

Hitachi Foundation Announces Yoshiyama Award Recipients; They Smash the Stereotype and Prove that America's Future is in Good Hands

News Editors/Business Editors/Education Writers

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 14, 2003

-- 10 Students Named 2003 Recipients of Yoshiyama Award for

Exemplary Service to the Community --

One has brought gender equity to sports in her state, another successfully rallied for free public transportation to school for thousands of low-income students in his community, and all have worked to awaken civic participation in their communities and lead sustainable change. They are the awardees of the 2003 Yoshiyama Award for Exemplary Service to the Community, and they are among the many active youth leaders working to make our world a better place.

The Hitachi Foundation named 10 high school seniors as recipients of the 2003 Yoshiyama Award. In addition, 6 nominees were named finalists and 18 others semifinalists for this prestigious award.

"The nearly 500 eligible nominees we received this year were among the strongest we've ever seen," said Barbara Dyer, president and CEO of The Hitachi Foundation. "They provide powerful evidence that America's youth are not passive observers. They are out there making a difference."

Several of the 2003 awardees have achieved large-scale, systemic change. This class of Yoshiyama Award recipients includes a young woman who created a nationwide program providing free luggage to foster children and a young man who organizes other African American men to take an active role in their community. It also includes a young woman who founded a student group to challenge and ultimately remove her school from academic probation and a young woman who works to improve the conditions of Latino fieldworkers.

The 2003 Yoshiyama Award recipients will participate in a leadership retreat and be honored at a luncheon to take place at the National Press Club in Washington, DC on October 14, 2003. Each will receive a \$5,000 gift.

Selected by a diverse committee from 499 eligible nominations submitted by teachers, community leaders, and others directly affiliated with youth organizations, the recipients of the 2003 Yoshiyama Award are:

Ian Amber, Miami Palmetto High School, Pinecrest, FL: Through the student-run nonprofit organization he founded, Kids That Care Pediatric & Cancer Fund (KTC), Ian promotes compassion, care and optimism for young patients with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses. Ian, a two-time cancer survivor, coordinates a year-round "KTC Ouch Box Toy Drive" to provide local hospitals with gifts for pediatric cancer patients at each treatment. At age 13, Ian started raising money for a hospital bone marrow transplant unit by selling stickers. This has led to an annual "Stick It To Cancer Day" where community groups sell stickers to raise money and awareness of pediatric cancer needs. Ian created the "Dream a Little Dream" contest, which grants the wishes of critically ill children. Miami is a tri-ethnic community and federal law mandates that cancer protocols be available in Spanish. The mandate is unfunded and in response, Ian secured grant funds to translate the protocols into Spanish. He has also worked with the African-American and Haitian communities to increase the number of marrow donors and has organized blood drives targeting communities of color, which are underrepresented as donors. Ian mentors younger volunteers in KTC and is training his replacement to ensure longer-term sustainability of the organization.

Aubyn Burnside, Maple Hill Homeschool, Murrells Inlet, SC: At age nine, Aubyn learned that foster children were using black garbage bags to transport their belongings between homes. To provide for the 300 foster children in her county, Aubyn founded Suitcases for Kids to collect unused luggage. Within two months, she had collected enough luggage for those in eight surrounding counties. As interest in her project grew, Aubyn wrote a 12-page starter manual to help others develop the program. Suitcases for Kids is now active in 50 states and 47 foreign countries and also serves senior citizens, missionaries and medical personnel. In addition to initiating

Suitcases for Kids, Aubyn started a 4-H club in her community, as the closest existing branch was more than 30 minutes away. She has since helped launch several others in surrounding communities. As youth coordinator of Operation Christmas Child at her church for two years, she helped send more than 400 shoeboxes filled with gifts and supplies to children worldwide. She teaches environmental programs and mentors Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts. In addition, Aubyn set up a stuffed animal donation fund with her brother in honor of a friend who died of cancer.

Christine "Chrissi" Egan, Boone County High School, Florence, KY: When Chrissi realized the Kentucky High School Athletic Association's regulations were biased toward men, she sought to change the rules. While male high school baseball teams were allowed to play without time restrictions, female teams' games were limited to 80 minutes. Chrissi also noticed a discrepancy in the quality of playing fields and pay between coaches for male and female teams. With a coalition of peers and advocates, Chrissi led a campaign to level the playing field. As a result of Chrissi's work -- during which she was regularly harassed -- the time limit for female players was lifted, and a sports complex for female athletes was built. In addition, her actions were instrumental in equalizing pay for equal work, making changes under both Title VI and Title IX. This change will result in providing increased opportunities for state women to compete for college scholarships. Chrissi has also spearheaded a campaign to help Latino families apply for assistance at health fairs and PTA meetings, babysitting while parents took necessary action. Chrissi has also volunteered with the service clubs Women of Boone and Helping Hands Society.

Merceditas Lazaro, Santa Maria High School, Santa Maria, CA: As co-adviser of Community Action Resources Educational Services (CARES), Merceditas helps improve work and living skills of underserved Latino fieldworkers and their children. In addition, she educates them in civic matters, provides English language training, and informs them about Mexican history. Merceditas is the founder and first president of the local Future Leaders of America club at her high school -- a statewide nonprofit Latino youth leadership development program. She has recently served as a translator for the Santa Maria community development staff's visit to her family's home village of Oaxaca, Mexico. In addition, Merceditas serves as a tutor twice weekly with the Upward Bound preschool program and teaches neighbors who need help with reading skills. She also volunteers at a free medical clinic.

Jessica Marrero, Buchholz High School, Gainesville, FL: Jessica founded the program Partners In Adolescent Lifestyle Support (PALS) as an outreach program designed to help children and adolescents with mental illnesses in the school environment. Jessica rallied school administration and students for two years and secured a \$100,000 grant to start this outpatient program. PALS helps to address critical issues in the health-care system. These include lack of funding for long-term residential care for adolescents with emotional problems and the need for additional follow-up care. Jessica has trained peer counselors for PALS who create an open, educational environment for those with emotional and psychological illnesses. She has written two national grants with the departments of psychology and child psychiatry at the University of Florida and organized local businesses to sponsor an annual golf tournament in an effort to endow the organization. The tournaments have raised \$40,000 for PALS. PALS is now active at three neighboring schools, serving about 1,500 students. In addition to her leadership with PALS, Jessica volunteers at a child/adolescent psychiatric unit.

Ryan Nevitt, Iota High School, Crowley, LA: After reading about the benefit of cell phone-access for victims of domestic violence, Ryan sought to involve his community in the national "Call-to-Protect" cell phone drive. Ryan organized the local "Donate-a-Phone" campaign to collect recycled cell phones, which are programmed to dial 911 and given to victims of abuse. Ryan also approached Faith House, an outreach office, to investigate other areas of need and initiated two additional campaigns, including "baby showers." He also organized events to collect personal items for battered women and children. More than 50 organizations statewide have participated in his programs. Ryan initiated his own campaign to educate the community and state about domestic and teen violence issues. In this capacity, he has presented at community events, written and aired public service announcements, submitted articles to newspapers and websites, posted flyers he created with answers to frequently asked questions and distributed brochures. In other activities, Ryan has served as a teen role model for the D.A.R.E youth drug prevention program, helped renovate homes and run food drives and benefits for victims of hurricanes.

Rovion Reed, Danville High School, Danville, IL: Through the group he established, Arms Up, Rovion works to encourage young black men to take active roles in their communities and with their education, to develop self-respect and self-worth, and to build leadership skills. Now with almost 200 members, Arms Up has volunteered at a local daycare, collected food for a neighborhood pantry and promoted dialogue on issues facing the community. Rovion holds regular "Talk Back" conferences in which youths learn about and discuss important issues with experts. Topics include sexual health, race relations and leadership. To improve school morale, to bridge the student-teacher gap, and recognize teachers for their commitment, Rovion oversaw the logistics of the Minority Teachers' Award.

Students presented 40 teachers of color in the school district with certificates for outstanding teaching. At this event, Rovion provided many students who had no public-speaking experience the opportunity to speak in a relaxed atmosphere. He has also volunteered with the Race Relations Conference -- an interactive live conference promoting racial unity between the generations. Rovion is training young men to lead the group in service after his departure.

Jamaul Thomas, Oakland High School, Oakland, CA: Having grown up without financial security or family stability, Jamaul works to enable others to overcome the same hardships he endured. To educate himself on local issues and to hear what matters most to his peers, Jamaul approaches youths on the streets and in the classroom. He has involved his peers in expressing themselves productively through hip-hop music and social activism. Jamaul led a collaborative campaign of Oakland youth, local politicians, and parents to lobby the regional transportation authority for free bus passes for low-income students. As a result of these actions, more than 33,000 low-income students in two counties no longer pay a fee to get to school. As a leader at Kids First, a youth advocacy organization in Oakland, Jamaul has single-handedly recruited more than 100 youths from diverse backgrounds to join in Kids First's after-school activities and launched a school-site student chapter of Kids First to engage more youth and parents in decision-making. He has also collaborated with a fellow youth leader to start a committee teaching the art of street theater as an educational outreach tool.

Eve Vang, Arlington High School, Saint Paul, MN: When others left in search of a better school, Eve stayed to make her school better. As the founder of a student-led activist group -- Voicing Our Intelligence to Challenge Education (VOICE) -- Eve created the group at her high school in 1999 after it was placed on academic probation. Eve and her peers wrote letters and spoke to the superintendent and school board members to convey student concerns. She worked to improve the school's image to retain and attract strong students by visiting middle schools where VOICE staged engaging presentations. As the school is a large part of her urban community, the probation status affected all facets of the area. In response, and recognizing that 90% of the high school's enrollment was people of color, Eve organized an annual multicultural carnival to strengthen the school's relationship with the community. Arlington High School was lifted from academic probation in 2002. Eve continues to advise VOICE, shifting the group's focus to community service and leadership development. Among other activities, Eve, who grew up in public housing and on welfare, has served as a mentor to women living in public housing. She has also organized Operation Christmas Child, in which her school sent gifts to third world countries.

Garen Wolff, Detroit County Day School, Detroit, MI: As founder of a mentoring and tutoring program for African American middle-school students -- City-Prep -- Garen targets four areas of academic and social development: articulation, math, etiquette and spirituality. City-Prep teaches skills for public speaking and succeeding on standardized tests, such as vocabulary-building and critical thinking. It also teaches professional etiquette and encourages participants to cultivate their individual spiritualities. City-Prep pairs middle school students with junior and senior high school students to help them broaden their understanding of academics, their leadership potential, and future opportunities. Garen has worked to secure funding for City-Prep, has recruited participants, developed a curriculum and attracted speakers. She has also co-founded her school's Diversity Council, which mediates conflicts and serves as a forum for discussion of race and culture. Garen co-founded the Women's Issues Club at her school as well, encouraging young women to empower themselves. Garen has trained experienced mentors to continue building and managing City-Prep after she leaves the Detroit area.

Finalists each receive a gift of \$1,000. Named as finalists are:

Juana Ibarra -- Tulsa, OK

Brandon Keefe -- West Hills, CA

Stefanie Lacy -- Bandera, TX

Kyle McDaniel -- Newcastle, CA

Tony Marks-Block -- San Francisco, CA

Veronique Robert -- Irvine, CA

And as semifinalists:

James Landon Buie -- Taylorsville, UT

Shang-Tai "Shawn" Chen -- Cerritos, CA

Megan Colvard -- Pacific Palisades, CA

Randy Diamond -- Irvine, CA

Mayo Djakaria -- Las Vegas, NV

Nickole Evans -- Kennewick, WA

Jason Harper -- Grand Island, NE

Eleanor Lee Kirke -- Omaha, NE

Jinu Koola -- Lake Forest, IL

Christian Lucier -- Bainbridge Island, WA

Thanh-Ha Luu -- Rochester, MN

Andrew March -- Mount Vernon, NY

Craig Joshua Mercer -- Pikeville, TN

Tyrell Nickens -- Kilmarnock, VA

Christopher Parrott -- Pleasant Valley, CT

Jamie Ridgely -- Manchester, MD

Nicole Riggs -- Nampa, ID

Amanda Waas -- Pinecrest, FL

The Hitachi Foundation is a nonprofit, philanthropic organization incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1985 with an endowment from Hitachi, Ltd. (NYSE:HIT), in Tokyo. The Foundation was established to promote social responsibility through effective participation in global society. The Yoshiyama Award for Exemplary Service to the Community was established in 1987 with a generous gift from Hirokichi Yoshiyama, former president and chairman of Hitachi, Ltd., in Tokyo, Japan, upon his retirement. For additional information about the Yoshiyama Award or The Hitachi Foundation, visit the Foundation's web site at www.hitachifoundation.org.

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