STUDENT SPOTLIGHT : **Austin Wood – Morse High School (Bath, Maine)**

For Austin Wood, mental health advocacy became part of his game plan.



Austin Wood

A rising lacrosse star at Morse High School in Bath, Maine, Austin dedicated his senior season to raising awareness about mental health and raising funds for KyleCares. He reached 200 career points, recorded 91 points during his senior season, and earned First Team Maine All-State Class B honors.

But Austin's greatest impact may have come from using his platform to speak openly about his own struggles and encourage others to do the same.

"Mental health is important to me because it's not a single person issue—it affects everyone," Austin shared. "This process with KyleCares has given me a big opportunity to openly discuss my personal issues and using that to encourage and bring confidence into other people's lives."

Austin knows that speaking openly about mental health can take courage, especially for young people. He hopes his efforts will help create a culture where students feel more comfortable talking about what they're going through.

This year, Austin and his Athletic Director introduced a new KyleCares club at Morse High School, speaking publicly to their entire school community and unveiling a KyleCares banner. He hopes the club—and the conversation—will continue to grow after he is gone.

There are three compelling pieces to Austin's story: he used something he already had—a platform as a successful athlete—to start conversations about mental health; he was willing to be vulnerable about his own experiences; and he turned that advocacy into something tangible by raising $2,270 for KyleCares along the way.



Next year, Austin will attend Bridgton Academy for a post-graduate year. Wherever his next season takes him, he leaves behind an important example: you don't have to be a professional advocate to make a difference. Sometimes, you simply have to be willing to speak up. Congratulations Austin, and best of luck at Bridgton!