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**Emily Leshner of Nazareth College Named Empire 8 Woman of the Year
Swimming Star Will Represent Conference in NCAA Woman of the Year Balloting**

ROCHESTER, NY – Emily Leshner, a recent graduate of Nazareth College and a member of the swimming and diving team, has been named the 2008 Empire 8 Woman of the Year. Leshner will represent the conference in national balloting for the NCAA Woman of the Year. The honor is given to a student-athlete who excels in academics, athletics, leadership, and service.

“You get a chance to have an Emily Leshner in your program once in a lifetime,” said Nazareth Athletic Director Pete Bothner. “She is an unbelievably talented athlete, but an even better person. I am pleased that the conference recognized her achievements.”

Leshner earned All-America honors nine times and captured the 2007 national championship in the 400-yard individual medley. She was selected as Swimmer of the Meet for the second consecutive time in the 2008 Empire 8 Women’s Swimming and Diving Championships and was honored as the first Swimmer of the Year this season. Leshner was also chosen as the Athlete of the Meet at the 2006 conference championships.

This year alone, Leshner won the state title and broke the Empire 8 Association and Championship records in the 200-yard IM, shattered her own school record and broke her own conference records in the 200-yard backstroke, and captured the state and conference titles in the 400-yard IM. She was a four-year conference champion in the 200- and 400-yard IM events and the 200-yard backstroke.

The Communication and Sciences Disorder major was honored with the school’s 2008 Robert A. Kiddera Scholar-Athlete, presented to the Nazareth senior who has excelled athletically and academically.

Lesher was awarded a \$7,500 NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship and will use the scholarship to attend graduate school at Ithaca College. To qualify for the award, a student-athlete must have an overall grade point average of at least 3.20 and must have performed with distinction as a member of the team from which he or she was nominated. The student-athlete must have behaved, both on and off the field, in a manner that has brought credit to the student-athlete, the institution, and intercollegiate athletics.

She earned NCAA Division III Academic All-American recognition each of the past three years. The multiple Dean's List student was honored with the Outstanding Clinician Award from the Communication Science and Disorders Department.

"Emily has obviously enjoyed a very decorated swimming career with many records and honors to her credit, but she has managed to excel in the classroom and holds firmly the values of social responsibility," said Empire 8 Commissioner Chuck Mitrano. "She encompasses everything that we value in the Empire 8 and is most deserving of Woman of the Year."

Lesher has also been very active on her campus and in the community at large. A student-athlete mentor each of her four years, she was a presenter at local elementary school this year for National Sportsmanship Day in March. Lesher served as a Study Hall Coordinator and served as a student member on the Athletic Facility Planning Committee. She volunteered for Special Olympics, prepared Thanksgiving Day baskets for needy families, and was involved in "Relay for Life."

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