

WEST ELBERT COUNTY SUN

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51 Elizabeth students honored as 2016 STARS

By Beth Shelly

Fifty-one students from the Elizabeth School District were honored at the 18th annual banquet, Salute to the 2016 S.T.A.R.S., Students Taking Accountability and Responsibility Seriously.

The banquet, a project of the Elizabeth Education Foundation, was held at Elizabeth High School on Saturday, Apr. 2.

Students were nominated by their teachers for the individual qualities they brought to the classroom and those that made them stand out as friends, tutors, role models, achievers, those who continuously strive to do their best, and more.

It was "A time for us to come together to pause, to reflect and to celebrate. It is a time to be inspired, humbled and moved," Superintendent Douglas Bissonette said in his opening welcome.

Jace Glick of Jace Glick Sells Team served again as master of ceremonies, calling each student up individually to read their teacher's nomination statement. He spoke to them one on one about their likes, ambitions, extracurricular activities and more.

Words used to describe this year's STARS are plentiful – good sense of humor, patient, kind, engaged learner, creative, accepts new challenges with purpose, positive role model to classmates, encourages all students to do their best, never comes to school without a smile and kindness to others, always willing to help, thinks before acting, contagious enthusiasm, trustworthy, and reliable.

One student who recently lost both of her parents was praised for her indelible spirit and her strength to persevere.

Some of this year's STARS honorees achieve academically, some balance their lives with sports, club activities or community service or any combination of these.

Some may not be the highest achievers but the trait that is shared is their commitment to do their best, to be respectful to others, to be a friend, to be caring, or just to persevere with a smile on their face.

Some already have their life plans outlined. Legacy Academy seventh grader Lucas Vicari aims to attend the Colorado School of Mines, Jennifer Marinelarena is taking college-level classes so she can have her EMS certification by the time she graduates this spring.

Donaciano "DJ" Lucero will be following his dream of joining the U.S. Marine Corps this year. EHS sophomore Kyle Elliott said Film Club has changed his life forever and he hopes to use the skills he has learned when he joins the Navy after graduation.

Life is an attitude, Glick reminded the students, saying this year's honorees were a steady stream of positive attitudes.

"I hope this evening makes an indelible, unforgettable mark in your memories and in your character. I hope you use it as a source of encouragement to take on big challenges, and as a cause for strength in difficult time. Remember what you're capable of, remember how much of a difference you make to others, remember that you have talents beyond what you know," Bissonette said.

"And if 10 years from now, you forget the reason you were here tonight, at least remember that others saw something in you, something out

of the ordinary," he added.

This year's recipients included: Elizabeth High School Freshmen: Eduardo Acosta, Makenna Karpunin, Brandon Kohrt, Sam Sockriter, Jianna Valenti, and Jillian Williams.

Elizabeth High School Sophomores: Kendall Adamson, Kyle Elliott, Kyla Green, Kasey Heap, Abigail Mohlis, and Kristina Worthing.

Elizabeth High School Juniors: Ashlyn Fowler, Zachary Imel, Dillion Lind, Brayley Payne, Madeline Tebrugge, and Dane Tomei.

Elizabeth High School Seniors: Kyle Birks, Colton Cline, Jennifer Marinelarena, Megan Reyher, Alexandra Stabler, and Dylan Wharton.

Elizabeth Middle School: Sixth graders Piper Gustafson, Sam Haszelbart, Tyler Robinson, and Cambell Taylor; seventh graders Thiessen Burch, Kyle Epstein, Tia Slade and Victoria Wharton; an eighth graders Nicole Hunt, Nathan Lipka, Rylee Rogers, and Danner Stephenson.

Frontier High School: Sophomore Cedar Needham, junior Brendon Gertie, and seniors Donaciano Lucero and Taryn Miller.

Legend Academy Charter: Fifth graders Emerson Lamansky and Cooper Rumbold, sixth grader Elizabeth Riedel, seventh graders Hudson Hauk and Lucas Vicari, and eighth grader Hunter Dobbs.

Running Creek Elementary: Fifth graders Lilly Baraldi and Alex DeLeon.

Singing Hills Elementary: Fifth graders Marissa Amaro, Terra Dundon and Max Wurdeman.

Asked what they liked best about school, teachers were acknowledged, as were friendships with peers, the opportunity to learn, the life experience, and learning how to get along with others.

Several students from Legacy Academy mentioned a simulated cave that was provided through a grant from the Elizabeth Education Foundation.

Each year the foundation uses proceeds from its reloadable grocery store gift cards and community nights at the Denver Nuggets, the Colorado Rockies and Colorado Avalanche, as well as individual donations, to make mini grants to teachers for direct use in the classroom, for educational tools and resources not otherwise furnished by the school district.

Special thanks were given to platinum level sponsors IOREA and Safeway, to gold level sponsors Jace Glick Sells Team, Farmers Insurance/Don and Elodji Means, Rodney Stein Construction LLC, Ritter Photography, the Elizabeth Stampede Foundation and Work at Home United, and to silver level sponsors Mike's Garage Doors, Parker Orthodontics, Creekside Animal Hospital, Bender Menders Collision Repair LLC, Front Range Kubota and RKM Trim and Construction Inc.

Dinner was provided by Teri Maher and the food services staff. Pre-celebration music was provided by Colin Bauerle and Mitchell Phelps (violin), Jessica Brown (viola), Logan Griffin (cello) and Sophie Slade (bass).

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The Elizabeth School District's class of 2016 STARS (Students Taking Accountability and Responsibility Seriously).