

Pleasanton Community of Character Juanita Haugen Memorial Scholarship

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Juanita Haugen Memorial Scholarship Winners Announced

Two high school seniors have been selected by the Community of Character Coalition as recipients of the 2014 Juanita Haugen Memorial Scholarship. Applicants were required to explain how their actions have reflected any or all of the six characteristics adopted by the Pleasanton school district, city government, and chamber of commerce: compassion, honesty, respect, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline.

The scholarship was created to honor the memory of Juanita Hagen, founder of the coalition, who died in 2007 due to cancer. Mrs. Haugen was a former president not only of the local school board, but also of the California School Boards Association. Each of the local high schools' graduating classes is eligible for one of the annual cash awards.

From Amador Valley High School's Class of 2014, Alice Deng is the scholarship winner. Miss Deng is the daughter of Tony and Janet. The Foothill High School scholarship recipient is Diane Hadley, daughter of Bing and Laura. As in past years, the Village High School recipient will be announced at their graduation ceremony in June 2014.

Alice Deng was born in Oakland and attended elementary school there. After her family moved to Pleasanton, Alice realized that lacking the ability to speak up in public was a great hindrance. As she took steps to gain confidence as a speaker, she decided she could help others. She has co-founded RSVP Speech Campaign, a non-profit organization that already has spread beyond Pleasanton to other cities, including Berkeley and San Leandro.

"We train high school youth to teach [public speaking] skills in their own communities," explained Alice. "Through our presentations, interactive discussions, gripping games, and one on-one lectures, we aim to demystify the process of speech deliverance, cracking one code at a time. I hope that, through our efforts, the youngest generation of our community will one day find themselves confident and resourceful. One day, they will not be scared to scale the stairs to a stage or be at a loss for words in front of a live audience. Instead, they will embrace the world and proudly let their voices be heard."

In recognition of the success of RSVP Speech, Alice was inducted into the Alameda County Woman's Hall of Fame this year. Her other activities have included leadership roles in her school's chapters of California Scholastic Federation (honor society), DECA (international business organization), and the marching band. Alice has volunteered over 500 hours, including at Open Heart Kitchen, American Red Cross, Museum On Main, and Shepard's Gate Shelter for Battered Women and Children. She serves on the Tri-Valley/Eden Township Youth Community Court and is past president of the Oakland Youth Energy Awareness Council.

Diane Hadley has developed her leadership skills through a number of organizations. "Through church, National Charity league, and Girl Scouts, I have had the opportunity to volunteer for more than 30 different charities and community organizations," wrote Diane. "My favorites have been Corazon, Foster-a-Dream, American Cancer Society, and Shakespeare's Associates....."

"Imagine not having a home! Corazon is an organization that builds houses in Tijuana for homeless families. I participated in two builds and fell in love with Corazon and the people of Tijuana. Sadly, because of the drug cartel many Americans are fearful of going to Mexico, and the number of Corazon builds has decreased significantly. The truth is, the neighborhoods we support are too poor for drugs, and the only danger comes from being on a construction site.

"When I was 15, I decided to organize a build through my church. I got the approval, recruited 50 volunteers, facilitated meetings, and organized transportation, food, and hotels. At the end of the weekend, I was able to hand house keys to a father – a man that works and takes care of his family but needed some help building a home. It felt great to provide him with the help he needed."

Diane has been involved with Girl Scouts for 12 years, earning the highest honor – Silver Award – by organizing parties to decorate over 100 pillow cases for foster children. At Foothill High School, she has been junior and senior class president. Diane has represented her school as a cheer leader, four years on game squad, two on competition squad, and three as captain. She also was a member of National Charity League for six years, helping with organizations such as the Shakespeare Festival, Special Olympics, and Relay for Life (American Cancer Society).

For more information about how individuals, organizations, and businesses can become involved in the Community of Character Coalition, visit their website at www.CommunityOfCharacter.org. Their annual fund-raiser is a spring luncheon, open to the community.

ABOUT: The Community of Character Scholarship is designed to honor the memory of Juanita Haugen; trustee and president of the Pleasanton Unified School Board. Juanita had a passion for the children and was a leader in the district's character education program, serving as a trustee on school boards in Pleasanton for 28 years. She was the leading proponent for the establishment of Pleasanton's "Community of Character Collaborative". The scholarship honors students from Pleasanton High Schools who exemplify the character traits of the Community of Character Collaborative through example and service.