**15064, John Healy**

Good Evening,

I want to thank my mom for always making sure I had a good bike to ride and for always encouraging me. I also want to thank my mentors and teachers for all their help along the way.

I have been riding since I was old enough to sit on the smallest bicycle. I have always loved to ride bikes, and once I began competing I discovered that competition actually pushes me to be an even better rider. You might think that after competing for so many years I wouldn’t get nervous anymore, but experience has not removed that nervousness. But, once I’m at the start line, all nervousness and excitement leaves and I zone out. Time actually stops from the time I am called up until the time the gun goes off.

I have received numerous benefits from riding and competing. The NICA and AZHSCL have given me the opportunity to prove to myself who I can be. I have gained self-confidence and become a more sociable person through meeting all kinds of new people at races. I never thought I would see myself as a mentor to aspiring youth athletes. But, now I have younger or less experienced cyclists coming to me before and after races asking my advice and telling me that my achievements encourage them to keep trying. Knowing I’m having that influence is very humbling. Last, cycling is an all-inclusive sport. It develops you physically and socially. It teaches you responsibility, dedication, commitment and how to plan for the future.

In order to stay competitive I have to always strive to be a better athlete. To do that I have to push myself to not just meet my limits but to exceed them. As I become a better athlete then I am able to move up in categories, and earn more challenges. I really enjoy sharing the podium with my teammates. Knowing there is someone better, faster and stronger helps me to keep improving. Learning from my mistakes is something I work on consistently so that I can apply those learned lessons to my next race.

Thank you, members of the NICA for awarding me this national award for cycling. I am honored to accept.