

STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 5, 2019
TO: City Council
FROM: Carrie Dyer, Community Engagement & Cultural Services
SUBJECT: 2019 Golden Heart Awards

Recommendation

Per City Council policy, ratify the recommendations from the selection committee for the recipients of the 2019 Golden Heart Awards.

Fiscal Impact

Costs including staff time, materials and items for the reception are included in the 2018/19 budget.

Background and Analysis

In memory of the death of Andrew Mockus, who was tragically killed by his peers in 1992, the City of Davis Recreation and Park Commission expanded its commitment to the youth of the Davis community. Public forums were held to discuss various issues and to brainstorm on how the community could do more to meet the needs of the teens in Davis. One of the outcomes of the forums was to create an annual award recognizing outstanding youth in the community.

Nominations for the award were accepted November 2018 through January 31, 2019. Due to an extended deadline for submissions and committee review, ratification and recognition of the awards are happening on the same date.

The selection committee spent considerable time reviewing the nominations and were impressed by the nominations. The committee consisted of:

- Joan Sallee, Former Rec and Park Commissioner and Former DJUSD Board Member
- Kate Snow, Davis Joint Unified School District Climate Coordinator
- Robert Larson, City of Davis Community Services Coordinator

After lengthy consideration, it is recommended that the following recipients be awarded a Golden Heart Award for 2019.

Community Service & Personal Challenge – Charlie Hilliard

Charlie brings maturity, compassion, wisdom, truth, and dedication to King High School, and all staff and students here have benefitted from their presence. Charlie took initiative to gauge student interest in and then build a “GSA” Club at King. GSA stands for Gay-Straight Alliance or for Gender-Sexuality Alliance. The club’s goal was to empower all students to learn about themselves and each other with respect and compassion, promote acceptance of self and others, connect with the larger LGBTQIA+ community, and share kindness while promoting a positive

school climate. This club was Charlie's idea and creation. With Charlie's guidance, King High's GSA club provided a place for students to talk with each other and discuss real-world issues. The legacy of the passion and courage that Charlie shared with King by creating a GSA lives on.

Charlie is a student with a complex background. They have overcome much adversity and has become a wonderful young human who I have no doubt will do wonderful things in the future. Charlie is the perfect example of overcoming hardship, taking opportunities, and making the most of challenging situations to be successful.

Community Service – Silas Kirsch

Silas Kirsch takes the ideals and messages of Youth Leadership Davis deeply. His compassion, grace, and passion for viewing the world in head, heart and with soul, makes him a standout.

Youth Leadership Davis students serve as trained interns at host churches for the Davis Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter where they work with shelter guests. The program builds personal development around this volunteer work with training in compassionate listening, mental health, first aid, personal power and shelter operations and procedures. Silas has received over 80 hours of training in preparation for over 40 hours of volunteer work staffing the host-site intake, working with guests and other volunteers. In addition, he has led and participated in dozens of student directed Youth Leadership Davis club meetings during school, designing and implementing community service projects, drives for shelter supplies, topical forums with guest speakers on homelessness and articles for local media.

In his third year, Silas is now the apparent leader among more than a dozen returning high-school seniors. The group seems to acknowledge that Silas has the experience and maturity, among many leaders, to lead. He has suggested to me a number of ideas for how to expand Youth Leadership Davis into new areas of service to our community, to involve more students and enhance the YLD experience. Silas was invited to be the Student Member on the Board of Directors of IRWS. Adult board members have often commented to me how impressed they are with his participation there. One board commenting, "If there are people like Silas out there, our future is in better hands than I thought."

Community Service – Vinita Saxena

Vinita Saxena is an outstanding and long-term volunteer for Team Davis. Team Davis is a local Special Olympics team, serving approximately 170 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities from Yolo County. Team Davis offers eleven sports, along with a number of other programs including art, singing, nutrition classes, gardening and regular dances and activities.

Vinita has served as a committed volunteer for Team Davis since 2013 when she was a student at Holmes Junior High. Some of our participants were her classmates at the time and she has remained a committed friend to them throughout high school. She has also been very involved in the Davis High School Best Buddies organization – a partner organization of Team Davis' which matches individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities for one-to-one friendships. As part of Best Buddies, Vinita helps organize a number of social activities for

Team Davis participants. Vinita has kind words for everyone. She sincerely cares for people and goes out of her way to make everyone feel connected and appreciated.

Community Service – Lindsey Vernau

Like many good humans, Lindsey has a big heart for those less fortunate – she is compassionate and really cares for their condition. However what makes Lindsey truly special is that she has turned typical concern into atypical action – by giving her time to actually save and improve lives. In particular, Lindsey is passionate about helping animals and kids in need, whether they are homeless cats and kittens found in the area or less fortunate children from around the world. Since 2013, starting at the age of 12, Lindsey has been heavily involved in two primary service activities related to these passions, and her work continues today.

Since mid-2014 Lindsey has volunteered fostering cats and kittens for Yolo SPCA along with the UC Davis Fracture Program, which benefit homeless, sick and injured animals. Over the past 4.5 years, Lindsey has provided 24/7 care for approximately 300 kittens, equating to at least 2500 hours to get them healthy and prepared to be successfully adopted into forever homes.

In 2013 Lindsey was part of a group of local youth who started a non-profit organization called Second Touch Soccer, collecting and sending used soccer gear to children across the globe. Lindsey is now the president of Second Touch Soccer, overseeing all board meetings, decisions, activities, finances and volunteers.

Lindsey is by nature shy, but in order to best serve her foster cats and the Second Touch Soccer organization she has learned to work outside of her comfort zone. She gives a tremendous amount of time to these community organizations and is devoted and dedicated to the efforts. She is committed to growing these activities by spreading her passion and encouraging others, particularly local teens to get involved.