

Inland Empire Community News

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

By Community News

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Photo BGCGR: Redlands resident and Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside supporter Tom Kaney poses with the Club's Youth of the Year Ambassadors Gabriel Gomez, left, Genesis Sanchez and Jocelyn Perez at the Club's Be Great Awards Wednesday, May 15 at the Redlands Country Club.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside honored local youth and supporters at its annual Be Great Awards May 15.

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

Club alumnus Miguel Fernandez, who served as Youth of the Year in 2013 and 2014 and was a state finalist both years, spoke.

“It’s programs like Youth of the Year that really paved the way to success for me ... me, a 22-year-old, is working at a Fortune 500 company,” said Fernandez, who started working as public relations coordinator for Esri in February.

When he came to the Club, he was shy and didn’t care about making friends because he moved a lot in childhood. At the Club, he developed life-long friendships and the skill of holding a conversation. The Club also helped him get into four universities, including University of LaVerne, from which he graduated last year.

The Club’s community awards were:

- **Be Great Future Award**, to the Majestic Realty Foundation,
- **Be Great Impact Award**, to the Redlands Fire Department, and
- **Be Great Mission Award**, to Tim and Carol Rochford, for financially supporting the Club’s mission.

The Be Great Future Award goes to a business that has impacted Inland Empire youth through support of academic success, healthy lifestyles, and good character and citizenship. Majestic Realty Foundation has steadily supported the Club’s after-school programs since 2003 while strengthening the local economy with business developments. Majestic was an early champion of construction of the Club’s Dennis Hansberger Clubhouse, and has sponsored Club events and programs throughout the years.

The Be Great Impact Award is given to a business or organization that provides in-kind resources, impacting the daily programs at the Club.

The Redlands Fire Department collects toys each holiday season during their Spark of Love toy drive for kids in need. This enables the Club to hold its Holiday Extravaganza, where every kid gets the gift of a toy at the Burrage Mansion. Over 11 years, they have collected and delivered over 14,000 toys. They also bring fire engines to the Club's Day for Kids and sponsor and donate to the Chocolate Fantasy fundraiser.

The Be Great Mission Award goes to an individual or organization that financially supports the Club's ability to accomplish its mission. Tim and Carol Rochford, who married two years after graduating from Redlands High School, bought and restored the historic Burrage Mansion in 2007. The mansion's purpose is to be a "sanctuary dedicated to the well-being and happiness of children in need." At the mansion, the Rochfords host the Club's Holiday Extravaganza, Camp Einstein, Ford Jr. Youth of the Year dinner, day camp trips, and other events. More than 6,000 Club members experience Holiday Extravaganza and over 1,600 kids do summer camp activities at the mansion.

Three high school students were recognized as the Club's Youth of the Year Ambassadors – **Jocelyn Perez**, **Genesis Sanchez** and **Gabriel Gomez**. Each of them gave a speech about how the Club has impact their lives and their vision for the future.

Genesis and Gabriel spoke about how the Club helped them express themselves and be accepted after being bullied; and Jocelyn spoke about how the Club helped her be confident in herself and use her platform to advocate for mental health awareness.

The Youth of the Year Ambassadors were chosen for their character and citizenship, academics, and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Jocelyn was chosen as the Club's Youth of the Year. Each Ambassador receives college scholarships.

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.BeGreatIE.org