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 bullying-free 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.

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**2022–2023 Project Cornerstone Funders**

Adobe  
County of Santa Clara School Linked Services  
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About the Speakers and Performers

**El Grito de la Cultura**
Folklorico 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 Chicana P’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**
Congratulations to the 2023 Asset Champions Award Nominees

Anyा 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  
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

Caring School Climate
Ann Sobrato High School  
Bagby Elementary School  
Baker Elementary School  
Booksín 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  
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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
Abinaya Sridharan
Adam Malacara, East Valley Family YMCA
Adan Lupericio, 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
Nadja 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 Aguilar, 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.
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 Santillian, 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 youth-led 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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Sarah Ogle
Madeline Rusterholtz*
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Henry Tran
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The Asset Champions award plaques were designed and created by Leah Verhoeven, Rob Verhoeven, and the Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council.

Translation by Miriam King.

*YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council 2022–23 member
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stanfordchildrens.org
We are honored to support the Asset Champions in their mission to make our community a better place for young people to thrive. We are proud of your impact!

**WealthArchitects**

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Visit [www.ymcasv.org/summer](http://www.ymcasv.org/summer) or scan the QR code.

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San Jose Water

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