

Dear Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation,

My Name is Holden Bradford, I am a 17-year-old competitive Freeride skier from Crested Butte, Colorado. Skiing is perhaps my greatest passion in life. Skiing has graced me with countless life-changing opportunities and connected me with a community, a family, that has changed my life. I began skiing at 18 months old, and perhaps the rest you could say is history. My life has been shaped by a love for the outdoors passed down from my parents. With a Mother, who taught ski school, and a father who was a ski patroller and a raft guide I spent more time outside than in. I grew up not going to daycare, but instead going to work with my parents, an occasion that many kids perhaps dread. Yet, for me, going to work with my parents was the best thing ever. I got to ski, raft, and kayak daily. My parents graced me with opportunities that many kids only dream of and for that, I carry the utmost gratitude. Yet, it wasn't just my parents that raised me, as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Being born into a family who pursued such career paths I was also born into a community filled with great mentors. Mentors, who took me under their wing teaching me crucial skills in skiing, kayaking, and just having fun. While perhaps my early childhood may have been unorthodox I would not trade it for anything. I learned skills that no classroom ever could have taught me. While these communities taught me technical skills, they also taught me life skills. They taught me how to have fun, how to dress up, how to love, how to respect, how to laugh, how to be and when to be both mature and immature, how to cherish every day every moment, and most importantly how to be me.

At the age of 6, I joined my first ski team in Breckenridge and began competing. Immediately I fell in love with competing. Yet it wouldn't be until many years down the road when I would truly understand why I loved competing. At the age of 11, I began competing in IFSA sanctioned Freeride competitions. Through the years the IFSA circuit has brought me to competitions all over North America and introduced me to everlasting friendships. At the age of 13, my parents decided to move from Breckenridge Colorado to Crested Butte. Here in Crested Butte, I joined the family, known as the Crested Butte Mountain Sports team and began skiing full time (5 days per week) for the program. This team has graced me with so many great opportunities. It has provided me with world-class coaches and training opportunities and allowed my skiing to progress to levels I never even imagined. This past ski season has perhaps been my most notable, in my time on the Crested Butte Mountain Sports Team and really in my career for that matter. This past season I had my best results in Big mountain skiing ever. The year started with a second place in Snowbird, then a third-place at my home resort in Crested Butte, I continued to receive a first-place at Grand Targhee followed by several top tens. Such results place me in good enough national standings that I qualified for the World Championships in 2020 in Kappl Austria. While all these events were thrilling, and I have great pride in accomplishing each, my most prideful moment of the season, and my skiing career didn't come from any podium finish or overall standing. No, my most prideful moment came from a crash. For it was a crash that made me realize why I loved the sport of freeride skiing so much. It was National Championships, in Kicking Horse British Columbia, at this point the biggest moment in my skiing career. I was sitting in 4th place overall in the North American standings. A National title and a shot at qualifying for world championships were within reach. I dropped in, all the nerves, all the worries slipped away. It was just me and the mountain. Perhaps it was too much speed or a wrong angle, by now it is all sort of a wash in my brain, but something didn't go quite as expected. Within the first 15 seconds of my run, I went from soaring like an eagle through the air to hurtling towards the ground, like comet bound for Earth. My body braced for the impact as I collided with the ground at what felt like light speed. I crashed. My run was over. My chances at

qualifying for the world championships of freeride skiing, and taking home the national title, were most likely gone. In the moment taken to gather my gear and thoughts after crashing, I was filled with anger, with sadness. Tears began to well in my eyes. Yet at this moment I heard a distant roar that grew louder and louder, blocking the sounds of any negative or sad reflections I held inside. The crowd below roared

with excitement. They roared with love. They roared with pride. It was at this moment that my attitude changed. As I gathered myself and continued my run, a vast smile engulfed my face. This was no tragedy, no it was a blessing in disguise. As I skied I began to laugh as I channeled my inner 80's skier, making every turn a jump and doing tricks never done in this day and age. I chose to make fun of the situation not letting it make fun of me. As I reached the finish corral the crowd whooped and hollered and I was met with warm hugs and smiles from my fellow competitors. Athletes, friends, and family all congratulated me as if I had just skied the craziest run ever, not as if I had crashed. At this moment I learned why I truly loved the sport of freeride skiing. It wasn't the success that I chased, or tricks, or the powder. Of course, all of these things are great, but after this crash, when I heard the love and support from the crowd below, I realized that it was the family. When I entered the finish coral I was met with smiles, and hugs overflowing with stoke, from people I had never even talked to. While we were competitors pit against each other, I realized none of us genuinely saw it that way. At the end of the day, we were skiers, all one and the same. At the end of the day, we were family. That night at the awards ceremony, as my fellow teammates stood on the podium, I wasn't filled with anger or jealousy, no I was filled with pride. I was proud to be part of such a beautiful, loving family, filled with so many like-minded people. After the last National titles were announced, the announcer asked for everyone's attention as there was one last award to be given. The Flyin Ryan Hawks spirit award. As the announcer presented the award, he talked about how the recipient embodied what Ryan Hawks stood for, an athlete whom even though crashed made the best of the situation, and had perhaps one of the crowd's favorite runs of the day. The announcer called, "Holden Bradford is the recipient of the Flyin Ryan Spirit Award." As I walked towards the podium to receive my award and the crowd cheered, I was filled with a sense of love, a sense of pride, greater than any time I had stood on the podium for a result. Tears welled in my eyes, this time not out of anger or sadness though, this time out of love, out of happiness. Even if I didn't end up qualifying for worlds in the coming year, I didn't care. For this crash had taught me more about myself than any qualification or national title ever could. And as a final cherry on top, this experience didn't hinder my chances at qualifying for world championships either, as I was notified this past august that I had qualified. I had barely squeaked in but I made it, crash and all. If I were awarded a Flyin Ryan scholarship, I would use it to fund my ski team costs and coaches fees for the season so that I could focus the rest of my funds on my trip to Austria this

coming winter. As a recipient, I would promote the foundation by all means possible. I would include you guys in social media tags and posts as well as stickering my gear, similar to how I promote my ski sponsors. I would do this in addition to always sharing and embracing Ryans' core principals throughout my community. If I were to receive the Flyin Ryan Adventure Scholarship the stress that it would reduce amongst my family would be colossal. While my parents are engaged in careers they love, passion doesn't always correlate to capital. My parents work as hard as possible to facilitate my dreams and passions, yet it would mean a lot to me if I could play a bigger role in helping them out and reducing the stress associated with the finances of skiing, and life. With Family being one of my personal greatest values, I strive to help them in always possible. A scholarship would not only benefit me but my family as a whole.