



# CREATING CONNECTIONS YOUTH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY.

# 2023 Asset Champions Breakfast March 17, 2023 | 7–9 AM

Santa Clara Convention Center Mission City Ballroom







Founded in 1999 by the Youth Alliance, today Project Cornerstone is a non-profit organization and community initiative of the YMCA of Silicon Valley. Our mission is to ensure all youth feel valued, respected, and known so they grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

We engage youth, parents/caring adults, and staff from schools and community organizations to strengthen healthy social and emotional skills and behaviors, build positive relationships, and create safe and supportive environments. Utilizing Search Institute's Developmental Assets and Developmental Relationships frameworks, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) model, our programs and services support the development of life skills youth need to thrive and provide effective tools and strategies for adults to build strong families, schools, and communities.

Our partnerships with hundreds of Silicon Valley schools have resulted in the creation of caring school climates and empowered tens of thousands of youth to stand up against bullying while fostering empathy, inclusion, and a sense of purpose and belonging.

Since the first celebration in 2003, the YMCA Project Cornerstone Asset Champions event has recognized Silicon Valley schools, individuals, and organizations that are committed to making this a better place for young people to live and grow. We honor adult role models, PreK-high schools that are creating caring and bullyingfree school environments, youth whose actions and behaviors make them positive role models for their peers, and organizations/people who provide opportunities for young people to make meaningful contributions to their community and/or help them feel supported and proud of their identity. The goal of the Asset Champions event is to honor and share the stories of these people, organizations, and schools in a community-building and celebratory setting.

We are so glad you have joined us for the 2023 Asset Champions event! To learn more about YMCA Project Cornerstone, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

#### 2022–2023 Project Cornerstone Funders

Adobe County of Santa Clara School Linked Services Kaiser Permanente Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation Peter Likhachev Foundation Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, Vice President Susan Ellenberg Sequoia Healthcare District Sutter Health / Palo Alto Medical Foundation

# Program

<b>Opening Performance</b>	El Grito de la Cultura
Salutations	Jim Hori President and CEO, YMCA of Silicon Valley
Emcees Welcome	Maribel Martínez Adult Emcee
	Saisujan Kotakonda Youth Emcee
Introduction of Keynote Speaker	Ziem Nguyen Neubert Executive Director, YMCA Project Cornerstone
Keynote Speaker	Dr. Victor Rios Guest Speaker, José Anzaldo
Musical Performance	Bella Villasis
2023 Annual Campaign Update	Mark Johnsen Board Committee Chair, YMCA Project Cornerstone
Awards Presentation	Caring High School Climate Adult Role Model Caring Middle School Climate Positive Cultural Identity Caring Preschool-Elementary School Climate Community Values Youth Positive Peer Influence
UPstander Pledge	YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council (SLC)

#### El Grito de la Cultura

Folklórico Nacional Mexicano de Elena Robles and the academy El Grito de la Cultura were founded in 1987 to empower youth and develop their talents through dance and cultural activities. Students participate in community service, gaining confidence and learning that they have much to contribute to their community.

#### Bella Villasis, CMT San Jose

Bella is a sophomore at Evergreen High School. She has been featured in many productions at Children's Musical Theater (CMT) and is currently playing the role of Philoclea in CMT's Mainstage premiere of the Broadway hit, Head Over Heels.

#### Dr. Victor Rios, Keynote Speaker

Dr. Victor Rios is MacArthur Foundation Chair and Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Professor Rios has worked with local school districts to develop programs for students who have been left behind in their education. Using his personal experience of living on the streets, dropping out of school, and being incarcerated as a juvenile—along with his research findings—he has developed interventions for marginalized students aimed at promoting personal transformation and civic engagement. He is the author of six books and has had the honor of meeting President Obama and advising his administration on gun violence and policing. His Ted Talk "Help for kids the education system ignores" has garnered over 1.6 Million views and he is the subject of the documentary film The Pushouts (thepushouts.com). Visit drvictorrios.com and www.scholarsystem.org to learn more.

#### José Anzaldo, Guest Speaker

José Anzaldo is from Salinas, California and is currently enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley. José and his teacher, Oscar Ramos, are the main subjects in the 2015 PBS documentary, "East of Salinas."

#### Maribel Martínez, Adult Emcee

Maribel Martínez (all pronouns) is a Queer Chicanx P<sup>'</sup>urhépecha brainiac, storyteller, and dream warrior. She received her BA in Political Science and Sociology and an MA in Applied Anthropology. She was the founding director of both the Cesar Chavez Community Action Center at San Jose State University and the County of Santa Clara Office of LGBTQ Affairs. She currently co-leads the newly created Division of Equity and Social Justice for the County of Santa Clara. Maribel is also a community artist, whose works have been recognized by local arts nonprofits including the MACLA, School of Arts and Culture, Teatro Vision, and The California Arts Council. She sees her work, whether in the office or out in the community or in the arts, as equity; what healing looks like in public.

#### Saisujan Kotakonda, Youth Emcee

A junior at Fremont High School, Sai is an active member of several clubs and initiatives including Science Olympiad and Fremont High's leadership class. He is passionate about advocating for mental health and wellness among students, as well as aerospace engineering. Sai is eager to apply his passions, leadership skills, and innovative thinking to creating a lasting and positive impact in his community, through high school and beyond.

#### **UPstander Pledge**

Led by members of Project Cornerstone's Student Leadership Council 2022–23: Chiara Bouissou, Ananya Dua, Vani Garg, Alina Gudeli, Vincent Guzman, Irene Hong, Saisujan Kotakonda, Mahika Maini, Ali Meriales, Brian Jewel Molina, Madeline Rusterholtz, and Ryan Verrette.

# Congratulations to the 2023 Asset Champions Award Nominees

Anya Boynton Ayaan Raza Brian Holloman-Kincaid Bridges Academy Cyndee Nguyen Erin Sobota Gina Estrada Gurkiran Sandhu Josue Salgado JP Lu Katherine Smith Elementary School Linda Hayer L.U.C.H.A. Elementary School Lucie Raynaud Maria Caro Matthew Corona Maureen McClintock Pearl Martinez Robert Randall Elementary School Sartorette Elementary School Sherman Oaks Charter School Springer Elementary School Summit Public School Tahoma To Be Honest

## **Previous Asset Champions Awards Winners**

#### **Adult Role Model**

Harold Atkins, Each One Reach One Program Helen Donald, Girl Scouts Jennifer Moyen-Logan, Girl Scouts John Rose, San Jose Police Department Lisa Jacobs, Almaden Hills, Cambrian Park, and Willow Glen United Methodist Churches Lisa Sullivan, Loma Prieta Joint Union School District Michael Cellini, Montclaire Elementary School Michael Fullbright, Milpitas High School Mitesh Patel, Fresh Lifelines for Youth Nancy Kobel, City of Santa Clara Crossing Guard Raul Peralez, San Jose Police Department Robert Castro, Mexican American Community Services Agency Ron Cooper, Mountain View Police Department So'o Poumele, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County Sue Gutierrez, Graystone Elementary School William Wagner, Good Samaritan United Methodist Church

Yonit Parenti, Moreland School District

#### **Caring School Climate**

Ann Sobrato High School Bagby Elementary School Baker Elementary School Booksin Elementary School Bret Harte Middle School Cabrillo Middle School **Calaveras Hills High School** Castillero Middle School **Country Lane Elementary School** Dartmouth Middle School Don Callejon School Easterbrook Discovery School Educational Options (EdOps) Fisher Middle School Forest Hill Elementary School Graham Middle School **Gunderson High School** Leigh High School Lincoln High School Live Oak High School Los Alamitos Elementary School Los Gatos High School Lowell Elementary School L.U.C.H.A. Elementary School Luther Burbank School Lynhaven Elementary School Marshall Lane Elementary School Moreland Middle School Mountain View High School Noddin Elementary School PA Walsh Elementary School Price Middle School **Prospect High School** Quimby Oak Middle School

Redwood Middle School Rucker Elementary School St. Andrew's Episcopal School Summit Rainier High School Trace Elementary School Union Middle School Village Elementary School Willow Glen Elementary School Willow Glen High School Wilson High School Yerba Buena High School

#### **Community Values Youth**

**Bill Wilson Center Bill Wilson Peer Education Program CASA** of Los Gatos Children's Musical Theatre San Jose CommUniverCity San Jose Forget Me Not The Hub José Valdés Math Institute Latino Family Fund de Gilroy Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation McKinley/Bonita Neighborhood Association **Milpitas Youth Program Team** San Jose Public Library SJSU Cesar Chavez Community Action Center Sunnyvale Challenge Team TeenForce

#### **Positive Cultural Identity**

African American Community Services Agency Alum Rock Counseling Center Ana Frias, Anne Darling Elementary School Christopher Temblador, San Jose State University Elena Robles, Folklórico Nacional Mexicano Fisher Middle School Special Education Team Jane Babb, Fisher Middle School Joma Briones, Asian Americans for Community Involvement Leticia Tapia, Payne Elementary School Los Dichos Founding Volunteers at Easterbrook Discovery School and Anne Darling Elementary School Louise Gill, Bret Harte Middle School Luis Falcon, Downtown College Prep Olga Morales Anaya, Girl Scouts Outlet Adolescent Counseling Services Robert Topf, Frost Elementary School and Indigo San Jose Taiko Veronica Trejo, Moreland Middle School

#### **Positive Peer Influence**

Abinava Sridharan Adam Malacara, East Valley Family YMCA Adan Lupercio, Washington Youth Center Akash Nigam, Kick, Lead and Dream Almond Elementary School Cornerstone Club Daniel Katz, Monta Vista High School Interact 5170 District Council Jessica Wenzel, Breakthrough Silicon Valley Johnson Tran, Santa Clara County Youth Task Force Matthew Leffler, Baseball Buddies Foundation Mario Contreras, East Valley Family YMCA Nadia Ghaffari, TeenzTalk Naireesa Merchant, Fresh Lifelines for Youth Nicole Pritchard, Mountain View High School Rock Founders, Gunn High School Sabrina Ma, Acts of Random Kindness Club Tony Aquilar, Fresh Lifelines for Youth Unidos Club of Mountain View Van Nguyen, Silicon Valley Interschool Council

#### **Spark Award Winners**

Dave Thornton Dr. Barbara Varenhorst Linda Silvius Mountain View/Los Altos Challenge Team Ruby Bridges Town of Los Gatos Youth Bill of Rights

#### **Lifetime Asset Champions**

Anne Ehresman Kelly Noftz Linda Silvius Myrna Pettengill Pam Von Wiegand Steve Tate



Thank you CreaTV for production of the awardee videos.

# **Project Cornerstone 2023 Asset Champions**

#### Caring High School Climate South County Community School (Santa Clara County Office of Education)

South County Community School is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and is committed to providing an educational environment that promotes the development of literacy, 21st-century skills, resiliency, and appropriate social skills that will help our students to have a successful life. Our Course of Studies in the



core subject areas address the California Academic Content Standards, and students actively earn credits toward graduation.

Our educational programs serve students who are undergoing expulsion, deficient in credits, and/ or have experienced challenges in matriculation in traditional school settings and need a smaller, more supportive school environment. Our goal is to treat the needs of the whole youth, ensuring that they grow in our program with enhanced academic and social skill sets, a belief in their ability to succeed, and the knowledge that they have a team to support them.

"I'd like to use the words of Mr. Camilleri to describe South County Community School: "They're not selling wolf tickets," they are "boots on the ground" and "doing what's best for kids." Translation, they are no phonies, they are not lying, they are the ones with the kids day in and day out and are focused on what matters most for our students. We are proud to be his partner in this work." – Eugene Santillan, Principal, North County Alternative Education, Santa Clara County Office of Education

#### Adult Role Model Lauri Scirigione, Lauri Gray's Dance School

My name is Lauri Scirigione; however, everyone calls me Miss Lauri. I am the owner of Lauri Gray's School of Dance. This year we are celebrating 38 years of teaching the art of dance in Santa Clara County, specifically in the community of Gilroy. I am also the Dance and Drama Director at Gilroy High School.

I have been blessed with a wonderful friend and husband who has supported me and my adventures. We are celebrating 35 years of married life and we have 3 beautiful children, Johnathon, KimberLee and Jason.

I graduated from San Jose State University where I had the privilege of representing the Spartan Swim Team as a long-distance swimmer (1981–1985) and I was the Dance Captain for Spartan Spectrums (1981– 1986). I also hold my CTE Credential from San Diego State University.



"Working with individuals with special needs brings with it a host of unique challenges and opportunities. She makes every day fulfilling for the kids that she works with, including my son. I know her work is making a huge positive impact helping each individual to grow, feel included and inspiring to be a better individual. Ms. Lauri's devotion and passion ignites the capabilities of each individual and it makes these kids feel important. She directly impacts each person and she truly makes a world of difference!" – Elaine Durante, Logan's mom

#### Caring Middle School Climate Price Middle School (Cambrian School District)

Ida Price Charter Middle School serves students in grades 6–8 in the Cambrian Park neighborhood of San Jose, California.

We welcome all families of middle-school-aged children to learn more about the curriculum, including Accelerated Math and English programs for upper

grade students, outstanding electives, including Theater Arts & Drama, Spanish, Journalism, Project Lead The Way & Media Production, Multi–Focused Arts programs, award–winning Music programs, Yearbook and Student Leadership programs, Mock Trial & Debate, Film & Literature and our popular athletics programs.

Our vision is to develop responsible citizens with positive self-worth, by providing a safe, friendly and fun place to be. We offer flexible scheduling and a challenging, integrated curriculum with many options, so students can make personal connections with real life experiences, will have opportunities to be successful and will achieve the practical skills necessary to be lifelong learners.

"Ida Price Middle School is a wonderful place for our students and staff to engage in teaching and learning. Price exemplifies this by ensuring student voices are heard. The collaborative culture emphasizes inclusivity achieved through deliberate programming that supports our Price Panther Community in a safe and caring environment." - Kristi Schwiebert, Superintendent, Cambrian School District

#### Positive Cultural Identity Annameekee Hesik, Los Gatos High School

Annameekee Hesik is an English Teacher, coach, and a champion for youth at Los Gatos High School (LGHS). A celebrated role model, Annameekee is a constant presence on campus, including being an advisor for the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and a panel moderator for LGHS' "Celebrate Diversity Week."

Annameekee aims to make her classroom a welcoming and safe environment for all learners. When searching for books to bring into her classroom library, she looked for those that would be representative of her LGBTQ students and show them how to appreciate and be proud of their cultural and personal identities. When she couldn't find the specific books she wanted, she wrote them herself by creating "The You Know Who Girls" series, which has a diverse cast and focuses on one high schooler's journey of coming out



and finding her joy along the way. An accomplished author, Annameekee has also been featured on several film and radio mediums.

"Annameekee is more than just a teacher here at Los Gatos High School. She is a strong advocate for children, she is adored and looked up to by her students, and she is inclusive ensuring that no student is underrepresented or left out. She has a wonderful ability to rally both adults and students to celebrate, learn, and inspire and we are so fortunate to have so many positive role models, like Annameekee, on our campus." – Kevin Buchanan, Principal, Los Gatos High School



#### Caring Preschool-Elementary School Climate Aptitud Community Academy at Goss (Alum Rock School District)

Aptitud Community Academy at Goss is a TK – 8 school in the Alum Rock Union School District. We thrive to be a welcoming, safe community where all students can thrive. Staff members share the vision that students do best when there is a foundation of care and relationships to strengthen student achievement.



It is the goal of the team to ensure that each and every student is connected to an adult on campus they can trust and talk to. In partnership with SCCOE, we house a wellness center run by two full-time staff members. In addition to our school counselor, they make up the wellness team and serve students and teachers by bringing lessons and activities into the classrooms.

Aptitud serves students' social emotional health with various interventions and supports. In each classroom, teachers have created "Peace Corners" where students will find a variety of tools to support calming, emotional health and refocusing. All students receive monthly character lessons to strengthen and develop as well-rounded students. When students need more support they can use the Wellness Center, a flexible, calm space on campus where students visit to self-regulate, take a calming break or access a counselor. The staff at Aptitud genuinely believes that all students can succeed in a safe, welcoming environment with strong relationships.

"We have been a part of the Aptitud community for 2 years and have found that the administration has made it a priority to create a safe haven for all students. As a parent, I know that every day when my children are there, they receive the education and support every child deserves. Aptitud Academy at Goss brings families, students, teachers, and staff together as one family." – Rhianna Diaz, parent

#### **Community Values Youth** Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action

Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action (SVYCA) is a youthled 501(c)(3) nonprofit that empowers teens and young adults to combat climate change through impactful education and policy initiatives. SVYCA has led youth leadership development workshops, spearheaded community outreach initiatives, shared educational materials across schools, and successfully advocated for ambitious climate-friendly policies at the local, regional, and state level.



With action teams in Cupertino, Sunnyvale, San José, Morgan Hill, and Santa Clara, SVYCA has become uniquely poised to advance climate policies and outreach in these communities. Local efforts include organizing climate-focused city council candidate forums, engaging in public outreach at schools and community events, and successfully advocating for ambitious sustainability policies such as passing strong Climate Action Plans, Waste Reduction, and Building Electrification. SVYCA youth are committed to scaling up climate solutions with teams dedicated to state-level policies, regional initiatives within the counties of Santa Clara and San Mateo, environmental education across local school districts, and transportation issues across the Bay Area. To learn more, visit: SVYouthClimateAction.org.

"Through their engagement in climate action and educational initiatives, the young leaders in Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action have made a positive difference in the lives of our students and families. It is up to young people to lead the climate battle, and I thank them for taking this challenge on." – Senator Dave Cortese

#### Positive Peer Influence Farah Tavana, Van Meter Elementary

Farah Tavana is a Bay Area native, born in San Francisco and raised in Los Gatos, CA. She has two younger siblings and a large network of family, friends, teachers and coaches who she loves very much. When she isn't at school spreading kindness and compassion, she can be found competing on the tennis court, coordinating her youth Toastmasters club, playing defense on the soccer field and promoting Safe Routes to School.

Farah currently serves on her school student council and is passionate about the motto of being safe, respectful, responsible and kind. She participates in the lunch buddies program that helps to pair students with friends who have learning differences. Farah loves participating in Project Cornerstone and Girls on the Run – organizations that allow for expanded time focused on social-emotional learning.



Farah's true passion is reading and if it wasn't for her love of talking and playing, her nose would be in a book at all times. She loves spending her nights up late with a flashlight reading Harry Potter, Percy Jackson and Keeper of the Lost Cities. She is so humbled and thrilled to be recognized for her commitment to kindness and inclusion in her community.

"Farah's personality shines in a group! She welcomes everyone with a warm smile and jumps at the chance to help others. The confidence and strength she demonstrates encourages others to grow and become the best version of themselves. She offers a caring ear when her peers need it and stands ready to make them feel heard. Farah pours her heart into letting all feel included and encouraging others to do the same." – Lucy Gorman, 3rd Grade Teacher, Van Meter Elementary

### **UPstander Pledge**

I am an UPstander. I have the power to influence my peers. I SAY something or DO something when you need help. I am there for you. I will help you get the help you need. You are not alone. I have your back.

# 2023 UPstander Dedications

#### To Be Honest Youth

### **Thanks to Our Committees and Volunteers**

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#### **Event Volunteers**

Chiara Bouissou\* Denise Cole Harpreet Dokal Ananya Dua\* Adrian Famularcano Kim Flammer Vani Garg\* Alina Gudeli\*

The Asset Champions award plaques were designed and created by Leah Verhoeven, Rob Verhoeven, and the Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council. Vincent Guzman\* Debbi Headley Diana Hernandez Irene Hong\* Saisujan Kotakonda\* Leticia Madeiros Mahika Maini\* Lori Maitski Ali Meriales\* Brian Jewel Molina\* Rik Nicholson Sarah Ogle Madeline Rusterholtz\* Kim Saito Henry Tran Ryan Verrette\*

Translation by Miriam King.

\* YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council 2022–23 member

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