

Junior Youth of the Year nominees honored at lunch in Redlands

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The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside recently honored its Junior Youth of the Year nominees at a banquet at the Burrage Mansion in Redlands.

They are Christian Zarate, 10, of the Boys & Girls Clubs' Mentone site; Larissa Lugo, 11, Waterman Gardens site, San Bernardino; Joshua Ramirez, 10, Bryn Mawr site, Loma Linda; Jeffrey Schroepfer, 12, Dennis Hansberger Clubhouse, Redlands; and Serena Granillo, 12, Casitas del Valle, Moreno Valley.

The Junior Youth of the Year nominees were picked for their leadership, character and attitudes, and were chosen from the members of the month at the clubs' sites.

Each member of the month received a certificate and was recognized by club Vice President Mark Davis.

The families of the Junior Youth of the Year nominees and members of the month were treated to a spaghetti dinner from Angelo's before the awards ceremony.

At the event, the clubs' teenage Youth of the Year nominees, Shane Johnson, Makayla Pennix, Kevin Ponce, Kamryn Coleson and Chyna Phillips, were also introduced, and each spoke about the impact the Boys & Girls Club has had on their lives.

Junior Youth of the Year nominees

- Christian Zarate, a three-year Boys & Girls Club member, is a junior assistant at the Mentone site, where he helps others with a variety of tasks and tends the garden.

According to staff, he is "a friend to all, and definitely leads by example ... Christian even surprised (us) when he voluntarily joined DramaMatters and participated in our December play performance. Since Christian joined the club, he has broken out of his timid shell and has developed into a positive role model."

Christian said that at the club, he likes making friends with kids he doesn't see at school. He said he wants to work with computers when he's older and said he would like to come back to the Boys & Girls Club and help the staff.

At home, he helps his mother with the chores and watches out for his little brother.

- Larissa Lugo, a five-year member, has participated in many programs, helps staff set up and helps younger members do activities.

According to club staff, she “has been at the club every day with a positive attitude and willingness to participate in the programs and activities offered.”

Larissa said the Boys & Girls Club is her second home, and her favorite thing about coming to the club “is how they are running the programs and seeing the end results of projects.”

Larissa, who wants to be a pediatrician, helps out at home with cleaning and cooking. She said her short-term goal is to get all A’s in school.

- Joshua Ramirez, a five-year member, has also participated in many club activities and enjoys art and soccer most.

According to staff, he “has been a great example of leadership before his peers” by helping staff, having a good attitude and leading and helping other kids.

He also shows commitment in academics by insuring he completes his homework on site and seeking help to understand math problems he is struggling with, according to site staff.

According to his mother, Joshua’s grades and reading skills have also improved since he began coming to the Boys & Girls Club.

Joshua said he hopes to play soccer in high school and attend college.

- Jeffrey Schroeffer’s introduction to the Boys & Girls Club was in 2009 at Bryn Mawr, where he had trouble adjusting to the program rotations. But since then, he has improved and “shown his dedication and passion in various ways to staff and his peers,” according to staff.

He is a member of the club’s tween group and volunteers to take care of the patio garden.

He said his short-term goal is to improve his grades, and his long-term goal is to be a staff member at the Boys & Girls Club “to ensure fun at the club,” or become a police officer to help and protect the community.

- Serena Granillo has come to the Boys & Girls Clubs’ Moreno Valley site since it opened three years ago.

According to staff, she “always arrives with a smile on her face and is constantly looking for ways to help staff, whether it be passing out snacks or helping our younger members with their homework.”

She enjoys participating in programs such as Kids in the Kitchen and Explore STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

According to staff, she has a natural drive to learn and lead group activities and isn’t afraid to make mistakes.

At home, she helps with the laundry and cooking and takes care of her younger sister.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside has been serving the Inland Empire since 1967 in the communities of Redlands, Loma Linda, Mentone, Moreno Valley, Riverside and San Bernardino. The clubs serve more than 2,600 youth daily in after-school settings and offer winter and summer camps.

For information, visit begreatie.org.

Source: Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside