

Dear *NCR Volleyball Scholarship Selection Committee*,

My name is Azul Moreno-Rodriguez, and I am a student-athlete at Saint Paul Central High School. I have played club volleyball for NCR teams throughout high school. I am thankful to share my experience with the sport and my future goals as I apply for the NCR scholarship.

I began playing volleyball in the sixth grade as an after school activity. What started as something small and fun grew into a passion. By eighth grade, I joined my first club team at Impact Volleyball Club to gain experience and improve my skills before entering high school.

High school volleyball introduced me to more than just competition; it gave me a community. As a nervous freshman, having teammates I already knew made my first day of school feel far less intimidating. I was greeted not only by upperclassmen but also by girls I had already met during practice the week before. This gave me a sense of belonging.

Through this community, I have built meaningful friendships and connections. Practices were not only a time to work hard and improve our skills, but also a time to connect with my teammates. We shared about our days, talked about our plans, and supported each other on and off the court. Having a coach in the building gave me a place to go when I needed guidance or simply a place to talk. Her office became a space that felt like a second home, and sometimes my teammates would join me when we needed a moment to breathe away from the loud hallways and classrooms.

Volleyball has shaped me into an open-minded and supportive person. It allowed me to connect with girls from diverse backgrounds and taught me how to work with and understand others. These experiences will carry into my future as I pursue a degree in psychology. I hope to work with children who struggle with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral challenges. I wish to assess children's needs and help develop a plan that helps them understand themselves and succeed.

I am especially passionate about improving access to healthcare in under-resourced communities. Many families face barriers such as high costs and fear of seeking care, which can negatively impact children's well-being. In the future, I hope to help bridge that gap and ensure that more children receive the support they need.

I believe I should be selected for this scholarship because I represent what it means to be a dedicated teammate. Being a student-athlete with rigorous coursework and having responsibilities outside of volleyball is not always easy. Being a student athlete requires discipline, time management, and commitment but most importantly, it requires the ability to support those around you even when your own feelings and schedule feel overwhelming.

While I may not hold records or have a stack of medals, my greatest achievement has been the positive impact I have had on those around me. I had my first panic attack on the volleyball court, while in the moment I felt it was embarrassing and later found it to be a moment of growth. It taught me that *it was okay to not be okay* and that we all reach a limit where we need to take care of ourselves. Although my

personal life took a huge toll on me my junior and senior year I consistently showed up for my team and my teammates. Volleyball and my teammates were the places I'd go to feel better and find joy again.

I have worked to become someone my teammates can rely on both off and on the court ,whether it was offering words of encouragement or listening when my teammates needed it. simply showing up for them in any aspect I could.

During my senior year, my teammates and I understood that we were responsible for the culture we left behind. We made it a priority to ensure every player felt valued, regardless of their level. I made an effort to connect with younger girls by having honest conversations about pressure, confidence and mental health. I wanted them to feel seen and supported.

Im proud to say that the culture we built has lasted beyond our season. Many of us still eat lunch together months after the season ended and continue to talk in the halls. That sense of community and belonging is something I will carry with me, and it reflects the values brought as a recipient of this scholarship.

This scholarship would significantly ease the financial burden of attending the College of Saint Benedict. As a first-generation college student with one working parent and siblings also pursuing higher education in the Fall I will be depending on any financial aid and personal savings to fund my education. I have had to work throughout high school, sometimes prioritizing work over academics. Receiving this scholarship would allow me to focus more fully on my education and future goals.

Volleyball has shaped me into a resilient, compassionate, and community-driven individual. The lessons I have learned are based on discipline, teamwork, and supporting others. My experience will continue to guide me in college and in my future career. I am committed to using these values to make a meaningful impact, both in the lives of others and in the communities I hope to serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Azul Moreno-Rodriguez