

Community Comment April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

By Jon Sapper

Amazing Students!

Last Thursday a wonderful event happened in Eureka. Twenty-one high school seniors from around the county, representing public, private and charter schools were recognized in the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Academic Achievement and Stellar Student Awards Ceremony sponsored by the Rising Stars Foundation. These students were nominated by their school based on outstanding academic records, demonstrated application of those academic skills, noteworthy leadership and community involvement. Exceptional talents in the arts, mathematics, sciences, humanities and athletics were in full display.

As an example, one student already has five patents and licenses to his name with another patent pending. He started a toy company, has helped a university professor build a supercomputer to run hydrogen fusion simulations, was a marketing intern for a Mountain View company and completed an intensive program sponsored by MIT and Caltech in applied theoretical and experimental methods of astrophysics to determine elements of near-earth asteroids. I'm humbled just reading his accomplishments.

There were students who have performed musically in Amsterdam, founded a non-profit, qualified and sang in Carnegie Hall, designed and implemented art therapy lessons for primary grade students, received national honors for exemplary volunteer service and have extensive international experiences that will help shape their continued education and goals.

Even though these students have accomplished a lot in their 17 years, their dreams are even loftier. They envision a world that has conquered cancer, a future where transportation will be completely transformed by advances in technology, a local community that has solved the problems of homelessness, drug use and addiction, a culture that has strong morals, respect for elders, an appreciation for the values of diverse perspectives working together, developing clinics incorporating the arts and music into healing activities for those who suffer from autism, traumas and other debilitating disorders. These are not just their dreams, these are areas where our young people are already engaged and making

a difference. It was truly a remarkable evening and impossible to leave without feeling good about the future before us.

Let us keep in mind that for every individual we read about in the paper who has made a wrong choice, there are five individuals we don't read about who are committing themselves on a daily basis to make this world a better place.

This is our community. These are our children. Let's continue to support them.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.