

American Racing Pigeon Union

Pigeon Tracks

2021 AU National Youth Race Winner Madeline Varriello

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Madeline Varriello is Frank Varriello's granddaughter. Madeline and her family moved to Florida with Frank and Madeline and immediately took an interest in the pigeons. She helped feed and train them. She even helped band them.

Frank told Madeline about the AU Youth Race last year and asked if she wanted to enter it. Well of course, she said yes! He brought out several youngsters for her to pick for the race. She picked a youngster that turned out to be the grandson out of Frank's GHC Classic Winner. They took the pigeon to the club where Sal Lama entered the bird in the race. Then they took the bird to Tommy Kurz where the race was being flown from his Pet Shop.

The birds were released on November 3, 2021. Madeline and family were on their way to

Tommy's barbecue when Frank received a call from Tommy telling him his granddaughter's pigeon had won. When she arrived and found out she won, she was ecstatic. Madeline said it was the best time in her life.

Madeline has never looked so happy. She treasures the awards and trophies.

Congratulations Madeline. The joy is what it's all about.



In this issue:

Winter 2022

Introducing the newest AU Youth Ambassador, Mr. Joseph LaQuiere	Page 2
New York Times Magazine Interview with Joseph LaQuiere	Page 3
A BIRD IN THE HAND Ronnie Shumaker, AU SE Zone Director & Youth/School Coordinator	Page 4
New Beginnings Karen Clifton	Page 5
Flying Clovers RPC 200 Mile Youth Race	Page 5
2022 AU Youth Convention Race Entry Form	Page 6
Flying Clovers RPC 200 Mile Youth Race Entry Form	Page 7
Getting to Know Darius Lee of Minnesota By Joseph LaQuiere, AU Youth Ambassador	Page 8
AU Youth Scholarship Program	Page 11
AU Youth Scholarship Application	Page 12
AU Youth Scholarships Awarded in 2021	Page 13

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Introducing the newest AU Youth Ambassador, Mr. Joseph LaQuiere

Hello everyone! I am here to introduce myself as the new Youth Ambassador for the American Racing Pigeon Union. So how did I get here, and what is my backstory? Let's start at the very beginning (it's a very good place to start).

In 1918 my great grandfather immigrated from Belgium and flew birds from 1925 into the 1980s. I never knew him, but he was and is the inspiration for my journey into the racing pigeon world! Birds have always been a passion of mine, and I've been around birds since I was born. I have had many a bird from chickens, ducks, pheasants, and quail to cockatoos, finches, and now, pigeons!

I got my first birds in 2019 from a very nice man in New Jersey with no thought to race them, but things changed very quickly; I met Ken Easley. Mr. Easley and I soon became friends, and through him, in the spring of 2020, I got my first pair of "real racers." These birds were from world-class One Loft winners, Portugal's Golden Algarve, and the South Africa Million Dollar Pigeon Race! Of course, I couldn't not race these fantastic birds, so with the help of Ken Easley, I began my racing journey!

Throughout 2020 I acquired more birds and began to grow my breeding stock. I now have 40 breeders, mainly birds from Ken Easley and Frank McLaughlin, along with others. In 2021 I got involved with the Flying Clovers Racing Pigeon Club and ended up as the fundraiser for the One Loft Youth Race. I am pleased to say was a very successful race thanks to the club founder and handler, Mike Netzky. 2021 was my first actual year racing, and I was pleased with the results. In November of 2021, my family and I took a trip down to Tampa, Florida, for the National AU Convention. During the convention, I was asked by the board of directors, specifically Deone Roberts, to be your new Youth Ambassador! This is a great honor, and I hope to be a good representative and a voice for all our



fantastic youth members!

Right away, I started with an interview with the New York Times Magazine. I am sharing the article here on the following page.

Regards,

Joseph L.

This go-getter has already established his on-line store. Visit the site at <https://www.laquilofts.com/shop-products>.

TIP

How to Race Pigeons

Start them young. Give them a good home so they want to come back.

By Malia Wollan

Jan. 11, 2022, 5:00 a.m. ET

“Don’t get too attached,” says Joseph LaQuiere, a 16-year-old youth ambassador for the American Racing Pigeon Union. In 2019, LaQuiere bought six pigeons on Craigslist. The next year, the first pigeon he entered in a race never made it back. Sometimes birds will join wild flocks, die on power lines or get lost in strong winds. You’ll never know for sure.

You can’t race pigeons just anywhere; the finish line must be their home, which they find using some combination of the sun, magnetic fields and an olfactory map of familiar smells. Make the birds want to return home by treating them with kindness, feeding them well and providing clean accommodations. Start training banded, vaccinated birds at around four to six weeks old. “The youngsters are pretty tame,” LaQuiere says. They will learn to fly by circling the loft. Once the birds are strong, take them half a mile away and release them. The general rule is to conduct two outings at each distance and then double that distance. Once the pigeons fly home from around 70 miles away, they’re ready to race several hundred miles. “Let them practice flying in most types of weather, excluding heavy rain, thunderstorms, snow and fog,” LaQuiere says.

Humans have been capitalizing on pigeons’ homing abilities for centuries; Genghis Khan used pigeons to relay commands across Asia and Eastern Europe. These days, the fastest fliers tend to be highly bred and pedigreed, like racehorses. In 2020, a female racing pigeon named New Kim sold for around \$1.9 million at an auction in Belgium. Still, you don’t need to be wealthy to race. “A lot of pigeon people are willing to give you birds for free to get started,” says LaQuiere, who has bought several pedigreed birds, including progeny of a bird named Porsche 911, which he is now breeding.

Although they have a house in suburban Detroit, LaQuiere and his parents and four siblings have spent months traveling up and down the country, towing a trailer outfitted with a pigeon loft for his 30 birds. Until he can get back home to train birds himself, LaQuiere is focused on breeding racing birds. “My mom will say to me: ‘I haven’t seen you all day. Where have you been?’” LaQuiere says. “And I’m like, ‘Out with the pigeons.’”

A version of this article appears in print on , Page 21 of the Sunday Magazine with the headline: How to Race Pigeons

Joseph did a grand job representing the sport
in the New York Times Magazine interview.
- American Racing Pigeon Union



A BIRD IN THE HAND

Ronnie Shumaker, AU SE Zone Director & Youth/School Coordinator



I am pleased to let you know the AU has a race clocking procedure ideal for youth and youth groups that does not require the purchase of any type of clock. This new system takes us back

in time to the use of the countermark machine and physically removing the countermark off the leg of our feathered athlete when it returns from the release point.

The cost of clocks has prohibited many children or youth groups from participating in our sport. This new system helps eliminate that cost. This system is ideal for youth groups, such as 4-H, schools, or home school groups.

Regrettably many pigeon flyers today have never experienced the thrill of removing a countermark from the pigeon's leg and with trembling fingers placing the small countermark in a capsule to drop in the clock. The clank noise of the old clocks being hand turned has been replaced by the multiple beeping of birds rushing across the pad and being clocked automatically. Now, a pigeon owner can be on the lake fishing and get a text or email that his or her bird has safely made it home from miles away. With today's technology no one has to be there to witness this remarkable feat of possibly flying hundreds of miles overcoming many obstacles.

As a former teacher that has had lofts at many different schools, I know the importance of the interaction of children and our remarkable birds. This clocking system ensures this interaction because the junior member must remove the countermark and by using an electronic device enter the countermark number on the AU National Data Base. The bird will then immediately be clocked in the race.

If your club has countermark machines you can donate to this program, the AU will be happy to forward them to groups that will use them. I would like to thank Southwest Zone Director, Bud Williams, for starting the work on this project and Joyce Stierlin for her efforts working with the programmer to make this tool available for our youth members. Contact me for details to help any juniors or youth groups in your area utilize this clocking system.

Ronnie Shumaker-
Youth/School Coordinator-
pigeonshumaker@gmail.com,
601-938-6775.

If you have not yet become acquainted with the AU's Youth and School Coordinator on the AU Board of Directors, iRonnie Shumaker, AU's SE Zone Director. As the Youth/School Coordinator, he will seek ways to improve and increase youth participation on the racing hobby through whatever ever methods are deemed feasible for the organization. His teaching background in public schools has well equipped him to understand some of the challenges facing youth today.

New Beginnings

Karen Clifton, Executive Director



We hope your holiday season was happy and that you are looking forward to a New Year with many fun and successful races, new opportunities to share your hobby with others and getting entered in the 2022 AU National Youth Race. The 2022 convention and races are being hosted by the Independence Homing Pigeon Club in Independence, Ohio.

AU junior members may enter one bird in the race. There is no entry fee. The race is flown for honors, trophy and certificates. The youth race entry form is on the following page.

Birds should be shipped between March 1 and June 1, 2022. Race day is scheduled for October 20, 2022.

The race handler, Steve Zurcher, is excited to receive and train the birds. As we receive updates when the birds start training later in the year, we will send updates to race entrants.

We wish you all the best of luck and thank you for participating in the 23rd annual youth race!

Karen Clifton

FLYING CLOVERS RPC 200 MILE YOUTH RACE

Don't miss the Flying Clovers Annual Race for Youth being held again in Petoskey, Michigan. Mike Netzky will once again receive and train your birds. Find details about where to send your birds and when, on page 7!





2022 AU YOUTH CONVENTION RACE ENTRY FORM

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Youth Name: _____

Loft Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Band Number	Color	Handler
		Steve Zurcher – 440-752-6542 northerntrailercenter@gmail.com

Ship Birds To: **IHC/Tim Kirschner 25400 Royalton Road**
Columbia Station, OH 44028 - (440) 476-1199

AU Youth Convention Race Rules:

- **AU Youth Convention birds are free for children age 17 and younger**
- **Youth participants must be AU Junior Members**
- **One bird per youth**
- **Race is scheduled to be released from 150 miles**
- **Youth Race will compete for non-monetary prize(s)**
- **Birds will be flown to one loft**

Accepting birds March 1st – June 1st (replacements by June 15th)

AU Youth Convention Race:

Shipping Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Race Thursday, October 20, 2022

FLYING CLOVERS RPC 200 MILE YOUTH RACE ENTRY FORM

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Youth Name: _____ Email: _____

Loft Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Mailing Address: _____

DO I WANT MY BIRD TO BE RETURNED? ____ (YES) ____ (NO)

Band #: _____ Color: _____

Ship Bird to: Mike Netzky
10900 Botsford Lane
Petoskey, MI 49770
847-714-2134

***Ship on Monday or Tuesday
Please call prior to shipping***

Accepting birds April 13 – May 11, 2022

No entry fees for race, however, return of bird is the responsibility of the owner.

- 50 birds accepted
- Youth birds may be entered (free) for children age 5 – 19 years
- Bird must have legal AU, IF, CU or FMC bands
- One bird per youth
- Race is scheduled to be released from 200 miles (Grand Rapids, MI to Petoskey, MI)
- Youth race will compete for non-monetary prize(s)
- Birds will be flown to one loft

Replacements by May 11, 2022

Shipping – Friday, September 23 or 24, 2022 (depending on weather)

Race to be held September 24 or 25, 2022 (depending on weather)

Email Application to:
American Racing Pigeon Union
augrow@aol.com

Mail Application with bird/entry to:
Mike Netzky (above)



Getting to Know Darius Lee of Minnesota

By Joseph LaQuiere, AU Youth Ambassador

Joseph: So here I am, your new youth ambassador, and I thought it would be nice to write an article about another fancier that is, shall we say, “retiring” as a youth member but is stepping into the adult racing world; with tenacity! This fancier’s name is Darius Lee of Minnesota. I asked him some questions, and this is what he shared.

So Darius, how and when did you get started with pigeons, and who was involved with getting you started?

Darius: Growing up, my dad used to have a few homing pigeons that we would keep in a small loft. I would beg my dad to let me go and handle or touch his birds; this was at the age of about 6. My dad bought me my first pigeons when I was about 12, and I started with three cocks and then eventually got a few hens from my uncle, who was a member of a pigeon club. My uncle Chong was who originally got me into racing pigeons and was a mentor. My friend Yia significantly influenced me on how I see the pigeon game today. Also, my partner in the sport, Elijah; he’s the same age as me and helped me get introduced to United RPC. We talk about pigeons every day and communicate with each other on how to better our lofts and pigeons’ health.

Joseph: It seems you had a lot of support when you began with pigeons. I experienced this as well! People were very willing to share and help in any way they could! What did your family and friends think about you racing pigeons?



Darius: I already had family who were part of the pigeon racing game, so it wasn’t anything new, but some of my friends took it as a surprise because they had never heard of pigeon racing. Kids my age and close friends of mine, Elijah and Vaughn, picked up the sport and hobby with me and have been my partners and good friends for the last year.

Joseph: Many fanciers get involved through family members. Even though I never knew him, my great grandfather was my inspiration. I like the family ties that we commonly see in this sport! Who was your most significant mentor and

(Continued on page 9)

Darius Lee, continued

(Continued from page 8)

source of knowledge when you started?

Darius: My Uncle Chong started me off well in the sport giving me advice on how to take care of the birds properly, but I would say Xue Thao from the United Club has had the most considerable influence on me and how I handle and take of my birds right now, especially since I joined the United Club. I asked all the questions I could think of, and he had the patience to walk me through it all and show me how to take care of pigeons, and I still do it similar to how he's taught me.

Joseph: It sounds like you had an excellent start in the sport! Where did your motivation and passion for the birds come from?

Darius: The passion for pigeons came to me through seeing amazing pedigrees; seeing how a pigeon is bred and the impressive bloodlines get me excited. I got my first set of pedigree pigeons from Yia Yang, he had won 1st @300 miles that year in his concourse, and he had gifted me the 300-mile winner with the complete pedigree. Once I

saw all the cool bloodlines and names on the pedigree, I instantly fell in love, and It still has the biggest influence on me today.

Joseph: I, too, enjoy studying pedigrees and the background of my birds! What was your experience in your first year of breeding and racing?

Darius: My first year of breeding wasn't too bad; I only bred from 9 pairs and bred about 30 young birds for my race team after a few rounds. I had also sent some birds to Andrei Tamas to race for me in the NEA derby. Unfortunately, the city I live in doesn't allow pigeons. I eventually had to dissolve my race team but kept a few of my best breeders for the future. I was lucky enough to have sent some young birds to Andrei, and I had two birds score on the 300-mile money race placing 2nd and 3rd! Even though I couldn't race myself, my birds still did a great job for my buddy Andrei and me.

Joseph: What a fantastic outcome to an unfortunate situation! Congratulations! What do you feel was the most challenging part of raising racing pigeons?

Darius: The most challenging part was not flying the 2021 season. I had put a lot of work into my pigeons, preparing them for the race season. I had to get rid of many pigeons, and it was a tough and painful first-year experience for me because I liked all my pigeons. It was definitely a challenging first year, but I'm grateful for my buddy Andrei for racing and doing a great job with my pigeons and giving my birds a chance to prove that they can win! That was a big morale boost for me and definitely helped keep me in the pigeon game!

Joseph: That does not sound like fun, but I'm glad it turned out well in the end, and as I'm sure you know, we learn a lot from experiences, but it seems that the negative experiences teach us more. To date, what has been the most significant accomplishment with your birds?

Darius: Definitely having my pigeons placing 2nd and 3rd @300 miles NEA derby 2021 for Andrei. He helped me not just test my birds but prove to me that I have good pigeons that can

(Continued on page 10)

Darius Lee, continued

(Continued from page 9)

race! That, to me, is the most significant accomplishment I've had so far. The fact that I couldn't race locally was really disappointing, and I couldn't fly and prove my pigeons; just having Andrei race my pigeons gave me a big boost in confidence over my pigeons, and that played a big role in the birds I still have today.

Joseph: Again, congratulations, that's is a big accomplishment! How has this sport impacted you and your family?

Darius: The pigeon game has impacted me in big ways, I've made many new friends, and I think my family can see that this is something I love to do. I'm glad my family is supportive of my passion for pigeons, and I appreciate everything they've done to help me.

Joseph: I, too, experienced many new relationships with really great people! What is the most significant thing you've learned so far?

Darius: The most important thing I've learned is that results speak louder than what's on paper. The birds that did well for me were

down from two proven racing stock pigeons that were both Ace pigeons in MN, and both gifts to me from Yia. Even though I love pedigrees, I trust the results of the pigeon more than the big famous names in the pedigree.

Joseph: We speak the same language! This is how I judge my birds. You may have fabulous pedigrees, but that doesn't guarantee results! What tip would you give to new young fanciers starting or soon to start in the sport?

Darius: A tip I would give is, go and try to learn from someone who's having a lot of success in the club around you. Don't be afraid to ask what you think are dumb questions because those dumb questions are probably important questions; also, if you think that you don't need to spend a penny on pigeons, your wrong! This game costs a few bucks to keep your birds healthy and in condition. I don't think it is "expensive," but getting the necessities for your pigeons' health takes some resources. Your pigeons are athletes and should be treated like they are.

Joseph: Again, I totally agree with you! You have to make sure you're giving your birds the best that you can but in a way that fits your purpose. This depends a lot on your goals. How has your experience been with the American Racing Pigeon Union?

Darius: The American Racing Pigeon Union has done a great job running all their sites and programs like "Pigeon NDB," where we can look up our results anytime. They have done a super job on always being available as well. When I first started, I wanted to order some bands, and I gave them a call, and they answered on the first call! And they have every time after that too! I appreciate the ARPU and what they are doing for the game!

Joseph: I am so glad to hear your experience has been positive! I have had a wonderful experience with the American Racing Pigeon Union, and they have some great people working there at the Union's HQ! Well, this has been very enjoyable to hear about your story and insight on the sport of pigeon racing! Best wishes as you continue to grow in the sport!

AMERICAN RACING PIGEON UNION YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The AU Youth Scholarship Program has been established to further the good work of the National Ladies' Auxiliary.

AU members and their relatives are eligible to apply for a scholarship. Criteria is listed below:

- Must be 23 years old or younger
- Must have a minimum B average
- Must be an AU member or relative of an AU member
- Must submit a **signed application, bio, proof of GPA & photo by no later than June 1**
- Bio will include educational & professional goals, work experience & community service involvement. Tell us how you work within the community (service programs, clubs, scouting, church, etc.) Be sure to include any certificates of acknowledgement or achievement and letters of recommendation. Supporting letters from educators are important.

Applications **must be postmarked no later than June 1 each year**. Applications and bios will be reviewed by the AU Youth Scholarship Committee. The top three essays (with the above information) will be selected. Each scholarship recipient will receive \$2,000.00 to assist toward fulfilling their educational goals.

Award recipients will be notified. Upon receipt of proof of enrollment for the Fall semester, a check will be issued.

Scholarship winners will be announced each year at the annual AU Convention.

MAIL APPLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTS TO:

**ARPU
SCHOLARSHIP FUND
PO BOX 18465
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73154-0465**

AMERICAN RACING PIGEON UNION
YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION



Complete ALL questions & return with bio & a current photograph postmarked no later than 6/1

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ EMAIL: _____

COLLEGE ATTENDING IN THE FALL: _____

COLLEGE LEVEL: FRESHMAN__ SOPH__ JUNIOR__ SENIOR__ GRADUATE__

FIELD OF STUDY: _____

HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE GPA (as of the completion of the last semester – provide proof) _____

HOBBIES/CLUBS/COMMUNITY PROJECTS _____

HONORS RECEIVED (not required - include copies of certificates, etc.): _____

DESCRIBE FINANCIAL NEED: _____

ARE YOU AN AU MEMBER OR RELATED TO AN AU MEMBER? INCLUDE AU ID NUMBER _____. IF RELATED TO AN AU MEMBER, EXPLAIN: _____

SUBMIT THIS COMPLETED APPLICATION ALONG WITH A BRIEF BIO/ESSAY WHICH INCLUDES:

- EDUCATIONAL GOALS
- PROFESSIONAL GOALS
- WORK EXPERIENCE
- COMMUNITY SERVICE INVOLVEMENT – HOW DO YOU GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY?
- LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

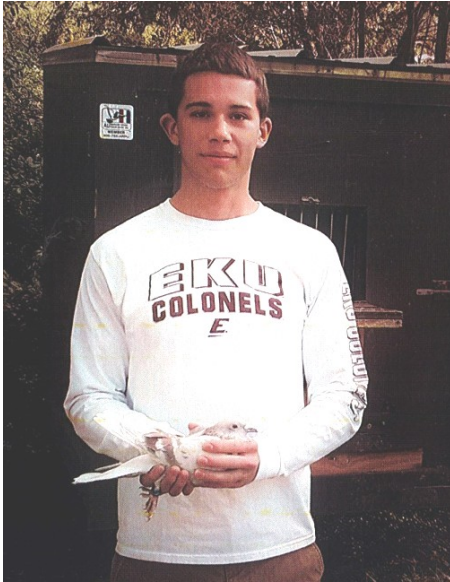
MUST HAVE A MINIMUM B AVERAGE & BE 23 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER

Applicant Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Candidates previously awarded a scholarship are not eligible.

AU Youth Scholarships Awarded in 2021



Leonardo Victor Vargas

He is a freshman at Eastern Kentucky University. We suspect his desire to become a systems designer, building inspector, fire safety director or insurance company consultant will be easily accomplished, considering his academic and community service success. He's already shown entrepreneurial spirit as an independent contractor. Leonardo is highly regarded by instructors and employers.



Catherine Stetson

Catherine comes from a medical family. This is what they know and love. Despite the struggle of COVID, she is forging ahead to service in oncology and pediatrics. With two languages in her skill set, she will have an advantage in communi-

cation with patients. She is preparing for her lifetime of service, which seems to be a theme with our scholarship recipients. Not only are they skilled and talented, but they have a strong desire to help others.



Brianna Schnitzer

She will give her life to occupational therapy. College is the next step in her career. She has already volunteered in related interests and continues to look for ways to make a positive impact in others' lives.

It is a pleasure to assist Brianna as she strives to help others overcome any obstacles holding them back.

Congratulations to the 2021 scholarship recipients! These individuals were selected out of 17 applicants. It is never a decision made lightly. All applicants exemplify the best of the best.