

# THE SEQUOIA AWARDS

March 12, 2020





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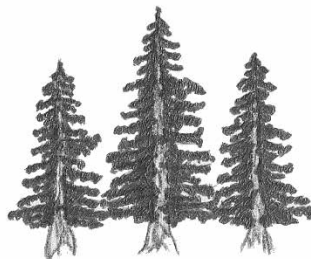
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# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

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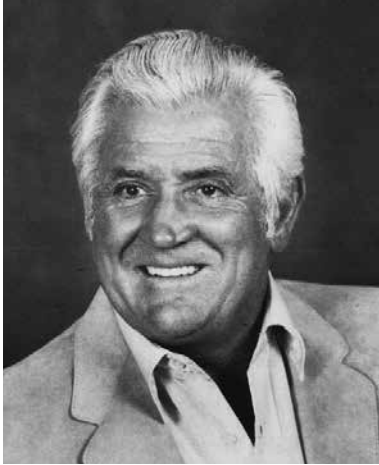
<b>Welcome</b>	Mark Simon, Master of Ceremonies
<b>Invocation</b>	Pastor Peter Perkins, Peninsula Covenant Church
<b>Chair's Remarks</b>	Jim Lianides
<b>Outstanding Individual Award</b>	Presented by Jack Castle
<b>Dinner</b>	
<b>Community Service Scholarships</b>	Presented by Tara Fowler, Mark Simon
<b>Outstanding Student Award</b>	Presented by Jim Lianides



**Student**  
**Business      Individual**



## The Friends of Pete



In memory of Pete Uccelli – one of the founding members of the Sequoia Awards – we have established a way for individuals to become involved in supporting the Sequoia Awards scholarship program.

Pete Uccelli was a man who loved watching things grow. He planted trees. He built a business. He supported charities. He was generous to those who needed financial help, and he never accepted repayment but rather advised the recipients to pay it forward and assist others in their community.

Finally, he believed the future of tomorrow are the young people of today. Those values combined and resulted in the creation of the Sequoia Awards.

On behalf of the Sequoia Awards, the board invites you to join us and support the organization which Pete helped create by becoming a “Friend of Pete” and donating to the Sequoia Awards. Your tax deductible donation to the Sequoia Awards will contribute to the scholarship for our top award winner and will help increase the scholarships for other deserving students.

We encourage anyone who would like to help recognize the spirit of volunteerism in our community to make a donation, of any amount. Please join the “Friends of Pete” in inspiring our community and investing in youth who are committed to helping others. Recognition will be listed in next year’s program.

### **How to make a tax deductible contribution in any amount to the Sequoia Awards and join the “Friends of Pete.”**

- If contributing by check, please make your check payable to the “Sequoia Awards” and in the memo area be sure to write “Friends of Pete” and mail it to:  
Sequoia Awards  
PO BOX 2355  
Redwood City, CA 94064
- If you would like to contribute online, please go to [sequoiaawards.org/donate](http://sequoiaawards.org/donate) and select the donate button.
- If you would like to contribute this evening by cash, check, credit card, or pledge, please see one of our volunteers in the atrium.



March 12, 2020

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Sequoia Awards,

Welcome to an evening that will inspire you. Tonight we will be honoring 24 students from various schools for their incredible volunteer and an outstanding community member.

Our outstanding Student Winner for 2020 is Maria Casique from Sequoia High School attending the SUHSD-Canada Middle College program. Maria will receive a scholarship in the amount of \$25,000.

In addition to Maria, this evening we will award 23 of her peers with scholarships as well. The work these students collectively do in our community is amazing.

We encourage you to learn about our scholarship winners. Their stories will inspire you.

Our Outstanding Individual is Annette Soby. For more than 30 years Annette has helped countless lives in a multitude of ways and continues to leave a lasting impact on those she has come into contact over the decades of volunteering and serving others at Kainos and the Peninsula Covenant Church.

Every year our all-volunteer Sequoia Award Board has the privilege of finding, interviewing and selecting outstanding students and community members. We have been blessed with the unwavering support of our local corporate sponsors, donors and friends.

We salute you and we are humbled by your continued support as we celebrate our 29th year.

Please join me and the entire Sequoia Awards Board of Directors as we celebrate our student scholarship recipients and outstanding individual.

May you be inspired and share the importance of volunteering. The lives you touch will be forever changed by this gift.

Thank you,

Jim Lianides  
2020 Chair



## About the Awards

The Sequoia Awards was established in 1990 for the purpose of recognizing outstanding volunteerism in the community among students, individuals and businesses. For 28 years the Sequoia Awards Scholarship Program has awarded over \$2 million to outstanding high school seniors who have performed extraordinary, uncompensated community service. The Sequoia Awards provides opportunities to dozens of students each year and is the largest scholarship program awarded in Redwood City. This organization was founded by a group of community and business leaders and is run solely by their efforts. The Sequoia Awards is a 501(c)(3) corporation.

## Our Goals

The goal of the Sequoia Awards is to promote volunteerism and to honor those within our community with extraordinary histories of selfless volunteer activism. Our Outstanding Business and Outstanding Individual awardees do not seek recognition for their efforts; they are nominated. High school seniors, who live in Redwood City, are selected for their exemplary volunteerism. They are recognized for their uncompensated volunteer efforts.

## The Process

Every fall application forms are distributed throughout the community including all local high schools. The form is also available on our website: [www.sequoiaawards.org](http://www.sequoiaawards.org). The application period deadline is October 31st and every applicant is researched by members of the Board of Directors of the Sequoia Awards. The recipients of the scholarships are interviewed by our committee who then gives their recommendation to the board for approval. The students are ranked by their volunteer impact and are selected to win from \$5,000 to \$25,000 in scholarship money. An additional amount is donated to a charity of the top scholarship winners choice. This year there will be 29 students winning approximately \$200,000 in scholarships. The Outstanding Business and Outstanding Citizen are selected via a secret ballot of majority vote.

Application and nomination forms for the 2020 Sequoia Awards will be available online. Please check our website at [www.sequoiaawards.org](http://www.sequoiaawards.org).

## Become Involved

Volunteer work in our community should not go unnoticed or unrewarded. It must be encouraged by all, as it keeps our city healthy and caring, plus helps enrich our quality of life. All of us benefit by the selfless acts of others. We invite you to find out more about this organization. Become a scholarship sponsor or general contributor, nominate an individual or business for next year or become involved in future Sequoia Awards activities! Please contact us by visiting our website: [www.sequoiaawards.org](http://www.sequoiaawards.org)



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Noelia Arteaga** • *Woodside High School*  
*Greystar Development*

## **Volunteer Activities**

Noelia began volunteering at a very young age and in an informal way, as a fifth grader, reading to children at the Fair Oaks Branch Library. Soon, her neighbors were asking her if she could tutor their children in reading and writing. By the time she reached high school, her tutoring had blossomed from happenstance to a formal structure through the Boys and Girls Club and the Fair Oaks Branch Library. Her volunteerism grew and expanded to include assisting younger students in electives, organizing sporting activities, leading the students in hands-on projects and continuing to read, all the while aware that she now was acting as a role model for elementary school students. All this emphasis on the written word also sparked an interest in journalism, and Noelia became an avid staff member of the Woodside Paw Print, the school newspaper, where her engagement went well beyond the requirements for class credit. She also took on the role of serving as a peer counselor for incoming freshmen at Woodside, helping them get comfortable at high school and prepare them for some of the issues that could arise.

## **Career Goals**

Noelia plans to study journalism in college and wants to pursue a career as a political writer and reporter.

## **Quote**

"Although it may seem unintelligent on my part to refuse to add my service hours on my transcript, I think the moral uplifting from doing good works for my community is sufficient for my liking."



**Rachel Amir Chatman** • *Carlmont High School*  
*San Mateo Credit Union*

## **Volunteer Activities**

The Third Baptist Church of San Francisco has been a central element of Rachel Amir's life and has played a critical role in helping to "uncover in me a personal passion for helping others." At church, she has been an orator, speaking on issues of social justice, she has been long active in the Youth Choir's annual Christmas program and distributing backpacks to those in need. From there, Rachel Amir launched herself into other volunteer activities, including leadership in the Key Club, undertaking a wide range of volunteer efforts, including coaching a "special needs" soccer team. She raised nearly \$1,400 as vice president of the Math Club for its annual math awards night. During the summer, she was a camp counselor in the Redwood City summer day camp program. And she even found time to lead the Teen Committee in support of the Belmont measures on the 2018 ballot, including walking precincts and stuffing envelopes. In the words of the venerable Reverend Doctor Amos Brown, pastor of Third Baptist, "Rachel Amir will be a quintessential world leader. ... She will stand for the cause of justice, peace and enlightened government."

## **Career Goals**

Rachel Amir plans to attend the University of Southern California with the goal of obtaining a degree in Biomedical Engineering so that she can pursue a career in that field.

## **Quote**

"Through these experiences of volunteering, I have learned that a true leader is someone willing to sacrifice, give back and recognize the overlooked."



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Maria Chavez** • *Sequoia High School*

*BKF Engineers*

## **Volunteer Activities**

Volunteering exposed Maria to younger kids and how she could lead them. Global Glimpse exposed her to another way of life in the Dominican Republic. The result is a young woman who wants to work with kids for a career. She has tutored younger students extensively through the Police Activities League and Project Read. At the Key Club, she volunteered at community events and has been a spirit coordinator. Her exposure to working with younger children came at Outdoor Education, where she was a cabin leader, an activity she has engaged in during three separate camp sessions. Global Glimpse required intense pre-trip preparation to learn the culture and prepare for a leadership role. Once she arrived in the Dominican, she taught English to teenagers twice a week and she led a project to build a basketball court. On this trip and at PAL and Outdoor Education, she realized she was someone young children could talk to and bring their problems and their worries to.

## **Career Goals**

Maria would like to study Psychology in college and pursue a career as a family and marriage therapist with an emphasis on working with kids.

## **Quote**

"When I first started volunteering ... I was afraid that I wouldn't have time to hang out with friends and family, but the more I started doing volunteer service, the more I realize that is what I love and it was not something that took up time, but made me happy."



**Jasmine Esquivel** • *Sequoia High School*

*The Sobrato Organization*

## **Volunteer Activities**

By her own admission she is considerably shy, but volunteering has allowed Jasmine to blossom into a confident, effective and multi-faceted leader. Her volunteerism has included a three-day action project in Panama through Global Glimpse, in which she and others did everything from painting a dining hall to making a soccer field. She was a camp counselor at Outdoor Education, undertook leadership training at the Boys and Girls Club, helped freshmen adjust to school through the Sequoia Shadow Host Program and tutored through the Police Activities League and Project Read. But it is the Key Club that has had the greatest impact on her, providing a sense of belonging to a larger community and undertaking events and service opportunities as a group, including organizing a holiday party for children with a parent in jail. The Key Club also provided exposure to regional leadership opportunities and all this has left Jasmine with a determination to provide others with similar opportunities to grow into leadership roles.

## **Career Goals**

Jasmine would like to attend University of Southern California or University of California at Santa Barbara. Her goal is to study communications and become an event planner and she wants to return to her community and coach students on how to get ready for college.

## **Quote**

"When I joined Key Club, I was really shy and I was not thinking I would be a leader. I felt a sense of community and I felt motivated to do more."





# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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## **Michelle Estrada** • *Sequoia High School*

*W.L. Butler Construction / Windy Hill PV*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Michelle started volunteering at a young age – at Second Harvest Food Bank when she was in the 3rd grade, making her school better while serving on her middle school student council. When she started in high school, she joined the Key Club, which offered many volunteer activities. Then, she found the one that was meant for her – Healthy Cities Tutoring (HCT), which matches elementary school students with a tutor/mentor. She began tutoring a girl at Clifford School. When HCT expanded to Hawes School, Michelle asked to work with a student there, since it was her old elementary school. She subsequently tutored again at Clifford. And when one of her students couldn't participate in HCT any more, Michelle tutored her privately. She has been a group leader at the Police Activities League summer program and tutored students through PAL. She has participated in many activities through Key Club, but she has found a home at the elbow of a young student.

### **Career Goals**

Michelle would like to attend Loyola Marymount University. She wants to study Business Management with the long-term goal of starting her own homeless nonprofit charity “that will be founded on the idea of helping others.”

### **Quote**

“To me, volunteering means participation in an act of kindness by helping someone else because you genuinely enjoy being a helping hand. For as long as I can remember, I have loved helping others because I feel the most wholesome when I know I have positively affected someone else's life.”



## **Parinaz Khosravi** • *Sacred Heart Preparatory*

*Alice W. Coghlan RN*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Parinaz's desire to volunteer was instilled at a young age, first as a 6-year-old playing bingo with seniors at Lytton Gardens in Palo Alto, then through the senior care facility her mother started in Redwood City. By the time Parinaz got to high school, volunteering was part of her life. She has continued volunteering with the elderly and she has immersed herself in an Orange County-based school for autistic children called Ece4Autism (now known as the Lotus School). Through the St. Bernard Project, she made a trip to Puerto Rico to help rebuild a family's home that had been destroyed in Hurricane Maria. She helped organize a mentorship program for 8th graders to help prepare them for high school. And she spent her summer at a UCLA's Pre-med Summer School Volunteer Program, assisting incoming and outgoing patients. Parinaz also participated as a member of Sacred Heart's Social Justice Teach-In core committee, helping planning and carrying out a daylong conference on the topic of mental health for more than 800 participants and attendees.

### **Career Goals**

Parinaz hopes to attend UCLA, Stanford or Duke as a pre-med student, studying Biology. Her goal is to become a doctor.

### **Quote**

“Volunteering has taught me what it means to be compassionate, empathetic, hardworking and selfless. It has taught me that by giving a part of myself and my time to others for the good of the community, I am not only impacting others, but learning invaluable life lessons myself.”



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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## **Tea Leiro** • *King's Academy*

*The Crittenden Family*

### **Volunteer Activities**

There is no shortage of ways Tea has found to volunteer. Through Peninsula Covenant Church, Tea has been involved in a wide range of volunteer activities, including mission trips to Mexico, tutoring kids, coaching kids at a sports camps and serving Thanksgiving lunches. She has been a volunteer with Street Life Ministries, serving food to the homeless, she has participated in food drives for Second Harvest Food Bank, and she has played various roles in the annual Bethlehem A.D. nativity pageant. But the most notable and most impactful might be her work at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto. She has been a hands-on staff volunteer, escorting patients to treatment and chemotherapy and she has worked to brighten the days of the patients with such diversions as bingo nights, serving special dinners and even helping to set up car shows through PCC's Reveille Ministries.

### **Career Goals**

Tea would like to attend a Christian college, perhaps Liberty or Grand Canyon, where she wants to study industrial or mechanical engineering. Her goal is to become an industrial designer, working on such things as new cars.

### **Quote**

"Wherever I go from here, I will always find a way to give my time to help others. To help improve someone else's life and bring them joy is the reason I will always look for opportunities. Although the skills I develop are secondary, I am very grateful to have acquired them and know they will serve me well in my future."



## **Annika Lin** • *Carlmont High School*

*Dostart Development*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Annika's volunteerism goes back to kindergarten as a Daisy Girl Scout, making cards for veterans and singing at senior homes. Since then, she has engaged in a wide range of volunteer activities: tutoring elementary students in flute, viola and violin, creating arts and craft kits for needy children, making medical kits for the homeless, organizing a thank-you card-writing campaign for the staff at Carlmont and organizing weeklong summer camps to teach middle school students about computer-aided design and startup business plans. But perhaps the most dramatic moment came when Annika organized a tennis program for the new Sandpiper Middle School in Redwood Shores. On the first day, she expected a handful of kids to attend. Instead, more than two dozen showed up. She had to rethink everything on the spot. A year later, more than 30 signed up and she subsequently recruited classmates to help with coaching and instruction. Now, she has arranged "the handoff," ensuring there will be others to make sure the program continues. All this, without dropping out of her other volunteer activities with the Girl Scouts, and school clubs.

### **Career Goals**

Annika plans to attend University of Pennsylvania where she hopes to study Economics and, ultimately, pursue a career in social entrepreneurship.

### **Quote**

"It's what I enjoy most: not just finding solutions to problems in the community, but iterating, digging in, and, honestly, even often biting off more than I can chew is, as far as I'm concerned, part of the fun."



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Nikhitha Nair** • *Woodside High School*

*Lift Leadership*

## **Volunteer Activities**

A tutor at Project Read, Nikhitha is credited with leading enrichment programs that include small reading groups in the Summer Book Club program and helping out at organization barbecues and annual events. As a volunteer at the American Cancer Discovery Shop, prompted by the illness of her grandmother, she found herself building relationships with the shop's customers. At Second Harvest Food Bank, she started as a volunteer, packaging fruits, vegetables and canned goods to be picked up by Food Bank clients. But then she began to recognize the clients by face and name. Volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club summer school program, she talked with a 7-year-old who was wondering if his parents were going to be picked up by ICE. Volunteerism is the means by which Nikhitha sees the bigger picture, and acts to address it, often by going well beyond the minimum.

## **Career Goals**

Nikhitha would like to attend University of California, Berkeley, or UCLA to study Biological Sciences with the goal of doing research in the field of Medicine.

## **Quote**

"I saw that I was so focused on the issue of curing cancer that I forgot to think about the people who are actually impacted by cancer. I didn't think about the emotional and mental problems that came along with cancer. If we want to make a true impact through volunteerism, we first need to meet and work alongside those whose daily realities are shaped by injustices and societal issues."



**Daniel Sajuan** • *Sequoia High School*

*Lyngso Garden Materials, Inc*

## **Volunteer Activities**

Danny's desire to help others grew, he realized ultimately, out of his own need for help when he was in middle school – help he never really received. For reasons he didn't fully understand, Danny did his share of volunteering, as a drop-in tutor at the Redwood City Library, spending time with helping kids with homework through the Police Athletic League tutoring program, leading a group of "special needs" kids through the annual Games event, and even serving for a week as a camp leader at Outdoor Education. But it was when he began volunteering at the Key Club that, by his own description, he really began to understand what it meant to give to your community and, at the same time, give to yourself. Serving as both president and vice president, Danny engaged in too many activities to list, or, as he put it "small and big service events." It started, he said, with handing out cups of water at the annual Oktober Run, benefiting the Redwood City Education Foundation.

## **Career Goals**

Danny plans to attend the University of Southern California, where he wants to study Business Administration with the goal of pursuing a career in business.

## **Quote**

"To me volunteering meant, and still means, having the strength to tackle/be a part of something greater than yourself and your own personal needs, and in turn comes the most important part: influencing others to do the same, and setting off an unstoppable chain reaction across your community."



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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## **Sandra Landa Sanchez** • *Sequoia High School*

*San Mateo County Sheriffs Activities League / In memory of Pete Liebengood*

### **Volunteer Activities**

As a young student, Sandra lacked the academic support she needed, and she struggled initially in high school. Far from being bitter or resentful, Sandra was determined not to let that happen to others. She began volunteering as a tutor at Project Read, and has continued to do so for three years. She was recruited to the Future Grads program at Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, and not only advanced her own academic career, but volunteered at several events to speak to underclassmen about her own experiences as a model for what they can achieve. She has led workshops and college knowledge activities. And she has returned to her own school, Taft Community School, as a teacher's assistant in the summer to help students with reading and math comprehension while ensuring that all students could participate and no one would suffer from a lack of effective attention.

### **Career Goals**

Sandra would like to go to University of California at Santa Cruz or Sacramento State and perhaps study Sociology, or Child Development or even Law. She is considering a career in Criminal Justice.

### **Quote**

"I am a first-generation and low-income Latina student of a family of four. I am the first one in my family to be on track to graduate high school and attend a four-year institution. ... Having experienced the lack of academic resources inspired me to give back to my community and help out students in similar situations I was in."



## **Jenna Teterin** • *Carlmont High School*

*Bank of America / Merrill Lynch*

### **Volunteer Activities**

A descendant of Holocaust victims, Jenna's hunger for justice and service to others has drawn her to the plight of immigrants and volunteering with organizations that provide support and assistance to immigrants, including Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) and the Immigration Institute of the Bay Area, organizations where she could help immigrants prepare for citizenship and weave through the complex naturalization system. She also has worked with Union of Students Serving the Russian community (USSRc), teaching Russian to younger students. Frustrated that there was no local organization to help undocumented workers that accepted high school volunteers, she started her own nonprofit, California Legal Aid Student Society (CLASS), a website providing access to legal assistance and educational and vocational opportunities.

### **Career Goals**

Jenna hopes to stay in California for college, perhaps Stanford, University of Southern California or Claremont McKenna. She wants to study International Relations and Russian Economics (she is fluent in Russian), and ultimately wants to pursue a career as an International Human Rights attorney.

### **Quote**

"It will take years for me to get a law degree and be able to meaningfully and significantly impact the lives of immigrants in need of legal protection, but I will get there eventually. Until then, I won't hide behind excuses of 'I can't do much' or 'It doesn't affect me.' Following the lead of many of the immigrants I've worked with, I shall start small, work hard, acquire the necessary skills and make my community better for everyone."



# CORPORATE SCHOLARSHIPS

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## **Alejandro Torres** • *Sacred Heart Preparatory*

*W.L.Butler Construction / Redwood City Police Officers Association*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Everywhere he has gone, Alé has had an impact and emerged in a leadership role. As a student at the St. Francis Center in Redwood City, he became a tutor and an athletics coach. He arrived at Sacred Heart “with a splash,” in the words of Religious Studies teacher Matt Carroll, and Alé was determined to make a difference. He was elected Freshman Class President, and quickly became a leader in the Social Justice Teach-In, a training program to teach young people how to participate in social actions, including teach-ins and sit-ins. From there, Alé twice participated in immersions programs: one to Homeboy Industries in East Los Angeles, where he worked with those struggling with drug addiction, gang violence and criminal history; and the other to Puerto Rico where he worked on recovery from Hurricane Maria. And, by the way, he helped found a nonprofit, Offering A Hand Up (OAHU), to assist the homeless, while remaining involved in student government and school activities.

### **Career Goals**

Alé hopes to attend college in Colorado or Arizona and he wants to study Business Management with the goal of a career in business or entrepreneurship.

### **Quote**

“Becoming involved with the community and speaking at town hall meetings as a 5th grader ... allowed me to recognize I had a passion for speaking out for the voiceless and serving those who were often overlooked. To my surprise, I also learned that service required one to be humble and selfless.”



# COMMUNITY SCHOLARS

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## **Anna DeVitis** • *Castilleja School*

*Hannig Law LLP*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Anna has worked locally and globally. She has been a reading tutor at Redwood City Reads. Through Peninsula Covenant Church, she has taught Sunday school, led small groups for girls, partnered with a “special needs” child and served as a translator at holiday events to benefit local residents. And over several summers and spring breaks she has returned to Mexico to undertake community projects, to interact with young people and to be of service. Perhaps most profoundly, her work with Africa Inland Mission brought her to Spain and put her in contact with people from the Ivory Coast who had been scattered from their homes, often exploited and used. The first year, she ran a sports camp for children. The second year, she led programs to provide childcare to refugee children, organized a clothing bank, led a sport camp and coordinated a night of entertainment. All of it left her wanting to do more.

### **Career Goals**

Anna is looking at Los Angeles schools to study Psychology with the ultimate goal of providing therapy to survivors of human trafficking, refugees and “those who have faced traumatic and unjust experiences.”

### **Quote**

“When I was in elementary school, I once read the phrase: ‘Sometimes it feels like you’re emptying the ocean with an eye dropper.’ This phrase has come to influence my daily actions, as I have learned that every chance I take to serve, no matter how small, will ultimately impact the issues that face our world.”



## **Jaylin Zamora Duarte** • *Woodside High School*

*Sequoia Hospital/Dignity Health / Heritage Bank*

### **Volunteer Activities**

In her freshman year, Jaylin heard people talking about volunteering, but she wasn’t sure how she could get involved. Her sophomore year she found AVID, the WHS program that helps economically disadvantaged students get ready to apply and go to college as first-generation students. Ultimately, she became an officer in AVID and then, in her senior year, co-president of the AVID Leadership Club, raising funds for AVID and also reaching out to students who have not joined AVID. That led her to Siena Youth Center, where she became a tutor, helped raise funds to support the center through food sales, funds that would go to the students and to families in the community. Also at the Siena Youth Center, she taught a women’s empowerment class to middle school girls, preparing lesson plans every week and facilitating the classes in partnership with two other high school students. With all this, Jaylin has worked part-time to support her family, but she still found time to volunteer at the senior home Palm Villas, participate in the school’s Octagon Club, a community service organization, and tutor at the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula.

### **Career Goals**

Jaylin will be a pre-med student in college and then go from there into the medical field, most likely nursing.

### **Quote**

“One of my main goals ... was to teach girls that they have power and that they have a voice in this world that needs to be heard.”



# COMMUNITY SCHOLARS

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## **Nicole Cruz Mariche** • *Sequoia High School*

*DPR Construction / Welch Everett Family Trust*

### **Volunteer Activities**

“Ask Nicole.” A student in AVID – where economically disadvantaged students are prepared for college – was struggling with a math problem and made a list of the steps necessary to solve it. Last on the list was “Ask Nicole.” It was a good choice. Raised in a Spanish-speaking household, Nicole was struggling with her studies in the 3rd grade. Her parents told her to seek help from a neighbor. Since then, Nicole has been determined to be the person others can turn to for help. She has proven to be that person in the Dream Club, where she has been a leader in fundraising and putting on conferences. She was that person when she worked every day at the summer internship program at Taft Community School, a summer school sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula. And she has been that person at Project Read, overcoming her own shyness so that she could be the source of learning, reassurance and confidence for the struggling, shy student that she once was.

### **Career Goals**

Nicole would like to attend either University of California at Merced or University of California at Santa Cruz. Her plan is to study Human Biology with the goal of becoming a physician’s assistant.

### **Quote**

“Feeling lost and confused about academics at an early age is something no child should struggle with. This is why I joined programs that focus on giving academic support to elementary aged children.”



## **Isabella Mattioli** • *Carlmont High School*

*Nintendo of America*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Before she started high school, Isabella convinced her mother to take her to the kitten nursery at the Peninsula Humane Society, where they fed the kittens, gave them baths, cleaned out their enclosures and got them ready for adoption. That was it. Isabella knew what she wanted to do. She has continued to care for the kittens at PHS, and she has volunteered during the summer through Broadreach, an international education and service program, working in the Bahamas and Costa Rica at animal rescue and care centers, local zoos and providing enrichment programs. Through National Charity League, her volunteer experiences were broadened to include service to the homeless, creating back-to-school packages for needy students, and teaching “special needs” kids how to play soccer, experiences that “allowed me to further my love for humans.” At Key Club, she immediately assumed a leadership role and received regional recognition for all her activism and that was in her freshman year. Since then, she has become a leader, an officer and she has helped her club chapter amass thousands of hours of service in wide range of school and community activities.

### **Career Goals**

Isabella wants to attend California Polytechnic, San Luis Obispo, or San Diego State University. She plans to study Animal Sciences with the goal of becoming a veterinarian.

### **Quote**

“Throughout high school, I have dedicated my life to serving others. I may have been providing goods or services to individuals, but in return each one gave me priceless knowledge and kindness.”



# COMMUNITY SCHOLAR

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**Leslie Zaragoza** • *Sequoia High School*

*Black Mountain Properties, LLC*

## **Volunteer Activities**

Leslie learned that volunteering may not bring large changes to the world, but that small changes can make a big difference in the people you're helping and in yourself, until, little by little, you get where you're trying to go. Her list of volunteer activities is broad and deep – tutoring at Project Read for three years, working to assist traditionally disadvantaged students prepare for college through Upward Bound and AVID and helping put on annual dinners and conferences through the Dream Club, which targets first-generation immigrants for a future life in America. But it is her experience in Panama through Global Glimpse she credits with the greatest impact on her as a volunteer. Not only did she take her first plane ride, but in Panama she helped remodel and renovate a shelter for kids suffering from malnutrition, she taught classes about the environment and she taught English every day for two weeks. The experience broadened her view and narrowed her focus – she doesn't want to stay local, but she wants to work with kids.

## **Career Goals**

Leslie would like to study Biology or Pre-Health Sciences at University of Southern California or Baylor with the goal of becoming a pediatrician.

## **Quote**

"Overall, what I learned was to appreciate even the small things in life. I don't need to do miraculous things. I just need to be myself and change the things I want to change about myself in order to change the attitude of those around me."





# COMMUNITY SCHOLARS WITH DISTINCTION

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## **Paulina Arguello** • *Castilleja School*

*Oracle Corporation / Sims Metal Management*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Since her freshman year, Paulina has volunteered through her school's Peninsula Bridge, a five-week summer program that helps under-served 5th graders get ready for middle school and, possibly, Castilleja. It's the same program Paulina went through. She has been a teacher's assistant in the English program and the dance program, the latter run almost entirely by Paulina. She has choreographed dance steps, planned field trips and interfaced with parents. Volunteering with Centra Esperanza brought Paulina to El Salvador, where she taught students about simple circuits and electricity. In addition, through Castilleja, she has joined two clubs. In one, she and other students go regularly to Rosener House, an adult day care for those with dementia, where they engage in fun games and interact with the clients. In the other club, she and fellow students put together boxes of fun activities for children hospitalized at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital.

### **Career Goals**

Paulina is looking broadly for possible colleges, including Ohio Wesleyan, Williams College in Virginia or Redlands in Southern California, but her intent is to study child development and Psychology and to have a career in social service.

### **Quote**

"When I volunteer, I don't do it for the awards or recognition. I do it because it makes my day brighter. I do it because of the impact caused in people's lives. I do it because I want to give back to places that have helped me grow. Most importantly, I do it because of the connections and relationships I form."



## **Luis Cruz** • *Woodside High School*

*Facebook Inc. / Stanford University*

### **Volunteer Activities**

Like too many others, Luis was raised by a single mom. Frequently, on his own, he looked for a place that would suit him. One day, Luis walked into Siena Youth Center and found a home, a place where he could realize his desire to be a leader and lift up his community that struggles with economic, educational and family challenges. He has tutored, organized sports and team-building activities. Over time, he became a high school staff leader, learning such values as "constructive discipline," and how to lead a class to effective learning. He has expanded his opportunities to learn and teach leadership, staging events and raising funds through the North Fair Oaks Youth Initiative, the Sheriffs Activities League Teen Leadership Council and the OYE Planning Committee. And then there's the cooking class he started and facilitated at SYC, teaching dozens of young people the basics of the kitchen, nutrition and the self-sufficiency that comes with it. Asked where he learned to cook, Luis says, with a smile, "The internet."

### **Career Goals**

Luis has a lot of options in mind – studying Environmental Science, Urban/Environmental Policy, or City/Urban Community & Regional Planning.

### **Quote**

"There's a lack of availability for middle school students coming from minority backgrounds to be able to develop leadership skills. Being able to teach younger students the values of leadership through the way I've been taught has enabled me to realize the potential I have to be resourceful to my community."



# COMMUNITY SCHOLARS WITH DISTINCTION

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## **America Nava • Sequoia High School**

*Danford Fisher Hannig Foundation / The Franceschini Family*

### **Volunteer Activities**

America started off volunteering at the San Mateo County Sheriff's Activities League (SAL), and things just grew so that helping others has become a central element of her young life. Through SAL, America has engaged in every kind of volunteer activity possible – making Christmas decorations for the elderly at a senior home, coaching the Garfield Community School 4th-5th grade girls soccer team, conducting food drives, holding wellness days and movie nights. As she said, volunteering at SAL opened her up to volunteering in a wider number of ways, including volunteering at Second Harvest Food Bank, UNICEF, Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding together. Outside of SAL, she has tutored at Project Read. In addition, she has been involved in the San Mateo County Earthquakes Soccer for Success with a special emphasis on her own community in North Fair Oaks. Coaching soccer allowed her to do something she loves and to teach others how to love it. And it has spilled over into the rest of her life. Now, when America sees someone in need of help, she steps forward without hesitation. "Volunteering is something I do every day," she said.

### **Career Goals**

America plans to attend Loyola Marymount University or University of San Francisco to study business and management. Her goal is a career in marketing.

### **Quote**

"Volunteering shouldn't be taken as an obligation, but rather as a way to give back to those who aren't lucky as yourself. It's something that helps make other people's days better."



## **Lizette Barragan Cervantes • Woodside High School**

*Chan Zuckerberg Initiative / Kaiser Permanente*

### **Volunteer Activities**

As a youngster, Lizette was shy and faced with potentially crippling circumstances – her father died when she was 8, she was raised by her single mom, who spoke no English. Far from hold her back, it has spurred her to become a leader and a teacher. Through the Siena Youth Center, she has been a daily tutor and supervisor of younger children and she has led and assisted in the center's classes. From there, she led a Girl's Advocacy class twice a week, teaching girls how to "speak out and speak out loud," and how to develop into leaders. Of her own initiative, she created and implemented the first-ever Siena Youth Center Career Night for her neighborhood. All the while, she continued her daily tutoring. During the summer, she joined Elevate Math, another tutoring organization in which she daily taught six students in an intensive Algebra program. Lizette has learned that she is not alone and there are ways to move forward. It's a lesson she is determined to teach others.

### **Career Goals**

Lizette would like to attend UCLA, where she plans to study Human Biology as a pre-med student, leading, ultimately to a career in medicine, perhaps in the field of Dermatology.

### **Quote**

"Before I started volunteering, I thought community service meant doing something extravagant for a community. ... This perspective changed when I learned through my, own experience that even small actions can significantly help the people around you and your community."



# COMMUNITY SCHOLARS WITH DISTINCTION

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**Eduardo Hinojosa** • *Cañada Middle College*

*Uccelli Foundation / Recology San Mateo County*

## **Volunteer Activities**

Eduardo's education schooling has been as much journey as education – a story about someone determined to rise above his circumstances and fulfill an internal desire to have a positive impact on those around him. Frustrated that the school he was attending was inadequate to his need to do for others, he began serving as a teacher's aide at the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula. That wasn't enough, so he applied and was accepted to the School for Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington, D.C., spending an entire year on his own in an unfamiliar town. There, his class volunteered at a local elementary school, and he tutored and played sports with the children. He returned to Redwood City, and, at a summer program at Stanford University, joined another student in expanding into the Bay Area a youth-run nonprofit – Financial Literacy for You (FLY), which seeks to bring financial education to youth. He and two others continue to work to bring the FLY curriculum to local schools.

## **Career Goals**

Eduardo is interested in studying Applied Mathematics or “something in the STEM field,” and in pursuing a career in business, or, as he puts it, “work with numbers perhaps running his own nonprofit.”

## **Quote**

“Inspired by the bold actions of my parents, I decided to set out on a mission to become the hero that I yearned for but never came, the hero that will help others not go through what I went through.”



# OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARD

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**Maria Casique** • *Sequoia High School / Cañada Middle College*

*Presented by Jim Lianides*



The goal of the Sequoia Awards is not solely to encourage young people to volunteer in their community. It also is to provide them the opportunity for the personal growth, self-knowledge and empathy that comes with helping others. When we give, we also receive.

There may be no more compelling example of this than the remarkable journey of Maria Casique and her determination to turn her own difficulties into something positive.

By the 7th grade, Maria, in her own words, had “mentally checked out.” She already had begun struggling with an eating disorder and by the 8th grade, “I couldn’t retain information, became distracted and felt hopeless and stopped eating and lost weight.” Diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and depression, she was committed for treatment and missed five months of school. It was her second hospitalization.

“I listened to my doctors and parents discuss my future and not once was my education mentioned,” she said. “... Although the future looked dire, I didn’t lose hope.”

She had loving parents who, nonetheless, have only a middle school education, speak little English and have demanding jobs. A hospital tutor wasn’t always available, Maria realized she had to become her own advocate for recovery and to avoid falling behind in school. By the time she returned to school in mid-year, “I had caught up with my peers. I learned to advocate for my education and to access academic support and resources,” Maria said.

“This experience is my main motivation to give back, to make sure other students have access to academic resources to succeed. ... I wanted to combat the lack of academic resources available to younger students.”

She began by volunteering as a tutor at Project Read. But she wanted to do more.

Maria decided to start an after-school tutoring center at her former middle school so that she “could have a bigger effect by serving more students.”

The program became the Connect Tutoring Center and by her Junior year, Maria had recruited classmates as additional tutors. They provided one-on-one tutoring and mentoring “and we served as role models who are succeeding in advanced STEM classes.” She found space for the program in downtown Redwood City that could serve as a “safe, designated environment for teens to spend time after school.” And she raised funds for a mental health pop-up, where teens could learn about mental health resources in an environment of understanding, support and safety.

“Mental health is important and I seek to change perspectives and raise awareness of issues teens face beyond stress from school,” Maria said.

“Not many with similar background as mine – mental health struggles, first-generation, low-income, Latina – make it as far as I have, and volunteering motivated me to continue to fight my eating disorder, and to voice my battle to the community to change perspectives on mental health, education and identity,” Maria said.

Maria will go to college to study neuroscience and, eventually, head to medical school with the goal of becoming a neurosurgeon.

She continues her journey with an internal strength and an abiding desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

“Through community involvement, I have learned I am not alone,” Maria said. “Volunteering has taught me to become a better advocate. ... My time is my community.”



# OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL AWARD

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## Annette Soby

*Presented by Jack Castle*



When in nature, it is said, leave only footprints.

In the world, Annette Soby leaves fingerprints. As a result, there is hardly a part of our community that remains untouched by her generosity, her giving spirit and the unceasing and diverse nature of her energy.

For more than 30 years, and with continuing support from her husband, Paul, she has helped countless lives in dozens of ways, and she continues to leave a lasting impact on those with whom she has come into contact over decades of volunteering and giving of herself to others.

She has been a volunteer at Kainos Home and Training Center for more than 25 years. She began as a mentor to Kainos clients, an activity she continues. But some years ago, she expanded into speech therapy, using her training as a speech pathologist to teach improved enunciation and expanded vocabulary. In the process, she has built the confidence of countless clients as they seek to build a mainstream life.

At Peninsula Covenant Church, she has provided speech therapy and counseling in addition to serving as a Sunday School teacher and a leader of the church's Christmas choir. She has been a mentor to new parents. Through PCC, she has traveled to China to teach to teach English to children. Numerous times, she has hosted travelers from China, The Congo and Japan, providing them a place to stay while they attend to studies at PCC. And she has opened up her home on a moment's notice to people suddenly rendered homeless. The list grows ever longer.

Annette teaches Sunday school for Kainos clients. Every month, she sets up the refreshment table and serves the members of Hearing Loss Association chapter in Redwood City. She participates in a women's Bible Study Fellowship and Bible School to children. She has tutored students in the school district, advised parents of children with special needs how to advocate for their children. Every fall, she leads a drive to collect blankets, coats, hats and socks to donate to the homeless through Streetlife Ministries. And she has been a tutor at Project Read for hard-of-hearing students.

A woman of deep and abiding Christian faith, her faith and her good works are intertwined. The Bible has much to say about being of service, summed up in the familiar phrase, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But the steadfastness of Annette's giving -- that she is a continuing blessing to her community -- brings to mind a passage from the Book of Matthew:

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"

# PAST AWARDEES

	<b>Outstanding Business</b>	<b>Outstanding Student</b>	<b>Outstanding Individual</b>
1991	Bay Area Bank	Tony Campbell	Bob Franceschini
1992	Browning Ferris Industries	Rosendo Chavez	Pauline Truscelli
1993	Raychem	Aimee Barile	Frank & Theresa Hannig
1994	Redwood Mechanical	Dora Arrendondo	Bob Bury
1995	Brian, Kangas, Foulk	Jenny Corral	Bonnie Miller
1996	W. L. Butler Construction	Yenda Inigo-Prado	Pete & Paula Uccelli
1997	San Mateo Credit Union	Christine O'Neal	Eddie Mae Spiller
1998	BAK Physical Therapy	Kate Goines	Pete & Ginny Hughes
1999	Terrace Associates	Monica Sotelo	Paul Vega
2000	Sequoia Hospital	Cristelda Gutierrez Sara Elizabeth Janzen	Tony Bertetta
2001	Electronic Arts	Emilia Cerrillo	Vince Truscelli
2002	Lewis Carpet & Upholstery	Brenda Magaña	Janet Borgens
2003	DES Architects + Engineers	Emily Tomita	Daniela L. Gasparini
2004	Lyngso Garden Materials	Jeis Renderos	Trynie Hermary
2005	SafKeep Storage	Agustin Valverde	Alpio Barbara
2006	Oracle Corporation	Viral Shah	Georgi LaBerge, Warren Dale
2007	Wells Fargo	Alicia Beekman	Sister Christina Heltsley
2008	1-800-DryClean	Claudia Norton	Jeff & Penny Richardson
2009	Recology	Sarah Ducker	Larry Purcell
2010	Kaiser Permanente	Hannah Hamley, Claire Tweedy	Millie Cole
2012	Chavez Supermarkets	Alison Logia	Richard Valente
2013	Rocket Fuel	Sofia Dueñas, Jeremy Smith	Richard Imperiale
2014	Hannig Law Firm	Ruth Gomez	Billee Werby
2015	Provident Credit Union	Cara Green	Karl and Paula Dresden
2016	DPR Construction	Sadie Rhen	Alyn Beals
2017	AbbVie	Karolina Soto Villa	Diane Howard
2018	Canyon Inn	Clara MacAvoy	Barbara Pierce, Dee Eva
2019	The Kastrop Group	Asha Argawal	Frank Bartaldo



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Sequoia Awards student scholarship recipients have  
volunteered with the following organizations:*

Alm Diaspora	Key Club	Tecate with The King's Academy
American Cancer Society Discovery Shop	Lucile Packard Children's Hospital	The Lotus School
Autism Buddies	Mills-Peninsula Medical Center	The Paw Print
Bay Club of Redwood Shores	OYE, Organization for Youth Empowerment	The Rodan Foundation
Bethlehem A.D. Live Nativity	P.A.L.	The School for Ethics and Global Leadership
Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula	Palm Villas	Third Baptist Church
Buddhist Tzu-Chi Foundation	Palo Alto Veterans Memorial Hospital	UCLA Pre-Med Summer Scholar Program
Camp Elevate	Peninsula Bridge Program	Union of Students Serving the Russian
Carlmont DECA Club	Peninsula Covenant Church	Community
Carlmont Music Mentors	Peninsula Volunteers	Upward Bound
Centro Esperanza El Salvador	Peninsula Youth Orchestra	Veteran's Hospital Internship
Children of Strength	Project READ	Walk for Water
City of Belmont Election	Redwood City Parks & Recreation	Woodside High School Freshman
City Trees	Redwood City VIP AYSO Soccer	Transition Peer Program
Connect Tutoring Center	Reveille	
ECE 4 Autism	Rosener House	
Elevate Math	S.A.L. Teen Leadership Council	
Fair Oaks Library, Redwood City	Sacred Heart Prep Mentorship Program	
FASCA-Formosa Association of Student	Safespace	
Cultural Ambassadors	San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship	
Financial Literacy for You	San Mateo County of Education Outdoor Ed	
Future Grads	SBP Puerto Rico	
Generations United	Second Harvest Food Bank	
Girl Scouts of Northern California	Sequoia High School Dream Club	
Global Glimpse	Sequoia High School Shadow Host Program	
Healthy Cities Tutoring	Sequoia Union High School District AVID Program	
Help One Child	Siena Youth Center	
Immigration Institute of the Bay Area	Street Life Ministries	
Kainos Home and Training Center	Tea's Talent Show	



## Donors

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The Sequoia Awards gratefully acknowledges the following for their contributions to the organization in the past year.

Bank of America	San Mateo Credit Union
BKF Engineers	Sequoia Hospital / Dignity Health
Black Mountain Properties, LLC	Sims Metal Management
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative	Stanford University
Danford Fisher Hannig Foundation	Steve and Diane Howard (Alice W. Coghlan R.N. Scholarship)
Dostart Development	The Crittenden Family
DPR Construction	The Sobrato Organization
Facebook	W.L. Butler Construction
Frank and Liza Bizzarro (Alice W. Coghlan R.N. Scholarship)	Welch-Everett Family Trust
Greystar	Windy Hill PV
Hannig Law, LLP	<b>Golden Circle</b>
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Kaiser Permanente	The Richardson Family
Lift Leadership	
Lyngso Garden Materials	<b>Table Sponsor</b>
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Oracle	
Pete and Paula Uccelli Foundation	<b>Donors</b>
Recology San Mateo County	Pat Becker
Redwood City Police Officers Association	Janet Borgens
Richard Franceschini & Robyn Franceschini Budelli	
San Mateo County Sheriffs Activities League (In Memory of Pete Liebengood)	

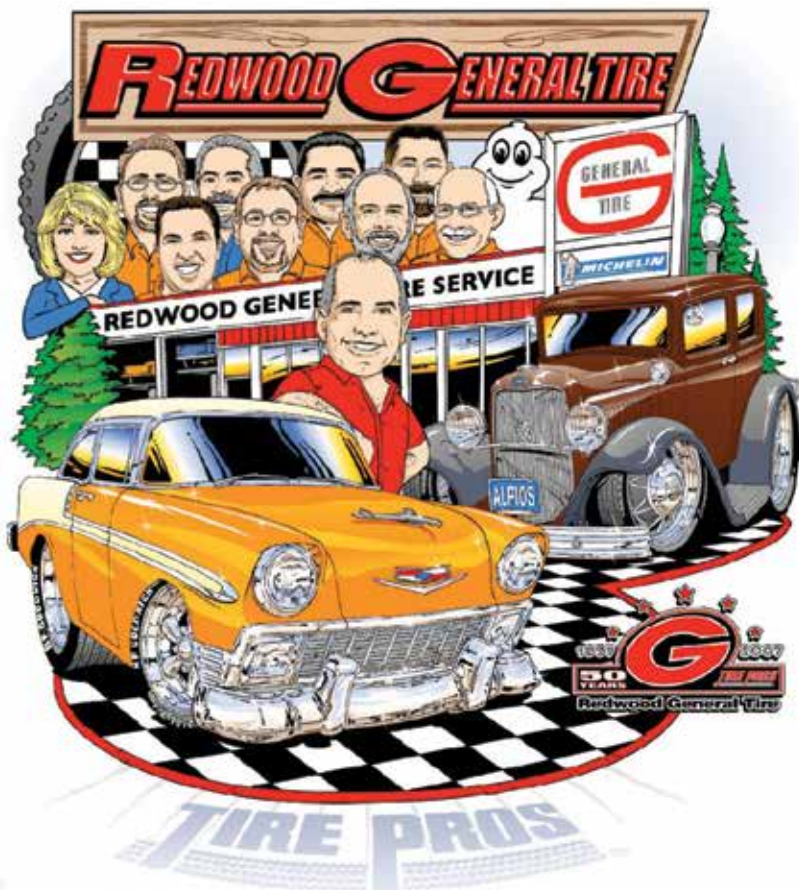








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