

American Racing Pigeon Union

Pigeon Tracks



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Summer 2023

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It's That Time!

Get Ready for Young Bird Racing!

Karen Clifton, AU Executive Director

For many members, working with young birds and getting them ready for competition is most enjoyable. Getting the birds weaned and on a quality, varied diet is important. You will want to have a perch for each young bird and, of course, the loft kept clean and dry. Allowing plenty of fresh air (without being drafty) is important.

We wish you all the best of luck in the coming young bird season. Please feel free to send an email (aupromo@aol.com) to let us know about your experience and successes this season. We would love to receive photos so we may share in upcoming publications.

Again, good luck to all. Have fun!

Karen Clifton



Contact information:
American Racing Pigeon Union
PO Box 18465
Oklahoma City, OK 73154
1-405-848-5801, telephone
1-405-848-5888, fax
www.pigeon.org

Contest Dove Brain Teaser

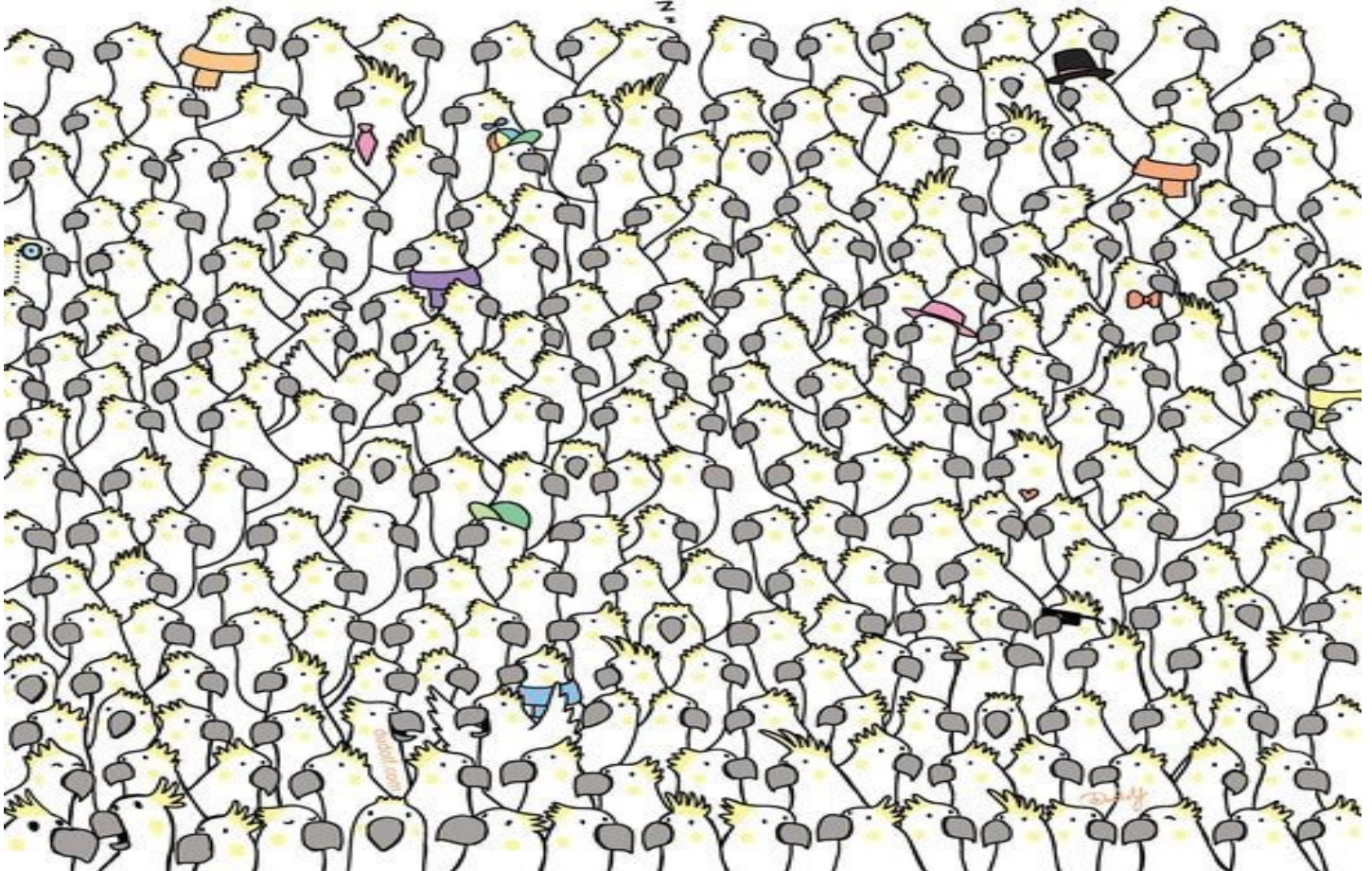
We are excited to announce that Madison won and has received an AU hat with monogram logo. This is an opportunity for juniors to promote their hobby as well.



Brain teaser for our Junior Club members. The **first two members** to find the 4 doves will win a AU Ball Cap. Please circle the doves and send the picture to aupromo@aol.com with Name and AU number.

Still looking for **two more winners**. Please submit by

October 1, 2023 last chance



Champlain Valley RPC Sharing the Sport!

David Knightes and Brock Stine (Champlain Valley RPC) presented a racing pigeon program to local scouts at Champlain Exposition Fairgrounds in Essex Junction, VT at the Boy Scout Jubilee. The theme at the Jubilee was Racing. Brock explained the banding to the Scouts. Dave explained the chipping and proper holding of a bird.



Brock and David did a presentation and handed out flyers to promote the sport of racing pigeons. The Scouts had many interesting questions including how fast pigeons can fly, how long does it take for an egg to hatch, how high the birds fly and what is the farthest the bird is flown in a race. Great job David and Brock.





2023 AU WINNERS

Karen Clifton, Executive Director

Samuel Paga

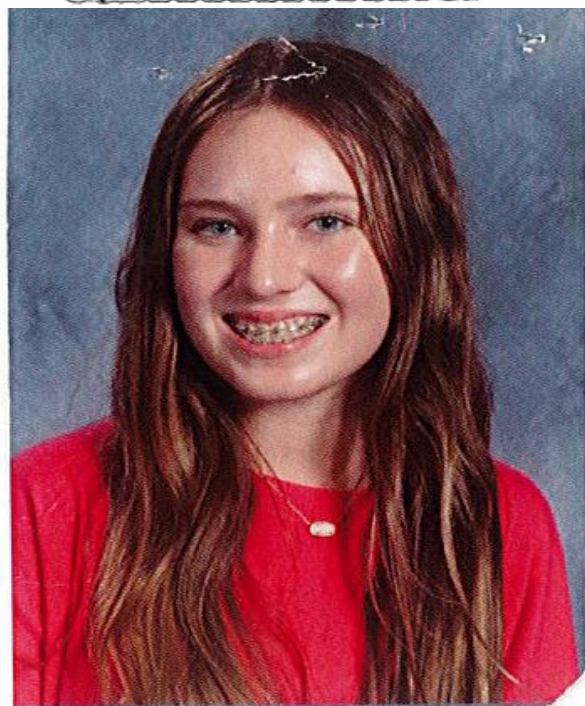


Future dentist Samuel hails from Michigan and is currently a student in Florida, majoring in biology. When he returns to Michigan, he will attend dental school and enter the family's dental practice. In the meantime, he has enjoyed a variety of activities such as racing pigeons, sports and volunteering in an assisted living facility.

Samuel is active in his church, National Honor Society and three varsity sports. He is recipient of all-state honors in cross country and track. Interestingly, he is part of an Alzheimer's research group and an honor student.

He does not back away from hard work, so we are expecting good things for Samuel.

Heidi Dumas



Heidi also hails from Michigan. She is a young entrepreneur having started her own successful business between 7th and 8th grade. She plans to transition the business to her brother so she may pursue higher education in biomedical sciences. Heidi's extra-curricular activities included serving on a youth advisory committee as part of a community foundation; dance academy; and racing pigeons.

Medical school is in Heidi's future and it appears from her stamina and accomplishments, she is up to the task. Her studies will focus on cellular and molecular

She has a servant's heart. Imagine what her expertise and service mindedness can accomplish!



2023 AU WINNERS



He is a music lover that wishes to instill the love of music in others as an orchestra director/performer. Harrison is no stranger to work and will likely work throughout his college career to make his dream a reality. We have yet another servant's heart in Harrison. Volunteering is practically his second career. He is an explorer in learning and making new discoveries. He has an associate's degree in liberal arts and dual enrollment in two different institutions, making the Dean's List multiple times. He received First Honors at his high school.

Harrison provides a most eloquent description of his accomplishment and goals. Most likely his progress will appear effortless.

Well done, students! Well done. Congratulations.



Raelynn with her pet Pigeon!

AU junior member, Raelynn, with her pet pigeon, "Little Debbie". After her swim every day, she races to the pigeon loft to get Little Debbie out for hugs.

Her mom, Corrie, shared, "We cultivate the love for animals and nature with our children and especially, racing pigeons!"

Thank you for sharing. It is such a positive to see junior members involved with such enthusiasm.



AMERICAN RACING PIGEON UNION YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The AU Youth Scholarship Program has been established to assist members or relatives of members pursue their educational goals.

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. Those that have already received an AU scholarship are not eligible to apply.

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 in the AU *Yearbook*.

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

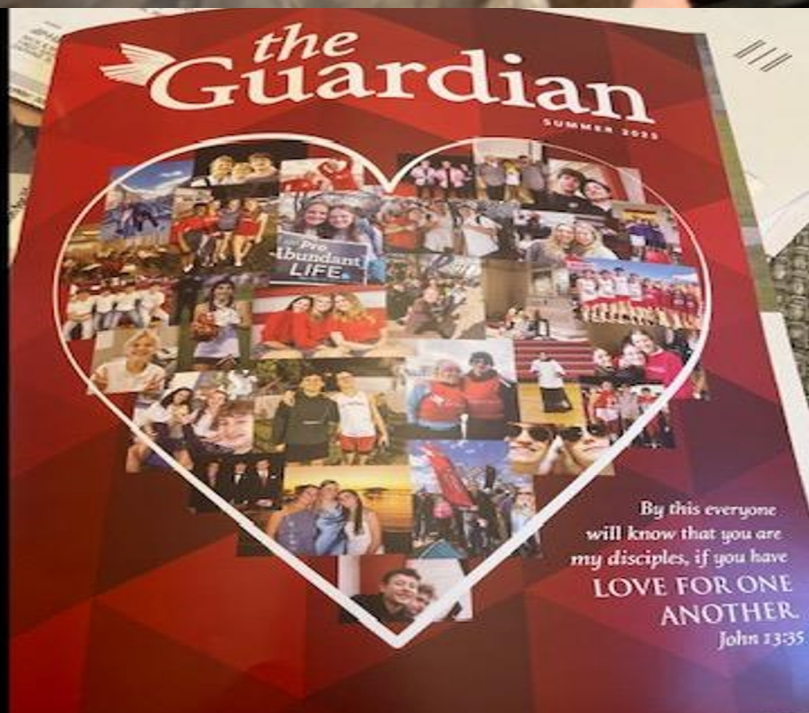
Applicant Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Candidates previously awarded a scholarship are not eligible.

Jesse Randolph - Randolph Acers

Jesse started enjoying Pigeons at nine years old. He is proud of his sport and loves his birds. Over the past seven years he has done very well with club races. Jesse is old enough to drive and takes Birds to school and single tosses them. It's only 2 miles from his home. Air miles. His school newspaper did an article about Jesse hobby.



Jesse Randolph - Randolph Acers Cont.



THIS CARDINAL *is for* THE BIRDS

It's race day. Participants arrive with their trainers, check in, and wait for the competition to begin. So far, all that sounds familiar. Then, however, things take a turn, for the race doesn't begin with a horn or a whistle. It begins with a release of up to 20,000 feathered participants that, with a flutter of noise and wings, rise into the air and head to their own homes which means they take off in any number of different directions.

Exactly what kind of race day is this? Ask St. Michael rising senior Jesse Randolph. He would know exactly what is going on and would welcome the opportunity to explain it. That's because Randolph is a fancier. He raises and races pigeons. "My father raised pigeons with his father when he was growing up in New York. There was a loft on the roof of his building. And now I am raising pigeons with my dad," he says. "Raising pigeons is a much bigger hobby up North than it is down here. Down here, when you ask what most people know about pigeons and pigeon racing, the answer is, 'Most people don't.'"

Despite "most people" in our area being unaware, pigeon racing is a billion-dollar industry with an extensive history. It traces back as far as 190-230 CE when the Mishnah Sanhedrin listed people who raced pigeons as unsuitable for testifying in court (scholars assume this is because racing pigeons would have involved gambling). Modern pigeon racing is directly linked to Belgium in 1818 when the first 100-mile pigeon race was recorded. From there, it expanded across Europe and made its way to the U.S. in the late 1870s. More recently, the industry has exploded in China where it is an expensive and serious business. In the past five years, two pigeons have sold there for over \$1 million dollars, and Chinese fanciers frequently pay upwards of \$150 thousand dollars for a single bird.

Compared to high-dollar fanciers, Randolph's pigeoning is a bit more humble endeavor. "We had a really small loft when we first started when I was in elementary school, and we didn't have that many birds," he says. "Then, we repurposed a shed and created a much bigger loft. Now, we have about 75 birds."

Randolph is clearly enthusiastic about this hobby that he shares with his father. That enthusiasm is catching as he adeptly simplifies the complex system of raising, training, and racing the birds. "Our loft is divided into different sections," he begins his explanation.

"The birds are separated based on what they do. For example, we have about 20 in the racing loft. They are actively training for the season that will start in the fall. Then, we have the old birds. They still race, but only in old bird races, and they don't have the rigorous training that the younger birds do. We also have five or six birds from good blood lines that we use as breeders. Those birds are 'prisoners' because they weren't trained to come back to our loft, so we can't let them out. If we did, they would try to go back to the loft where they were trained. For one of our birds, Champ, that would be all the way back to Oklahoma. He probably wouldn't make it that far."



Caring for all these birds requires much work. One might assume that cleaning up behind 75 pigeons would be the worst part of that job. Randolph disagrees. "I just scrape the floors, put the mess in a bucket, and take it out. That's the easy part." He grimaces a bit as he continues. "The worst part is mixing the pigeon food. I hate it! I use an old tomato can and mix pigeon food pellets with pigeon feed with corn and pigeon feed without corn, and then I combine all that with barley. One tomato can. I use this one tomato can to fill a huge bucket. It's not hard, but it is really annoying. My dad talks about getting a cement mixer to do this. Then, I could dump

Jesse Randolph - Randolph Acers Cont.

12

MONDAY

13

TUESDAY

14

WEDNESDAY

15

THURSDAY

the different bags into the mixer using the right portions and let it go. Mixers are expensive, but, to me, it would be worth it because I know how much they are, that is that much of my time that I don't have to waste to scooping things up with that old tomato can."

Along with caring for their birds, Randolph and his father also have to train them. "We start by letting the birds onto a screen partition inside the loft called 'the stalls.' Each bird has a band with a number. There is a clock pad in the stalls that detects a pigeon when a bird walks over it. That clock is really important for training," he says. "Eventually, we take the screen off and let the birds fly around the area. They go out two to three miles and fly back to the loft. This is called 'routing.' After a few days of this, we herd the birds into crates, take them out, release them, and watch them fly back to the loft. We increase the distance in increments of ten miles until we get to 70 miles, which is the furthest we go in training."

Obviously, training leads to races, but those races are atypical. Most significantly, while the birds begin a race in the same spot, they end up back at their home lofts. In other words, there are multiple "loft lines" for each race. For the Randolphs, races begin on Friday night. "Everyone goes to a check-in the night before a race," Randolph explains. "The birds are entered into a computer. They are given food and water and put into a crate. On Saturday morning, the crate is taken to a spot as close to equal distance from the participants' home lofts as possible and the birds are released. The time of departure is noted and then, when a bird returns to its home

loft, that clock pad that I talked about earlier registers it. The 'winner' of a race is determined by both time and distance." Fanciers are organized into clubs, and the distance of races and the prize size vary based on the club that sponsors the race. "My birds once won a 600-mile race," Randolph boasts. "It was a combined race with multiple clubs participating, so there was big money on the table. My birds took first and second place and won more than \$2,700." For Randolph, that might be "big money," but in the larger world of pigeon racing, it's minuscule as six-figure winnings are not an unusual occurrence.

Racing and hopefully winning might be an outcome of this hobby. Certainly, recouping some of the expense associated with the activity is nice (that stalls clock — it can cost over a thousand dollars, Randolph, by the way, won his by submitting the strongest

response in an essay-writing contest for young fanciers). For Randolph, however, the very best part of this hobby is just the birds. "They're my pets," he says. "I have birds that are my friends. Jeff is a Satinette pigeon. That's a kind of show pigeon, not a racing pigeon. We use him as a Chico to get racing birds to come into the loft when they get back from a race. We throw him into the air, and he flies around and lands on the roof. The racing bird will follow him to the roof. Jeff is our best Chico ever." Randolph smiles as he continues. "But Jeff is a pet bird, really. I do a lot of stuff with him. He is really chill. He will sit on my shoulder and stuff. Not for too long. He flies away eventually, but he comes back when he wants to. Jeff is really a reliable guy."

Randolph welcomes opportunity to share his hobby with his

community. "This year, I trained some birds for the Panama City Retreat (an annual youth event sponsored by Christ the King)," he says. "The theme involved pirates and kids getting kidnapped to go to PCR. I was going to put a little note with 'HELP' scrawled across it in big letters in a bird's band. To get ready for that, I had to train birds to come home from Christ the King. Since St. Michael is between Christ the King and my loft, it worked for me to bring the birds and release them from campus. People on campus knew it was happening and watched the birds. It was fun."

While most people have seen indolent pigeons flying around urban landscapes, Randolph explains that there "are all sorts of pigeons. They range in color from silvers to splashes to whites to reds. With show pigeons, there are fancy-looking pigeons and multicolored pigeons. There is a type of bird called a

tumbler. They go up in the air and they look like they just freeze and stop flying and tumble down in the air and then they catch themselves. It is really cool to watch. Oh, and, most of the time, when they release 'doves' at a wedding, they aren't doves. They are white pigeons."

All this is the kind of information that Randolph likes to share with people. It is clear that he loves this hobby and enjoys introducing others to it. In fact, he extends an open invitation: "If anyone is interested in looking at the pigeons and seeing what they do, I would totally be open to giving them a tour of the loft or teaching them about how the pigeons do what they do." And he means it. If your interest has been piqued, reach out to him through St. Michael. He will make good on his offer to host a tour because, kind of like Jeff, Randolph is a reliable guy.

