

STAFF REPORT

DATE: April 15, 2025
TO: City Council
FROM: Carrie Dyer, Community Relations Program Manager
SUBJECT: 2025 Thong Hy Huynh Awards Recipient Recommendations

Recommendation

Ratify the following nomination recommendations from the Human Relations Commission for the 2025 Thong Hy Huynh Awards.

- 18 and Older Category
 - Ann Block
 - Dillan Horton
- Community Organization Category
 - Davis Night Market
 - Delta of Venus/Lee Walthall

Fiscal Impact

There is a cost associated with each individual award certificate, the perpetual plaque and the awards reception. These costs are included in the 24-25 budget.

Council Goal(s)

Objective 5: Maintaining High Quality Infrastructure and Services

Commission Input

The Human Relations Commission oversees the Thong Hy Huynh award nomination process, review of the nomination form and timeline, evaluation of received nominations and the recommendations to the City Council.

Background and Analysis

The Human Relations Commission annually seeks nominations for the Thong Hy Huynh (“*tong hi win*”) Awards. The awards are presented once each year in memory of the stabbing death of Davis High School student Thong Hy Huynh on May 4, 1983. The award was established to raise awareness about and to honor community members whose actions exemplify the goals of diversity, community, social justice and equal rights.

The three award categories are:

- 18 and Older
- Under 18
- Community Organization supporting the Davis Community

There are unlimited qualities that support an individual or organization being nominated. Examples include:

- Promoting civil rights and/or civic engagement
- Creating positive human relations in our multicultural and diverse community
- Improving the quality of life in Davis for residents and visitors through: health promotion, human services, housing, education, employment, cultural awareness or peaceful means of conflict resolution

At the February 27 meeting of the Human Relations Commission, the commission created a subcommittee made up of Alvarez, Kaplan and Wong-Chen to review the nominations. The subcommittee presented their recommendations to the full Human Relations Commission on April 2.

Per the nomination guidelines, there may be multiple recipients in each category. Based on careful reading of the award description and the nomination language submitted, the subcommittee is recommending the following nominees to be recognized as 2025 Thong Hy Huynh recipients:

- 18 and Older Category
 - Ann Block
 - Dillan Horton
- Community Organization Category
 - Davis Night Market
 - Delta Venus/Lee Walthall
- Under 18 Category
 - No nominations received

Tamimi moved with second by Gorman approval of the subcommittee recommendations of Ann Block and Dillan Horton in the 18 and over category and Davis Night Market and Delta of Venus in the Community Organization category and to move forward the recommendations to City Council for ratification. Motion passed as follows:

AYES: Baker, Gorman, Kaplan, Pickett, Tamimi, Wong-Chen

NOES: Kol

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Alvarez

Nomination statements are attached. **(ATTACHMENTS)**

As per policy, staff brings the Commission recommendations to the City Council for review and ratification prior to issuing the awards. The awards will be formally presented to the recipients at a ceremony on May 20.

Attachments

Nomination Statements

- Ann Block
- Dillan Horton (four nominations)
- Davis Night Market
- Delta of Venus/Lee Walthall

Ann Block

I sat in the Vet Memorial Center theater at this year's Day of Remembrance event, listening to Ann Block's powerful words: "Today, we need to find that courage." She was referring to the bravery of Yoshi Kubo, who stood against the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans. Ann reminded us how history echoes into the present, with executive orders, ICE arrests, and the consequences that continue to impact our communities. At that moment, I realized: Ann Block is a woman who has found the courage to stand up - again and again for others. Because of this unwavering commitment, I am honored to nominate Ann Block for the Thong Hy Huynh Award.

Ann's dedication to civil rights was clear from when she arrived in Davis as a law student at UC Davis' King Hall and through her private legal practice, which opened in the mid-1990's. Through her local office, she has represented countless foreign nationals in Davis, Yolo County, and the surrounding region. Since 2017, she has also worked for the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, currently serving as a Senior Staff Attorney. She is particularly known for her work on VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) and U (victims of criminal activity) visas. Please see more about her work at www.ilrc.org/ann-block.

Ann is not only a respected attorney, but she is also a tireless educator, organizer, and ally. She led & participated in numerous "Know Your Rights" workshops in Davis, Woodland, and Winters, and provided immigration legal assistance through CRLAF, Legal Aid of Nor Cal, and NorCal Resist. Beyond her volunteer work for these organizations, she has provided countless hours of pro bono legal advice and logistical support for immigration cases in our local community - a commitment that has spanned decades and continues to this very day.

Her dedication to education extends to all, including providing immigration education for undergrad and law students & speaking at Davis elementary schools, Harper, & DHS. She worked on the Yolo County Sanctuary Resolution and spoke on the 2016 panel "Navigating the City of Davis' Sanctuary Status in a Climate of Intolerance." Though this nomination focuses on Ann's work for immigrant rights, her advocacy extends across many causes: Being a founding member of the Cesar Chavez Elementary Parent Homework Committee, later the DJUSD committee; Advocating for social justice candidates in election campaigns; Dedicating time to student rights, women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, free speech, Palestinian rights and more; Attending countless city council and school board meetings, writing letters, signing petitions, and speaking out at public events - sometimes in a crowd, sometimes as a lone voice.

These are just a few examples of Ann's lifelong commitment to justice. She embodies the very essence of this award. Her dedication to advocacy, education, and civil rights has profoundly shaped our community. I urge you to honor Ann Block with this award - a recognition she truly deserves.

Dillan Horton
(Four nominations received)

#1 I am honored to nominate Dillan Horton for 2025 Thong Hy Huynh Award for significant efforts in promoting civil rights and/or civic engagement. Mr. Horton has been a champion of civil rights and civic engagement in the city of Davis for years through activities such as his role as commissioner in the Davis Police Accountability Commission, where he has served 3 terms as chair and 1 term as vice chair. Mr. Horton's work in the Police Accountability Commission began in 2018 when the commission was established and he was selected as the inaugural vice Chair and his work was instrumental in creating the reform recommendations which the city of Davis accepted and used to create the Davis Department of Social Services & Housing. The Davis Department of Social Services & Housing plays a critical role in strengthening the Davis community by supporting the most marginalized population, people experiencing housing insecurity. The Davis SSH Department also promotes the civil rights of all people by focusing on non-police solutions to social and mental health issues such as early intervention and prevention, mental health, affordable housing, and homelessness services, and data analysis. It is thanks to the work of Mr. Horton that we have a city department that works exclusively for non-police solution to the problems facing the most marginalized populations which include people experiencing housing insecurity and people experiencing mental health concerns.

In addition to Mr. Horton's work on the Police Accountability Commission, he has also been a member of the Pride Committee since 2021. The Pride Committee organizes Yolo County's largest and oldest annual LGBTQ+ advocacy event which supports the LGBTQ+ communities and allies. The Pride event in Davis strengthens community inclusivity, reduces discrimination in the community, and decreases prejudice motivated violence with a focus on providing resources for LGBTQ+ youth, and its revenues fund programs including anti-bullying campaigns, workshops, and outreach events. Mr. Horton has been a key voice on the Pride Committee and his work for the committee has been critical in supporting the rights and dignity if the LGBTQ+ and ally communities. Mr. Horton's enthusiasm and involvement in this committee has been an effective driver of spreading the appeal of this event throughout Davis, resulting in growth in the community support of civil rights for all.

#2 With great enthusiasm, we write to nominate Dillan Horton for the City of Davis' 2025 Thong Hy Huynh Award. We have known and worked with Dillan in various capacities for many years, and feel that his tireless commitment on behalf of the community embodies the values inherent in creating a more just, humane, and cohesive Davis, for which this Award was established.

Although he was born in Texas, Dillan adopted Davis as his home when he transferred here to become a UCD student in 2013. Both as a student and after graduation, his activism has focused on organizing and advocating on behalf of those suffering from injustice- whether in the workplace, the LGBTQIA community, or in communities of color, among others. He has also committed to serving as a mentor to young people. While his current work as a CASA Volunteer Supervisor in Solano County takes him several miles down the road, his work as an advocate and mentor for foster youth

speaks to his deep sense of responsibility to all of our youth and embodies precisely the values that this Award seeks to celebrate.

Dillan's work not only attests to social justice ideals, but reflects concrete advances toward those goals. In his capacity as a long-time member/Chair of the City of Davis Police Accountability Commission (since 2018), Dillan has worked to implement a public safety model that also protects the rights of marginalized groups in our community. As those familiar with Davis politics know, this effort helped establish the City's innovative Department of Social Services & Housing. As well, Dillan has been a dedicated advocate for more affordable housing in Davis. As a recent candidate for the Davis City Council, Dillan raised these issues and more as part of a broader vision for moving Davis forward as a welcoming, dynamic, and just community.

Last, but certainly not least, as an out and proud gay, Black man, Dillan Horton is a recognized advocate for greater inclusivity for all, working not just to make our city a welcoming place for communities of color, including immigrants, but also for LGBTQ+ residents. He has played an active role as a member of the Davis Pride Organizing Committee since 2021. He has had an outspoken presence whenever and wherever any community members need a strong ally and friend and continues to take principled stances in alignment with his values.

We cannot think of a more deserving recipient for the Thong Hy Huynh Award at this time than Dillan Horton.

#3 Dillan has been a social justice "warrior" for many years in Davis, CA -- and is well deserving of this award. I am surprised he has not received this award previously. Dillan has stood up for, advocated for and worked tirelessly for our most vulnerable and marginalized Davis residents. As a black and queer person himself, he understands quite well what marginalized folks suffer in our community, but he never makes it about himself. Dillan is always looking to make life better for the residents of this City, whether as Chair of the Police Accountability Commission, leading residents to see what the UCD encampment was really about, fighting for justice for LGBTQIA+ neighbors, fighting against bias and for inclusivity of us ALL, or advocating for affordable and safe housing for all. He has had the courage of his convictions, and has been undeterred even when some have questioned him and even voted against him in his past campaigns when he stood up and spoke out on human rights for all. Dillan has "been here" for all of us, and truly is a person who makes our community better for us all.

#4 For as long as I have known him, Dillan Horton has been synonymous with social justice. For a lot of us, social justice is something we try to make time for on the side, something we do on the weekends or for a couple hours a week. But in everything Dillan does – from his work to his free time - he prioritizes serving his community.

Whenever I attend social justice or civil rights oriented events in Davis – whether organized by the city or community members – Dillan is more often than not there too, demonstrating solidarity and speaking out on behalf of the marginalized people in Davis. One of his greatest achievements is serving as chair of the Davis Police Accountability and working to pass several critical police reforms in Davis. Dillan is an invaluable member of the Davis community.

Davis Night Market

For years the Davis Night Market has been solving two critical problems in Davis - hunger and food waste. The volunteers of the Davis Night Market work with local businesses to save food from being dumped (which release greenhouse gases and require transportation to landfills) at the end of the day and redistribute the food to the hungry community.

UCD students, low-income and unhoused folks, anyone in the community is invited to fill their stomachs in the spirit of community mutual aid and social justice and without judgement. One of Davis' greatest civil rights issues is our treatment/persecution of our unhoused neighbors. Davis Night Market exemplifies how our community should be fostering positive relationships with unhoused Davisites based on care, not violence.

Taking part in the Night Market is an act of civic engagement and promotes positive relationships through solidarity among diverse populations in Davis, particularly between marginalized Davisites.

Delta of Venus/Lee Walthall

As community leaders and residents, we write to nominate Lee Walthall for the Thong Hy Huynh Award. Lee attended DJUSD when Thong Hy was murdered and has spent his life reflecting on the horror of the injustice, and ways to make our community more inclusive.

For over 20 years Lee has used his popular restaurant business, "Delta of Venus," to promote and offer multicultural music and art exhibits. Lee is also quick to provide support for community projects that help youth in our schools explore their cultural identities, such as the Ethnic Studies YOLO Academy and the Davis Queer youth group.

By opening his doors to the community and providing hands-on volunteer support for projects that address social justice, he has created a rare location in Davis that is a known safe space to gather for the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ community. Lee has improved the quality of life in the City of Davis for residents and visitors by elevating cultural awareness through socially conscious music and educational exhibits. The musical and visual artists at Delta of Venus, have been inspiring, vibrant, culturally relevant, and responsive to the times and express messages of human solidarity.

For over twenty years, Lee has created a haven for our community. It is a space of belonging. Lee has served folks across generations, from elders like Isao Fujimoto, Jack Forbes, and Carl Jorgenson to thousands of youth and young adults. He has also provided space for many organizations, including the Davis Arts Alliance, Purple Tree Cafe, Davis Music Fest, Culture Co-op, Davis Phoenix Coalition, ES YOLO Academy, Mexican Graduate Student Association, Semillas y Cultures: Seeds & Cultures Summits, and many others.

Lee's generosity to support diverse artists and cultural causes speaks to his understanding of the power of positive human relationships. Many in our community would be heartened to know of his selection for this award.