

Boys & Girls Club honors community supporters, Youth of the Year

Inland Empire Community News
June 20, 2018



Alan Mondragon: Boys & Girls Club alumnus Alan Mondragon speaks about how Club staff impacted him at Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside's Be Great Awards June 12 at the Redlands Country Club.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside honored local youth and supporters at its annual Be Great Awards June 12.

The event was held at the Redlands Country Club and included dinner. Lillian Vasquez, from KVCR, served as master of ceremonies.

Club alumnus Alan Mondragon, who grew up in what was Waterman Gardens public housing in San Bernardino, spoke.

“It was tough at times and mentors were hard to find, but at the Boys & Girls Club, I was able to find mentors and develop and learn,” Mondragon said.

Two Club staff “always pushed me to meet my full potential,” he said.

In fall 2017, Alan worked in Redlands Rep. Pete Aguilar’s office through the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. He graduated June 16 from Cal State San Bernardino with a degree in public administration, and wants to pursue a master’s degree in health care administration.

Before the community awards were presented, three graduating high school students were recognized as the Club’s Youth of the Year Ambassadors –**Isabel Cruz, Tyryn Cleveland** and **Katie Gonzalez**.

The Club’s community awards were:

- **Be Great Future Award**, to Redlands resident Tom Kaney, for impacting youth through his support of academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles,
- **Be Great Impact Award**, to Riverside Buffalo Wild Wings general manager Presh Cox, for supporting the Club through in-kind donations, and
- **Be Great Mission Award**, to Rowena and James Ramos, for financially supporting the Club’s mission.

Kaney started making wooden cutting boards and selling them to support local nonprofits after retiring several years ago. He has raised more than \$20,000 for the Club with his boards.

“After seeing Katie and Tyryn and Isabel up here, my hours in the woodshop are worth it,” he said.

Cox has supported the Club through her restaurant’s Community Day, where 10% of proceeds go to the Club; donating wings for Club events; and organizing her staff to volunteer at Club events.

“Presh goes above and beyond ... there’s a whole list of things she’s done for us,” Club vice president of resource development Kate Salvesen said when introducing Cox.

Cox and Kaney were surprised by the awards.

The Ramoses have been the \$10,000 title sponsors of the Club’s signature fundraiser, Chocolate Fantasy, for several years.

“It feels good to donate to organizations that take care of kids,” James Ramos said. “So many kids nowadays go the wrong direction.”

The Youth of the Year Ambassadors were chosen for their character and citizenship, academics, and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Isabel was chosen as the Club’s Youth of the Year.

Teen Services Director Eddie Hernandez introduced them as “a future teacher, an enlisted Army soldier who leaves in August, and a future author.”

Katie, who didn’t have the advantage of resources about post-high school education until late in her school career, wants to be an English teacher and help other first-generation students. The Club helped Tyryn overcome his anger to serve

his community and country. Isabel wants to turn her past struggles with low self-esteem and bullying into a writing career to help others.

The Be Great Awards were sponsored by Redlands Ford, KVCR, Montecito Memorial Park & Mortuary, Candice Kelley of Connect Realty, the McEwen family, Linda and Mark Messersmith, the California Endowment, the Charles J. Kramer Scholarship Fund, and Ross Stores.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's Youth of the Year program "honors the nation's most awe-inspiring young people on their path to great futures and encourages all kids to lead, succeed and inspire." For more information about the program, visit www.youthoftheyear.org

For more information about Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside's Youth of the Year Ambassadors, go to www.YouTube.com/BeGreatIE



Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside's Youth of the Year Ambassadors pose with their certificates at the Club's Be Great Awards June 12 at the Redlands Country Club.