

Council honors community standouts

BY MONICA STARK

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Recognizing deserving individuals and organizations, the Davis City Council announced the 2023 Golden Heart Awards and this year's Thong Hy Huynh Memorial Awards at Tuesday's meeting.

Golden Heart

The Golden Heart award was first presented in 1994 in memory of Andrew Mockus, who was killed by his peers in 1992. After many community forums hosted by the Recreation and Park Commission, it was decided to recognize outstanding youth in the Davis community with two different categories within the award: community service and personal challenge. The Community Service Award recognizes individuals who've given significant service to the communities and their fears and or their schools, and the Personal Challenge Award recognizes individuals who overcome significant challenges.

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STANDOUTS: Awards honor the best in community service

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For community service, the Golden Heart recipients are: **Empower Youth Community Service Club, Arianna Ramirez and Isla Robertson.**

The Empower Youth Community Service Club comprises students from Davis High School and Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior High. Empower Youth was started by 12 local teens in August 2020 to support children at the Empower Yolo Safe House and other families in need. Because of the dedication of its officers, the club has grown to more than 100 members at Davis High School and 30 members at Emerson.

The youths participate in community service projects with Empower Yolo, such as organizing and preparing Halloween treat bags, Easter egg hunts and movie nights for children at the safe house and participating in the adoptive family program.

Ramirez, a senior at DaVinci Charter Academy,

is described as “a curious, kind, empathetic, and thoughtful leader.” As a peer tutor, she works one-on-one with special education students and study skills. As student body president, she exudes exceptional leadership skills and the ability to delegate and mentor others. She also has a passion for music and leads her school’s Mariachi club.

Accepting the award, Ramirez said, “I never do anything other than out of the kindness of my heart.”

Robertson is a seventh-grader at Harper Junior High School. At a young age, she developed a passion for community service and philanthropy. She is a National Charity League board member for the class of 2028. She volunteers with Tree Harper, Project Linus, Yolo Food Bank, Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue, the Davis Schools Foundation and Davis Musical Theatre Company.

The personal challenge awardee is **Ashton Aroseteguy.**

A seventh-grade student-athlete at Holmes Jr. High,

Aroseteguy, who suffered a serious injury, could have stayed home but set aside his personal disappointment with not being able to compete and showed up to lift up his teammates.

Huynh Awards

The Thong Hy Huynh Memorial Awards, established in 1986 recognize local individuals or organizations promoting civil rights, civic engagement of positive human relations and are helping improve the quality of life for Davis residents and visitors. The awards are in memory of a Davis High School student who was stabbed to death 40 years ago on May 4, 1983. The awards are intended to help raise awareness of social justice and inclusion. The City of Davis Human Relations Commission leads the award nomination process.

■ Under 18: **Ruvi Rajapaksha, Bailey Ren-li Paquette, Mattias Rowenbale.**

Rajapaksha, an eighth-grader at Holmes Junior

High, has demonstrated considerable dedication to the well-being and success of diverse students across the David Davis Joint Unified School District over several years. Her first foray into districtwide system change came in the form of participating in the student ethnic studies committee of the Ethnic Studies Task Force as a sixth-grader from Willet Elementary.

Paquette, a junior at Davis High School, grew up in the Philippines and Singapore before moving to Davis in third grade. Last year, she founded a club with the intent of making community service fun and meaningful for high school students.

Rowendale advocates for fellow students, his community, and the environment. A founding member of the Davis Student Union, he has advocated for the elevation of the student voice and

important matters in schools. Rowendale has advocated for gender-neutral restrooms and changing rooms.

At Tuesday’s meeting, Rowendale accepted the award with urgency for continued work: “Despite the accomplishments we’ve made and the accomplishments I’ve been able to make these last few years, there’s much left to do.”

■ 18 and older: **Naomi Davis; Natalia Deeb-Sosa;**

Recognized for her leadership, support and guidance she has provided the Davis Senior High School Black Student Union, week after week and year after year.

Deeb-Sosa been devoted to this integral get marginalized community of Davis for years. As she recognizes the strength of the farmworkers and undocumented community, at Tuesday’s

ceremony, she said she hopes “the near future does not need for these kinds of awards.”

■ Community Group: **Empower Youth Community Service Club and Ethnic Studies of Yolo Academy**

Recognized for the second time on Tuesday evening, Empower Youth officers were further acknowledged for having collectively volunteered hundreds of hours, working extremely hard to raise awareness about issues that affect youths.

Ethnic Studies of Yolo Academy focuses on awareness of identity and history, systems and power resistance movements, and civic engagement. This understanding assists the use of building community amongst themselves like using skills, which they can bring to the wider community.