

Al Julian Track and Field Meet

The Al Julian Track and Field Meet was named after Al Julian in 2002 in honor of his contributions to track and field and youth development in East Palo Alto. Parents and teachers came together on the eve of Al's retirement to establish a track and field meet in his honor. Working with the regional director of Hershey's Track and Field, they made the meet a local qualifier for the International Hershey's Track and Field invitational meet.

Hershey's Track and Field Meet is primarily designed for youth between the ages of 9-14, however the Al Julian Meet includes children as young as five in select events. For these younger children, the event just serves as a fun event that introduces them to track and field.

Each child is expected to choose a minimum of three events including at least one field and one track event. Teams of 9-14 year olds can also participate in a fourth event, the 4X400 relay. The top three in each event for each age group (except 5-8 year olds) get to attend the regional track and field meet held annually in San Jose. The top times and distances at the San Jose Meet are compared with results from southern California, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii. Winners get a chance to advance to Hershey's Pennsylvania for the international competition with all travel and accommodation paid for the athlete and one adult. In its 13 year history the meet has sent several qualifiers to the International Meet with some winning gold or silver medals.

For the first two years of its existence, the founding parents group with help from Kiwanis volunteers, hosted the meet at Costano School. In 2004 however the parents group formally asked the Bayshore Community Kiwanis Club to take over the meet's hosting. The meet then moved to the Cesar Chavez Academy School track. Although initially started as a meet serving youth attending Ravenswood elementary schools, the meet expanded to include youth from other communities in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda counties. In the last two years, the meet has been held at Menlo Atherton High School or Palo Alto High School out of a desire to expose the participants to competing on a regulation track.

Al Julian was a teacher, a coach, an accomplished instructor and mentor to youth. A very humble and soft-spoken man, Al joined the Ravenswood City School District as a teacher in 1959. Prior to that, Mr. Julian was an all-League track and wrestling star at Sequoia High School in the early fifties and a successful assistant coach to the San Jose State's first NCAA National championship boxing team in 1958.

Track in particular and sports in general has been Al Julian's primary love, to which he devoted his skills, experience, and energies as a coach and mentor. He was so effective with his students that one group set the AAU record (1969) in the 4X440 relay in the 12-13-year-old division, a record that stood unbroken for almost two decades. Several others went on to significant sports careers.

- Nathaniel "Nate" Branch played with the world famous Harlem Globetrotters.
- Rudy Law played Major League Baseball.
- Wendy Brown made the Olympic trials in track.
- Arthur Edge became a high school basketball coach.
- Carolyn Hamel-Galloway runs a track club in San Jose, California.
- Joseph Prince made the US track team and is currently an author and a teacher.