

## LAUREN SISLER

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Communications/Women's Gymnastics

Nominated by: Maisha Palmer

Lauren Sisler was busy trying to balance the demands of pre-medical studies and participating in gymnastics as a freshman in college yet both of these demands would seem insignificant to her as her freshman year progressed. Lauren had always been a strong student and enjoyed the support of a close-knit family growing up in Virginia and, like many other college freshmen, she headed off to college in another state full of both fear and excitement. She was making the adjustment well when a single telephone call turned her world upside down. In March of her freshman year her father called her to let her know that her Mother had passed away and that the family needed her to come home as soon as possible. The next morning she flew to Roanoke and was greeted at the airport by her Uncle and cousin. Tears were already flowing from her eyes over the loss of her mother when they informed her that her father has passed away as well, just hours after the death of her mom. Both her parents had suffered from problems with prescription drugs, a growing problem in homes across the country. Lauren said that at that moment she went from being known as "Butch and Lesley Sisler's daughter, Lauren" to being just "Lauren Sisler, double orphan".

Surrounded by family and friends Lauren managed to return to Rutgers and finish out the semester because she believe it was what her parents would have wanted. Besides making the continued adjustment to college life she found herself having to learn about real life concerns that her parents had once handled such as medical insurance and tuition payments. She found herself struggling academically and felt no passion for her studies. But the support from teammates and support staff at Rutgers kept her going. She changed her major and discovered that her true passion was in the field of communications. Once she dedicated herself to a career in broadcasting her academic situation changed dramatically and she found herself regularly making the Dean's List for her efforts. She battled through nagging back injuries, a fractured femur and torn ligaments but these didn't hurt as much as the frustration of not being able to realize the athletic goals that she had set for herself. Lauren reports that she has many causes that she holds dear and that she is dedicated to champion these causes over the course of her lifetime in honor of the spirit of her parents. There is little doubt that they provided her with the foundation that she needed to be successful in life and that she will continue to honor their memory on a daily basis.