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TEMECULA'S OCTOBER STUDENTS OF THE MONTH HONORED



Pictured: Standing (left to right): Student of the Month Founder, Sally Myers, Student of the Month Program Chair, Jennifer Mejares-Pham. Seated (left to right) Jae Shin (GOHS), Nikki Schwankl (LCHS), Rachel Hayes (RVHS), Flor Pineda (NHS), Rachel Storer (TVHS), Nicholas Chian (CHS)

Wednesday, November 7, 2012 -- Temecula, CA -- Six Temecula high school seniors were honored as Students of the Month on October 18th by the Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce. The students were recognized by their families, teachers, school administrators, the business community, and locally elected officials. This year, the Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce Student of the Month program celebrates twenty years of honoring students who are making a difference.

Jae Shin, Great Oak High School

Principal Keith Moore describes Jae as a student who is, "Well rounded with academic prowess in the classroom". Ranked #2 out of a senior class of 800, Jae's IB English teacher January King says, "Jae takes everything as a challenge. He's an integral part of keeping the competition among his classmates healthy, but not negative or contentious." Jae's academic accolades include being named a semi-finalist for the 2013 National Merit Scholarship. With a 4.63 GPA, Jae is a two time recipient of the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by the College Board both in 2011 and 2012. Outside of the classroom, Jae is a member of Great Oak's Men's Varsity Swim Team. He has been on the varsity team since his freshman year and has competed at both League Finals and CIF Championships. Jae has also medaled at the Regional and State Science Olympiad. His future plans include attending a top engineering school, such as MIT or Cal Tech, to study mechanical engineering, physics, biomedical, or alternate energy technologies.

Nikki Schwankl, Linfield Christian High School

Nikki's Advanced Theater teacher, Drea Lee describes Nikki as, "Reliable, intelligent, dedicated, passionate, and caring." She says, "Nikki strives to excel at all she does. No matter how small a task she is willing to put forth her best effort, not just for herself, but for the benefit of her school community and the activities and groups she is in." In her junior year, Nikki was forced to miss a lot of school after having reconstructive knee surgery.

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She says the experience taught her about resourcefulness, diligence, hard work and maintaining a positive attitude. Despite missing school, Nikki has maintained a 4.2 GPA and hopes to attend Johns Hopkins, UC Davis, or UCSD. She says she would like to become a Veterinarian at the Zoo, similar to her mother. Nikki says she credits her mother for teaching her to “love the world around me”. Her mother, Barbara Schwankl says she is proud of Nikki’s “focus and her passion for herself and passion that she spreads to everyone else”.

Rachel Hayes, Rancho Vista High School

Rachel Hayes was nominated by Mrs. Brunner, her English teacher, who describes Rachel as “quiet and unassuming, but a brilliant English student”. “She says, “Rachel writes wonderful essays and glides through assignments with ease”. Rachel says she came to TVHS unmotivated and not caring very much about school. She says, “I constantly struggled academically and socially.” She says she feels fortunate that at Rancho Vista, she met teachers who “genuinely care about what I was doing in my life.” She says, “Coming to Rancho Vista surrounded me with sincere and caring teachers and students I could relate with.” Rachel says that during her time at Rancho Vista she has gained “self confidence in myself and my work and achieved so much more than I thought possible.”

After she graduates, Rachel plans on attending an art university somewhere in Northern California. She then hopes to earn a BA in game design and pursue a career in conceptual art.

Flor Pineda, Susan H. Nelson High School

Nominating teacher, Ilka Jordan describes Flor as “Bold, genuine, passionate, hard-working, persevering, caring, and responsible.” She says even more impressive is that Flor persevered through the tragedy of losing her mother, and never gave up on her education. Mrs. Jordan says, “One of the perks of being a teacher is to see someone like Flor who has faced hurdles and succeeded.”

Flor says she had given up on school after the passing of her mother forced her and four siblings into various foster homes. She says, “I had given up. I was misbehaving and skipping school.” Mrs. Jordan says that it was accepting help from others that allowed Flor to get back on the right track. She says, “Flore made a complete transformation from a student who was defensive, loud and uncaring about her future to a hard working, motivated, respectful young lady.”

Flor would like to attend MSJC to study child development to become a preschool teacher.

Rachel Storer, Temecula Valley High School

Rachel’s English teacher, Mrs. Moreland describes Rachel as “buoyant, positive, motivated, generous of spirit, well rounded, and self-directed”. She says, “Rachel is a determined young woman, accomplishing multiple goals at TVHS, from varsity sports to community service to writing workshops. Rachel always has a smile on her face, even when things don’t go her way.”

Rachel says she comes from a middle class home where her parents always did their best to provide for her and her sister and gave them the best childhood they could. She says the only obstacles she has ever faced have been self-imposed. She says, “I have learned that life is not stagnant. It changes in a blink of an eye. You must be ready for those changes. Coming out of it is hard, but you can be proud knowing you are ready for the long journey ahead.”

Rachel has earned a 4.3 GPA, and after graduation plans to go to a four year university where she will work towards earning a master’s degree. Ultimately, she would like to become a Clinical Psychologist. Beyond schooling, Rachel says she would like to have a family and go into a line of work that makes a difference in people’s lives.

Nicholas Chian

Nicholas Chian was nominated by Mrs. Monteros-Garcia, his AP Spanish Language teacher who says Nicholas “has shown excellence in academic endurance by his four years of dedication to the study of the Spanish language. He welcomes challenges with a smile and conquers them with humility.” She describes Nicholas as having a wonderful sense of humor and the type of student who “always has a smile on his face.”

Nicholas credits his family for the good morals his family passed on to him. He says their guidance and support have provided direction in his life. He says he has also been fortunate to have positive friendships that have given him moral guidance. After graduation, Nicholas hopes to attend the University of California, San Diego to study computer science and also hopes to study abroad.

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