

## OUT OF THE BLOCKS

The Official Newsletter for the Friends of Harvard Track

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## A NOTE FROM JASON SARETSKY

Dear Friends of Harvard Track & Field,

With each passing year at the helm of this program, I am more impressed by the desire of our student-athletes and staff to be the best versions of themselves. The 2017–2018 academic year has brought with it some changes and opportunities to reflect on what makes us a great program in every sense of the word. One of the biggest new developments this year was the addition of the husband-wife team, Coach Alex Gibby and Coach Kathy Newberry, to lead our men's and women's cross-country group. Coming to us from UNC Charlotte and bringing along their 4-year-old twins Anson and Cora, Coach Gibby and Coach Newberry have been an immediate asset to the team and a fantastic resource for our student-athletes.

One thing that remains constant year to year, of course, is our student-athletes' stellar performances in the classroom. This year, the men's and women's cross country squads had the highest team GPAs in the Ivy League (3.5 and 3.65, respectively), earning selection to the USTFCCCA All-Academic team.

Freshman Hugo Milner (Derby, U.K.) was individually honored with the USTFCCCA All-Academic award, based on his GPA and his impressive 16th-place finish at the Regionals. At his first NCAA regional competition, he was just two spots away from individually qualifying for the national championship. His performances throughout the season (including an 11th-place finish at Heps) earned him the J. D. "Don" French '56 award at our end-of-season banquet. Another standout freshman, Abbe Goldstein (Ambler, PA) was recognized with the Kate Wiley Most Outstanding Performer award. We closed our celebration of the season by announcing the election of the captains for the 2019 season: juniors Erin Dietz (Bedford, MA) and Malia Ellington (Davidson, NC), and sophomore Charlie Davis (Manchester, MA).

After the cross country season concluded, Harvard students went home for the winter holiday, but soon enough the Crimson was back in action for J-term training. I always love this opportunity for the students to train hard, explore interests they might not have time for during the school year, and strengthen their team bonds. Those weeks prepared us well for the indoor season, which saw us competing at meets in New York, Texas, Boston, and right here at Gordon Track. One highlight came when we hosted the annual Harvard-Yale-Princeton meet, earning a pair of runner-up team finishes on the men's and women's side. I found particularly satisfying the energy we brought for the relays, three of which we won in style (the men's and women's 4x440, and the men's 4x880 with a blistering kick from sophomore Mike Kolor [Harmony, PA]).

A few weeks later it was time for Heps, hosted at Dartmouth. Our women finished second with 105 points, while our men took sixth with 51. There were too many incredible performances to highlight them all, but our pair of Most Outstanding Track Performers certainly made headlines: junior captain Myles Marshall (Kingwood, TX) won his second straight 800m title and anchored our winning 4x800 relay to clinch the nomination, while

junior captain Gabby Thomas (Florence, MA) won gold in the 60m and 200m for the third year in a row while also running a spectacular 51.8 anchor leg to bring our 4x400 back from 3rd to win for the third year in a row. In total, Harvard had five individual and two relay champions, for 11 All-Ivy selections.

The next week junior Kat Gillespie (Dollar, Clackmannanshire, Scotland) followed up her 800m Heps title with a victory in the 1000m at ECACs, running the second-fastest time in program history in that event. And the Crimson were not done yet: Gabby Thomas showed the nation and the world what she could do when she set a national record and won the NCAA crown in the indoor 200m; her 22.38 was the fifth fastest mark in the world all-time, and made her the first Ivy woman sprinter to win a national title. Her name is on the Watch List for the Bill Bowerman Award. Her event group coach, Kebba Tolbert, was honored with the title of USTFCCCA Northeast Indoor Coach of the Year for the second year in a row.

Just after the excitement at indoor nationals, we were off on our spring break trip to Houston. This year was our 36th annual visit, and while I am always amazed by the kindness of our host families there, this year their generosity was especially meaningful, coming on the heels of such a devastating storm this past fall. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, it was inspiring to see how the Harvard community of Houston remained resilient, and I was touched to see our student-athletes, current and former, reaching out to those affected by the event.

The Houston trip got the outdoor season off to a good start. We opened with a showing at the Cougar Spring Break Invitational at the University of Houston and have since completed a great outdoor season. The team meet at Wake Forest in March was a great chance for the team to practice supporting each other through any conditions. We had better weather all across the country the following weekend, with competitions in Austin, TX; Raleigh, NC; and Lowell, MA. And it was great to see so many outstanding performances when we were down at Penn for the Outdoor Heps. Highlights there included our men's 4x400 relay setting a new meet record with a team that included two freshmen, Jovahn Williamson (Dix Hills, NY) who earlier in the day won the open 400 and Rodney Agyare-May (Worcester, MA) who placed 4th behind teammates Williamson and senior Matt Hurst (Newport Beach, CA), the runner-up. On the women's side, Gabrielle Thomas was named Most Outstanding Performer both on the track and in the field after winning the 100, 200, Long Jump and contributing on both winning relays (4x1 and 4x4). She was joined by Simi Fajemison (Oxford, U.K.) for the Field award after Fajemisin won the triple jump for the second year in a row and placed 3rd in the long jump. I am so proud of our team and the growth our student-athletes are constantly realizing, as competitors, as scholars, and as community members.

With thanks to all the Friends for supporting our team in this journey,

Jason Saretsky

William W. "Bill" McCurdy Director of Track and Field/Cross Country

# A NOTE FROM OUR FRIENDS CHAIRS

Greetings from the Friends of Harvard Track (FoHT) Executive Committee!

As we approach the homestretch of the 2017–18 year, we are most fortunate to enjoy the continued success of the men’s and women’s teams and the ongoing support of hundreds of alumni and parents.

On April 14, 2018, the tradition of New York City alumni gatherings continued with a festive nighttime social event at The Standard Biergarten in the High Line neighborhood. The event coincided with yet another showing of generosity by the Cannavo Family, this time in the form of a \$35,000 matching gift challenge that ran from mid-March up through the NYC event. Our regional events also continue to grow in new ways. In mid-June 2018, the Sabharwal Family will graciously open their home in the Washington, D.C., area to host a FoHT social event. Details will be forthcoming shortly. We are excited to for this opportunity to gather our alumni in a geographic area where so many of them currently reside. If any other alumni or parents have ideas about organizing or hosting FoHT social events in other areas of the country, please contact us, and we will help to make it happen!

We would also like to thank Brian Davis '90, P '18, P '20 for continuing to keep the parents of student-athletes informed about the teams’ competitive schedule and online resources for streaming coverage and meet results. Thanks to Brian’s dedicated efforts, parents always have the latest team news at their fingertips.

On May 26, 2018, the FoHT will host a Spring mini-reunion for most of the Class Years ending in “3” and “8”. Details will be announced soon. The Classes of 1973, 1978 and 1988 will be included in the Fall mini-reunion, and the FoHT will organize a gathering on a date to be announced during October 11–14, 2018.

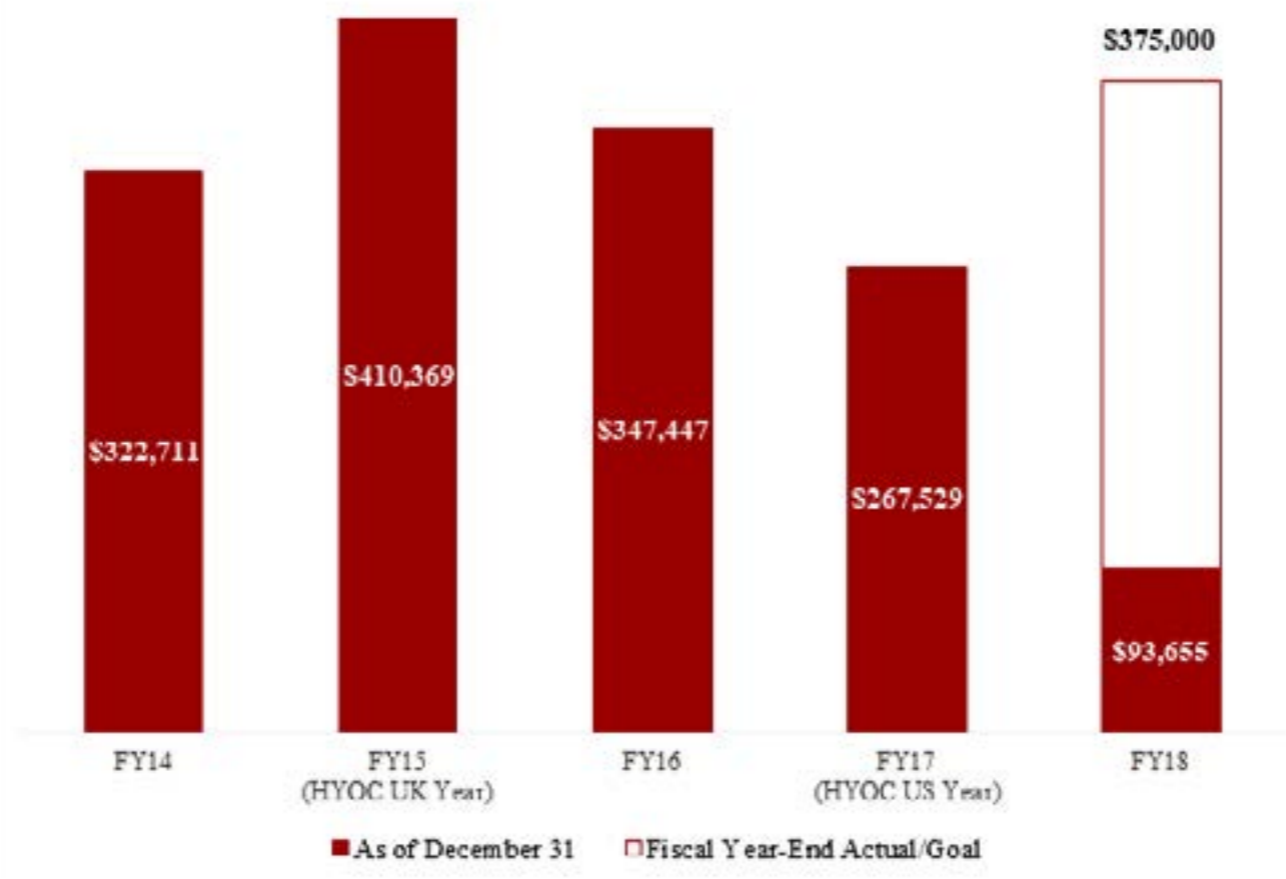
As a very early reminder, Harvard will be hosting the indoor Heps championship during February 2019. For anyone who has ever attended indoor Heps at Harvard, you know that the atmosphere is like that of no other track meet! Next Fall we will make further announcements about a FoHT social event that will take place in conjunction with Heps, so please keep it on the radar!

Be sure to follow important news about FoHT events and initiatives throughout the year on the Harvard Track and Field Facebook page! For those alumni who have already donated to the FoHT during this fiscal year, please accept our sincere thanks and appreciation.

We thank you for your continued generosity and support of the FoHT!

Joe Ciollo '99 and Evan Favermann Eisert '09

Co-Chairs, Friends of Harvard Track



## STUDENT-ATHLETE PROFILE

### FIONA DAVIS '18

Hometown: Manchester, MA

High School: Manchester Essex Regional

Event: Distance

Concentration: Government

#### The First Test

It was a Sunday morning in late August. Even at 7:30 in the morning as I quietly slipped out of Canaday (my roommates would still be asleep when I returned that afternoon) I could tell it was going to be a hot one. I scarfed down the hardboiled egg I had swiped from the dining hall the night before and started nervously chugging water as I made my way to the Gordon Indoor Track. It was long run day and our first official team practice: my first test.

I had made it through team training camp, but as a walk-on, I was desperate to prove myself on the winding trails of the Battle Road at Minuteman National Historic Park. The coach who gave me my summer training over the phone in June told me I would basically have to become a professional athlete if I wanted to make it on the team. I had to be all in. I took her at her word and spent the summer doubling my weekly mileage from high school and trying to get my average training pace down, all the while repeating over and over in my head *I believe in myself, I believe in myself*.

On the van ride to Minuteman, one of the upperclassmen played pump-up tunes on the aux up front while I scrunched into the way-way back and tried to get to know the other freshmen without betraying my fears too much. When we arrived at Minuteman, we piled out of the vans and stretched for a bit, sharing some nervous laughs and knowing looks with what seemed like the entire running community of Boston who had come here for exactly the same reason—to get better and beat the heat.

Before I knew it, we were off, our feet making the pat-scratch-scuff noise I would come to know well over the next four years as the sound of tired feet on gravel that only Minuteman could produce. I settled into a rhythm with two upperclassmen who had taken me under their wing, and, as the sun got higher and higher in the sky, we just kept running and running and running. The thing about Minuteman is that the first three miles gently ease you into the run. You go through a series of gently sloping downhill that turn into a shady, flat, woodchip trail. But on the way back, your last three miles are a never-ending series of uphill that come when you are most tired. Of course, I knew none of this, having never run the trail before.

So as we turned around at the halfway point, and started to approach the three-mile-to-go mark, I was oblivious to what lay just ahead. The trail had been beautiful so far, I had managed to keep pace stride-for-stride with my teammates, and I couldn't have imagined anything better. But then I started to feel it, the lactic acid burning in my legs, the sun beating down, the oppressive heat, and the hardboiled egg I had for breakfast. I managed to keep going through the first round of hills. I was determined not to get left behind. But the more experienced girls I was running with were actually ratcheting up the intensity. Somebody's Garmin beeped. A 6:30 mile. A minute faster than my normal training pace. With a mile to go, we hit one last little hill, a bump, really, in comparison to what we had already done. But that was the last straw for me and for my stomach. I careened off to the side by a rock with the engraving: Here Lies the Body of a British Soldier. Crouching on the ground I looked up the trail towards the upperclassmen, getting farther and farther away. I picked myself up and started sprinting. I still felt pretty bad, but there was no time for excuses. I caught up to my group just before making the final turn for home. My teammates looked at me with an expression that was a mix between bewilderment and respect.

We finished the run, and immediately the rest of the team started telling me how awesome Sunday brunch was going to be. I smiled and wiped puke off the side of my face as I squeezed back into the van between some of the Mid D guys. Brunch that afternoon did not disappoint. In fact it never has. There have been times over the past four years when I have felt like that freshman crouching on the side of the trail. But the promise of good banter at Sunday Brunch and the friendship I have felt every day since then has never failed to pick me up and motivate me to keep going. I am proud that over my four years, I was able to go from a long-shot walk on to a top-five scorer in every cross-country meet this fall, including the grueling NCAA Regionals at Buffalo where we ran through single digit temps, biting wind, and frozen mud up to our calves. But I could not have done that without my teammates, especially in my senior year, who supported me, accepted me for who I was, and made me feel that I had nothing left to prove.



## STUDENT-ATHLETE PROFILE

### MATTHEW MILLER '18

Hometown: Lafayette Hill, PA

High School: Germantown Academy

Event: Pole Vault

Concentration: Earth and Planetary Sciences

*What effect has your time at Harvard had on you?*

Before I came to Harvard, I'd say I was always a hard worker, but not necessarily a smart worker. However, over the course of my time here, I've seen teammates, friends, professors, and coaches achieve extraordinary things, and I have consistently observed the ways in which their understanding of their goals has informed careful and effective strategies towards achieving them. From my roommate's Rhodes Scholarship to Gabby's NCAA Championship, I've seen that great things stem from knowing how to work and not just how much work to do.

Certainly, I should say that track has been an extraordinary means for me to learn this.

When I came in as a freshman, aspiring to excel in the pole vault, I was eager to put in as much extra effort as possible to go from an unrecruited athlete to a Heps performer. I would stay in Palmer Dixon for extra squat reps, but rarely would I stretch or recover afterwards. At technical sessions, I'd take as many jumps as possible, but hardly, if ever, adjust my form. Unsurprisingly, by my junior year, I was on the verge of burn out and I realized I needed to make some fundamental changes. Taking a serious look at my work habits and re-adjusting to emphasize quality over quantity has now led me to my most consistent season of college track. Currently, as I look forward to medical school, I have no doubt that this new approach to my work will help me beyond the pole vault runway as well, as I pursue passions in medicine, research, and beyond.

*What has been your most memorable moment on the team?*

A great moment came this past Indoor Heps at Dartmouth. Our freshman vaulter, Erick Duffy – a New Balance Nations outdoor champion – was on his third attempt at 15' 9" after an indoor season in which he had struggled psychologically in the pole vault. A seventeen-foot jumper in high school, he had spent most of the winter unable to even take off the ground, yet in this moment, with his back to the ropes, Erick put it all together and absolutely blasted over the bar. As he landed back on the mat triumphantly, Ian West (our Junior vaulter) and I rushed over

for an ecstatic group hug. Not only had Erick scored (albeit, just knocking me off the podium after a narrow miss of my own!) but he had overcome a major mental hurdle and reasserted an important piece of his identity as an athlete. We were the most consistent pole vault squad of any school that day, and Erick's performance was the high point of a day in which we as an event group walked away with our heads held high.

*Of all your teammates over the years, whom have you admired the most and why?*

Ian West, our Junior vaulter, has been an absolutely incredible presence throughout my time with Harvard Track and Field. An über high energy North Carolinian, with a true southern drawl and a hyper-speed way of speaking, Ian has animated our team more than any three guys combined. But in addition to being the Crimson's self-proclaimed "cheerleader," Ian has an ironclad work ethic (belied by a boundless affability) that has carried him past injury and hardship to an elite status in the pole vault. Even on the rainiest (or snowiest, or both...) days in Cambridge, when we're bogged down in papers and p-sets and sore from lift, Ian brings both intensity and levity, making sure that each of us is not only pushing our athletic limits, but having fun in the process.



**STAY CONNECTED,  
FOLLOW THE TEAM!**



## CROSS COUNTRY CAPTAINS AND AWARDS

Rising seniors **Malia Ellington** and **Erin Dietz** will lead the women's team, while rising junior **Charlie Davis** will captain the men's team.

Kate Wiley Women's Most Outstanding Performer Award: Freshman **Abbe Goldstein**, who was Harvard's top finisher in three races this season, including the Ivy Cross Country Heptagonal Championships.

The Jerry Kanter Improvement Award: Junior **Kathryn Gillespie**, whose strong season culminated in her team-leading performance at the NCAA Northeast Regional, placing 43rd overall.

J.D. "Don" French '56 Memorial Cross Country Award, given to the team member who best combined the qualities of team inspiration, enthusiasm, improvement and ardent belief in the values of sports and athletics at Harvard: Freshman **Hugo Milner**, who earned USTFCCA All-Region honors and Second Team All-Ivy recognition after placing 16th at NCAA Regionals and 11th at Ivy Heps.

Jaako Mikkola Award, which recognizes the team member who, through continued and conscientious effort for team success, has shown noteworthy improvement in physical performance: Junior **Collin Price**, who was Harvard's second best performer at Ivy Heps, placing 38th overall, his best showing at the conference championship meet.



## TRACK & FIELD CAPTAINS AND AWARDS



Rising seniors **Malia Ellington**, **Ngozi Musa**, and **Gabby Thomas** will captain the women, while **Taylor Brunksole**, **Myles Marshall**, and **Ian West** will lead the men next season.

Bingham Relay Award, presented annually to each member of the relay team considered by the coaches to be the most outstanding during the indoor and/or outdoor seasons: Men's Outdoor 4x400m - **Rodney Agyare-May**, **Myles Marshall**, **Jovahn Williamson**, **Matt Hurst**; Women's Outdoor 4x100m - **Ngozi Musa**, **Gabby Thomas**, **Karina Joiner**, **Olivia Okoli**

Rita Raju Memorial Award, presented for excellence of scholarly pursuits, integrity, and community involvement. Qualities which mark her a leader by example and an athlete who is a joy to coach: **Marlena Sabatino**

Watters Mile Award, awarded annually to the man or woman who has competed for Harvard in the mile run with distinction and with dedication to the team's success: **Kathryn Gillespie**

Helmus Improvement Awards, awarded annually to the three (3) members of the squad who w/ loyal, team effort, hard work & conscientious practice have shown marked improvement contributing to teams success: **Taylor Brunksole**, **Andrew Connolly**, **Matt Hurst**

Little Shot Put Award, awarded to the Harvard shot putter who has contributed to the success of the Harvard Track & Field team through dedication, hard work, ability to overcome obstacles & excellence of competitive performance: **Gunnar Allison**

Westmore Wilcox 440 Award, presented annually to the Harvard runner who is the most outstanding in the 440 yard run/400 meter run during the season: **Jovhan Williamson**

Pappy Hunt Improvement Award, presented to that individual who, although perhaps not the fastest or strongest, has through hard work & dedication to the team, shown the most improvement during the track season: **Karina Joiner**

Hennessy Mile Relay Award, Presented to the relay team which through performance and attitude inspires the qualities of dedication, determination, competitive spirit, teamwork and high performance characteristic of Vincent Hennessy: Women's Outdoor 4x400-meter: **Maya Miklos, Olivia Okoli, Karina Joiner, Gabby Thomas**; Men's Outdoor 4x400-meter: **Rodney Agyare-May, Myles Marshall, Jovahn Williamson, Matt Hurst**

Women's Beyond the Call of Duty Award: **Kathryn Gillespie**

Francis J. Haggerty Award for Excellence in Women's Track and Field, honoring the woman on the Harvard track team who seized opportunities and excelled, thereby greatly contributing to the success of the Harvard women's track & field team: **Simi Fajemisin**

Schick Sprint Award, presented annually to the Harvard sprinter who through consistent courage, ability, sportsmanship, & devotion to teams welfare, provides outstanding example & inspiration: **Gabby Thomas, Rodney Agyare-May**

Gourdin Broad Jump Award, given to the Harvard varsity long jumper whose conscientious efforts, competitive performance and overall character contribute notably to Harvard Track and the Harvard Community: **Gabby Thomas, Simi Fajemisin**

Ohiri Triple Jump Award, awarded to that triple jumper on the Harvard varsity track team who best exemplifies Chris Ohiri '62 , Nigerian Olympic Team 60' & 64', in the characteristics of enthusiasm, team loyalty, & excellence of performance: **Simi Fajemisin**

Rand Hurdle Award, presented to the Harvard hurdler who has contributed significantly by his outstanding character, excellence, leadership, team spirit or individual improvement to the best in Harvard Athletics: **Jay Hebert, Livia Gauntlett**

Ed Stowell Award, presented to the field event athlete with exceptional enthusiasm, unbridled optimism, continued hard work, loyalty to the athletes, team and school and, most importantly aggressive eagerness to compete for team success: **Matt Miller, Martha Kebeh**

McLaughlin Award, presented annually to that Freshman of the track team, who, like James McLaughlin, distinguishes him or herself in exemplifying fellowship & sportsmanship: **Erick Duffy, LJ Daniel**

Jannergren "Overcoming Physical Adversity" Award, presented to the individual who overcome great physical adversity over the course of his or her college career and become a consistent team contributor: **Annika Gompers**

Nelson Unsung Hero Award, awarded to that senior member of the Harvard track team who through years of perseverance, loyalty, & effort often unnoticed has made a vital contribution to his teammates: **Randy Raymond**

Robert W. Harwood Pole Vault Award, presented to the Harvard pole vaulter who through loyalty, effort, performance and conduct has made a significant contribution to Harvard and Harvard Track: **Erick Duffy, Marlena Sabatino**

Gary Geissler Women's Unsung Hero Award, presented to the female senior member of the Harvard track team who best embodies G's characteristics of unbridled passion for the sport, dedication to all of the student-athletes under his care, and for the heroic work done behind the scenes: **Fiona Davis**

Leslie Cooper Golemme Women's Most Outstanding Performer Award, Awarded annually to that individual(s) selected by the coaches as having been the most outstanding and is usually awarded on the basis of the Indoor and Outdoor seasons combined: **Gabby Thomas**

Women's Most Valuable Performer Award: **Gabby Thomas**

McCurdy Beyond the Call of Duty Award – MVP: **Myles Marshall**



## THE FRIENDS OF HARVARD TRACK AND FIELD ANNUAL ALUMNI AND FAMILY MEET

In late January alumni and children once again gathered at the Gordon Indoor Track for a festive day of friendly competition and making/renewing friendships. This year was bittersweet as we remembered the legacy of **Leslie Cooper Golemme '86**, an incredible athlete, Friend of Harvard Track Co-Chair, and long-time champion and organizer of this event. The meet began with a beautiful tribute where many Friends shared fond memories of Leslie. We were honored to have the Golemme family in attendance, and while Leslie's presence was missed, the incredible impact of her years of volunteer work to support Harvard Track and Field and foster the alumni community will remain with us always. Going forward, we are proud to officially call the meet the "Leslie Cooper Golemme Friends & Family Meet" in her honor.

We had some incredible performances on the track and in the field from competitors of all ages, from age 2-81. It was a fun day for the Friends of Harvard Track. Save the date for next year's meet in January 2019!





Photographs courtesy of Brian Panoff '98