awareness, so I'm just doing my part, really."

On July 23, 2017, Richard pursued an assailant outside of a party on Long Island. The assailant pulled out a gun and shot at Richard three times, hitting him once in the left quad and once in the right hamstring. A friend, Michael Abiola, was also shot, leading to nerve damage.

Richard underwent intensive physical therapy and was able to return to the field and appear in 10 games that season. He wrote "Michael 200%" on his wristbands before games, knowing that, for reasons that cannot be explained, his friend took the worst of it that July night. Richard finished second on the team with 75 tackles, along with 4.5 tackles for loss, three sacks, two fumble recoveries, nine quarterback hurries and two pass breakups.

In April, Richard was presented with the Biden Courage Award for Bystander Intervention by former Vice President Joe Biden, along with a Next Generation Award from Kristin's Fund, which is an Oneida County charity that aims to end domestic violence through awareness campaigns. Richard has also received a thank-you note from NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

The Lakeview, N.Y., native has spoken at a number of awareness events, deflecting personal attention while hoping that other people around the world can follow his example and step up whenever they are presented with an opportunity to act.

"I just want people to believe that it is true: Anybody can be a hero at any given time," Richard said. "I believe that my teammates at Cortland would've been doing the same thing if they were in the situation that I was in. I want to believe that there are so many people, but the problem is not enough people do it. So just be that hero in somebody's life. Even if you think of little things, just try to be there for somebody."

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“This stuff is happening every day and we need to stop it as a society. And hopefully my generation is the generation that really puts into perspective how much this has to change.”

Richard credits another friend, Sulaiman Aina, for initially recognizing the sexual assault at the July party and attempting to break it up as well.

Richard was a two-time captain for the Red Dragons, who went 7-3 this season. He finished tied for the team lead in tackles, with 71, to go with seven tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, one interception, two pass breakups, three passes defended, four quarterback hurries, one fumble recovery and one safety. He is expected to graduate with a degree in kinesiology this spring.

His inspiration comes from his mother Sandra, a sergeant in her 28th year with the Nassau County Police Department whose tough-love approach helped shape Kyle and his two brothers.

“First let me express how thankful and proud I am of Kyle — as a father of two daughters, his college coach and fan,” Cortland coach Dan MacNeill said. “He is truly deserving of all attention and accolades according to the profound action that draws him into this story of highlight and hardship. The highlight: the obvious action taken two summers ago to save and serve a young girl from assault, along with the actions, that continue to this day to serve society in the pursuit of the perpetrator.

“The hardship: the cost to him as a result of the physical injuries sustained and then recovery handled in a very humble manner. These, along with the many actions and choices prior to and then after this circumstance, define him as ‘special.’

“Kyle was raised and self-prepared for this moment. He is emblematic of having and exuding strong principles, possessing behavioral values we all hold dear, including being an ‘active bystander.’ Kyle is that solution, open to right-minded service in the protection of others. Educated by strong family values instilled at home and then thankfully drawn to our program with similar leadership traits, he embodies our culture, as evidenced and honored by his election as a junior captain prior to this heroic story.

“Kyle’s responsive manner continues as a servant. His story allows him a platform as a spokesman and advocate for justice. Combined with a tough resolve, humble perseverance and extraordinary recovery, he continues to define his success story and journey as our cherished two-time captain and all-time teammate. This award is justly bestowed on the ‘right’ young man, as his actions are a gift to all.”

The Courage Award was first presented by the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) in 2002. A select group of writers from the FWAA vote on the winner each year. The requirements for nomination include displaying courage on or off the field, including overcoming an injury or physical handicap, preventing a disaster or living through hardship. Kyle Richard will be included in festivities during Capital One Orange Bowl week and receive his trophy at an on-field presentation during the Capital One Orange Bowl game between No. 1 Alabama and No. 4 Oklahoma on Dec. 29.

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Previous winners of the Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award

2017 D’Cota Dixon - Wisconsin	2009 University of Connecticut Football Team
2016 James Conner – Pittsburgh	2008 Wilson Holloway - Tulsa
2015 Hunter Knighton - Miami	2007 Zerbin Singleton - Navy
2014 Laken Tomlinson - Duke	2006 Ray Ray McElrathbey - Clemson
2013 Anthony Larceval - San Jose State	2005 Tulane Football Team
2012 Daniel Rodriguez - Clemson	2004 Haracia Colen - Memphis
2011 Arthur Ray - Michigan State	2003 Neil Parry - San Jose State
2010 Eric LeGrand - Rutgers	2002 William Bratton – Toledo

About the Orange Bowl

The Orange Bowl is a 360-member, primarily-volunteer non-profit sports organization that promotes and serves the South Florida community. With its primary mission since being created in 1935 to bring tourism to South Florida through an annual football game and events, it has also maintained a legacy of charitable contributions and community outreach. Orange Bowl community outreach efforts are comprised of four pillars: youth sports, fundraising and community events, academic programs and scholarships, and legacy gifts. The Orange Bowl features a year-round schedule of events culminating with the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the Capital One Orange Bowl on December 29, 2018. For more information on the 2018-19 Orange Bowl events, including promotional and volunteer opportunities through the Ambassador Program presented by Panera Bread, log on to orangebowl.org. Follow Orange Bowl: [@OrangeBowl](https://twitter.com/OrangeBowl), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/OrangeBowl) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/OrangeBowl).

About FWAA

Founded in 1941, the **Football Writers Association of America** consists of 1,400 men and women who cover college football. The membership includes journalists, broadcasters and publicists, as well as key executives in all the areas that involve the game. The FWAA works to govern areas that include game-day operations, major awards and its annual All-America team. For more information about the FWAA and its award programs, contact Steve Richardson at tiger@fwaa.com.

2018 Orange Bowl Courage Award Nominees

- Sept. 12: John Schlarman, Kentucky
- Sept. 19: Nic Weishar, Notre Dame
- Sept. 26: Rex Culpepper, Syracuse
- Oct. 3: Caleb Farley, Virginia Tech
- Oct. 10: Antwan Dixon, Kent State
- Oct. 17: Marquez Stevenson, Houston
- Oct. 24: Janarius Robinson, Florida State
- Oct. 31: Tre Brown, Oklahoma
- Nov. 7: Matt Stauder, Indiana
- Nov. 14: Kyle Richard, Cortland
- Nov. 21: Isaiah Woods, Portland State
- Nov. 28: Ben Abercrombie, Harvard

Related link:

- [Capital One Orange Bowl Courage Award](#)

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