



# 22<sup>nd</sup> ANNIVERSARY

# 2020 Youth Awards

Presented by: **Hispanic Heritage** FOUNDATION and its Sponsors

**RED REGION – Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine,  
New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont**

FEBRUARY 23, 2021



MESSAGE FROM  
**JOSE ANTONIO TIJERINO**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION



We are thrilled to honor yet another outstanding class of Youth Awardees who will carry on the tradition of vision, commitment, social impact, and “ganas” from past recipients. There is no shortage of Latinx talent across the United States, and our Youth Awardees are all living proof. We are grateful to our dedicated sponsors who understand the importance of investing in the youngest and most dynamic segment of our population. We are in good hands with these outstanding young leaders going forward and believe these are the young leaders of today, not tomorrow. We can’t afford to wait. Following their lead, we will help meet America’s priorities in education, the community and the workforce.

Paz,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'T' followed by a large, sweeping flourish.

**Jose Antonio Tijerino**

# SPONSORS & PARTNERS



## **JORDAN ROMANO**

Business & Finance - **GOLD**

Major: Economics

GPA: 4.00

High School: Smithtown High School East

Heritage: Puerto Rican

According to Jordan Romano, business economics is a field relevant to every industry and to social economic parameters worldwide. That's one of the reasons he finds it so fascinating and why he's nurtured his fondness and passion for the subject since his freshman year of high school. To prepare for his future success, Jordan has taken business classes and serves as Vice President of his high school's DECA club. He has also participated in various NYS regional and local competitions, winning various business awards. For the past 10 years, Jordan has volunteered with Community Mayors Inc. an event that puts on a holiday celebration for underprivileged children in the area. The event serves 4,000 children from all over New York City, and according to Jordan, is as rewarding and soul-fulfilling for him as it is for them. Jordan calls community service both powerful and necessary, and this view is shaped by his exposure to it from a very young age. Whenever possible, he and his family find ways to be charitable with their time, and he hopes to use a degree in business or economics to propel him forward and allow him to serve his community on an even greater scale. Whether by hiring and educating employees from underrepresented communities, or starting businesses in those very same communities, he hopes to use his business acumen to give back. In addition to being committed to fueling his knowledge of business, Jordan is also a stellar student and maintains a 4.00 GPA amid a rigorous course load. A proud Puerto Rican, he hopes to continue pursuing his lofty goals at Yale University, Cornell University, or Boston College.

## **EMERLY CAMPUSANO**

Business & Finance - **SILVER**

Major: Psychology with a minor in Entrepreneurship or Business Management

GPA: 4.00

High School: All City Leadership Secondary School

Heritage: Dominican

Emerly Campusano is motivated, diligent, and a leader in every sense of the word, qualities that will serve her well on her journey to be her own boss. Emerly has always found the mind to be an interesting subject because, as she says, it's the powerhouse of the body, and understanding how it works can better help us deal with our everyday emotions. Ultimately, Emerly's main goal is to be a business owner and she has certainly laid a strong foundation for it. Over the summer, she participated in NFTE Bizcamp, which offers NYC students the chance to learn about entrepreneurship and business. She and her peers were challenged to come up with original business ideas that they had to pitch to a panel of judges. Emerly's idea? Stick It: a tracking sticker that could be attached to virtually anything, which would connect to a phone app and allow users to keep track of often lost items. Born from her personal experience of often losing her glasses, her product was a success, and she won second place in the competition. Emerly is also committed to giving back to others. During her freshman year she participated in a volunteer opportunity where she read to local elementary school students. The experience sparked an idea - there was no place in the community for students like herself to come together and share their creativity with one another - so she launched a coffee house open to students who wanted to share their poetry. The event was a hit - and with ideas like these, she is certainly going places. Emerly's entrepreneurial spirit isn't the only thing setting her up for success. She is also a straight-A student, maintaining a 4.00 GPA and a host of AP classes that range Literature to Chemistry. She plans to continue her academic pursuit by studying Psychology with a minor in Entrepreneurship or Business Management at University of Southern California, Washington University in St. Louis, or Pennsylvania State University.

## **SOFIA PALACIOS FERRER**

Business & Finance - **BRONZE**

Major: Marketing

GPA: 4.00

High School: Rye Neck High School

Heritage: Chilean, Peruvian, and Venezuelan

According to Sofia Palacios-Ferrer's teacher, there are many qualities that teachers look for in a "great student": motivated, hard-working, interested in the course content, and willing and able to help lead class discussions. To him, Sofia embodies every single one. Sofia is a committed and diligent student, whose curiosity and capacity for learning are self-evident. After reading Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow*, she became fascinated by the ways in which our brains form subconscious biases, which influence and control decision-making. In many cases, marketers use the same underlying psychology to influence customers to buy their products. It's clear how this could be used to facilitate purchasing, but Sofia's also interested in the more positive and human aspects - how might we use tools like these to improve society? Throughout her high school career, Sofia has developed and honed her interest in marketing and immersed herself in the field. She participated in Columbia's Marketing Summer Internship Program and worked as an intern at Blue Opal Capital, a Wall Street investment firm. Currently, she is engaged in a project where she's employing her marketing know-how and working with a local cable television and the mayor's office to foster positivity within the community and combat the effects of social isolation caused by the pandemic. Sofia's impressive extracurricular activities also include community service projects such as tutoring and participating in food drives, as her parents have always highlighted the importance of giving back to her community. Sofia's academic record speaks for itself - with a perfect 4.00 GPA, a host of awards and distinctions, and a course load crammed with AP classes, she hopes to continue her pursuit of becoming a purpose-driven business leader giving back to the community by studying Marketing at University of Pennsylvania, University of Notre Dame, or University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

## **NATALIE VILLACRES**

Education - **GOLD**

Major: Music Education

GPA: 4.00

High School: Townsend Harris High School

Heritage: Colombian and Ecuadorian

If Natalie Villacres, fondly called Squidward for the last ten years and counting thanks to her avid clarinet-playing, is passionate about one thing, it's music. Since the first grade, she has been a member of marching bands, ensembles, pep bands, and parades, always immersing herself fully in what she calls "a channel to emotional expression". In addition to clarinet, she is also a stunning piano and violin player, and hopes to continue pursuing her passion through college and beyond. Her goal? To make sure every student in her home city and beyond have access to the beautiful and lifechanging art of music, which in many small ways has offered her a haven throughout her life. Natalie's interest in becoming a music teacher is in part due to her passion for the art form, but also her commitment to making a difference in her community and wider society. In 2018, she began volunteering at Delve Bright Education, a nonprofit organization that provides tutors to schools in underserved communities. At first, Natalie noticed her team of 10 second-graders were struggling. Worksheets were unanswered, the students were disengaged, and she knew she had to do something. Soon, she had abandoned the worksheets in favor of captivating lessons on the chalkboard, using cookies, spaceships and at one point, even the members of One Direction to map out math problems. The shift was palpable, and soon they were tackling the worksheets with newfound confidence. At the conclusion of her volunteer stint, Natalie's supervisor pulled her aside and handed her a two-dollar bill. "These are uncommon nowadays, but when we find them, we cherish them. That's how we feel about you." High praise, but exactly what Natalie needed - this is what she was meant to do. Since then, Natalie has thrown herself into other community service activities and her studies. With a perfect 4.00 GPA and a schedule packed with AP classes, she is well on her way to achieving her goals. She hopes to study Music Education at Columbia University, New York University, or University of Southern California and continue to inspire the next generation of music lovers.

# **CECILIA SÁNCHEZ**

Education - **SILVER**

Major: Education

GPA: 4.00

High School: Holyoke High School

Heritage: Puerto Rican

Cecilia Sánchez is a dedicated, hard-working and well-loved individual. And if anyone knows how kind and dedicated she truly is, it's the children she teaches in the inner cities of Springfield as part of the summer impact clubs hosted by Hope for Kids. All summer, Cecilia spends her days preparing skits, teaching lessons, playing games, and providing them the love and support they need to thrive. For the past four years, she has also volunteered as an assistant teacher for Summer Strings, a program that offers music lessons to children. These experiences have not only strengthened her resolve to continue pursuing a career in education, but also genuinely prepared her for one, as she honed her leadership and communication skills. Community service is incredibly important to Cecilia, and she credits her volunteer experiences for pushing her out of her comfort zone and into challenging new situations. It has also enhanced her awareness of the needs of others within her community. According to her teacher, Cecilia is a driven and organized student undaunted by new challenges – traits that will serve her well as a future educator. Her patience and understanding for others have helped her succeed in the tutoring program at her high school, where she played an important role in assisting, tutoring, and teaching her peers in various subjects, always with a smile and a positive and encouraging attitude. She maintains an impressive 4.00 GPA amid a consistently challenging course schedule that boasts various AP classes, including AP US History, AP World History, AP English, and Honors courses. Cecilia is a committed, well-rounded student and has been recognized as a member of the National Honors Society, as a Rising Star, and for High Honors, and she hopes to continue her academic career by majoring in Education at Elms College, Amherst College, or Western New England.

# LINDA MELÉNDEZ

Education - **BRONZE**

Major: Adolescent Math Education 7-12

GPA: 4.00

High School: Preston High School

Heritage: Puerto Rican and Peruvian

Linda Meléndez is an intelligent, mature, and dedicated young woman, deeply committed to serving her community and peers. She sees community service as being important not only for one's future opportunities, but also for the reward of knowing you have made an impact in even one person's life. One of Linda's main means of giving back is tutoring, which she has been involved with since she was in middle school. Though she started out tutoring math to her peers, when she entered high school she expanded her subject matter as part of the peer tutoring program. Linda is also heavily involved in two high school service clubs: Compassion Connection and the Italian Club. With her other classmates, she has made sandwiches, hosted a food drive, written letters to senior citizens, and hosted seasonal parties for families in need. For Linda, the hard work is well worth the effort. In addition to her range of extracurricular activities, Linda is also an exceptional student. She has shown tremendous achievement in languages, earning a total 11 college credits for both Spanish and Italian language classes she completed throughout her high school career. She will also be the first graduate of her high school's Native Spanish Speaker in Italian Program, and is a candidate for two Seals of Biliteracy. Clearly adept at communication, a skill that will serve her extremely well as an educator. Linda is well-liked by her peers, committed, compassionate, and persevering, and her teacher calls her "the backbone of the Honor Society" - we're certain her success is imminent. With a 4.00 GPA as well as a range of AP courses ranging from Calculus to Art, she is well prepared for her future endeavors studying Adolescent Math Education (7-12) at Iona College, Siena College, or St. John's University.

# EDUARDO CIENFUEGOS DE PAZ

Engineering - **GOLD**

Major: Engineering and Business  
GPA: 3.90  
High School: North Haven High School  
Heritage: Spanish

All life depends on water – it is one of life’s most basic needs – and Eduardo Cienfuegos de Paz is particularly aware of this. In the summer of his sophomore year of high school, he attended an environmental engineering course through the UCONN Engineering Summer Program. For the final project, he and his peers were instructed to find cost-effective means of extracting water from humid air. The experience gave him a hefty dose of the realities and challenges facing environmental engineers dedicated to finding feasible solutions to water scarcity. Ever since, Eduardo has been fascinated by water – its abundance and scarcity around the world – and hopes to continue his pursuit of improving the planet by studying Engineering and Business. Engineering is a technical profession and one that requires a strong understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts. Eduardo has proven his adeptness by enrolling and excelling in various AP STEM classes, including AP Physics, AP Chemistry, AP Calculus AB, and self-studying for AP Calculus BC. Outside of the classroom, he is a member of his school’s math team of which he is now the captain and where, as a sophomore, he was one of only five students to qualify for the state tournament. His leadership skills shine through in many of Eduardo’s extracurriculars, including his role as the captain of his soccer team, and his commitment to community service. As a member of the Latino/Hispanic community, who is intent on pursuing higher education, he has worked hard for his achievements and started mentoring Hispanic and Latino children, many of whom struggle in school. The Hispanic/Latino community has tons of brilliant minds, says Eduardo, but too often, they aren’t offered the resources and support needed for success. That’s why, aside from tutoring, he works as a junior counselor at LEAP for Kids a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring elementary school kids from underserved communities. Eduardo’s future is clearly bright, and with an impressive 3.90 GPA, he hopes to attend Northwestern University, Johns Hopkins University, or Yale University to study Engineering and Business.

## VIVIANA ALATORRE

Engineering - **SILVER**

Major: Architecture

GPA: 3.90

High School: Art & Design High School

Heritage: Mexican

Unlike many people her age, Viviana Alatorre knows exactly what she wants out of life: to become an architect. In fact, that is one of the things that made her stand out most to her mentor in the ACE mentor program, combined with her unfailing optimism, self-assuredness, and confidence. In a male-dominated profession like architecture, Viviana is unafraid and perfectly capable of holding her own. The ACE mentor program offered her valuable experiences and understanding that prepare her well for her future as an architect –for example, as part of an off-the-grid housing project, she learned about a variety of solutions, such as radiant heating floor systems and solar panels. Viviana has also worked hard to master all the skills necessary to earn her CTE certification in AutoCAD this year. After completing her internship, she was offered a position to stay on and work with the RGL Building Env. Consultants firm, as a draftsman, something that only solidifies the notion that she is primed for success in the field. Apart from her commitment to architecture, Viviana is also actively involved in various extracurricular activities. She has been a member of the youth community of the Calpulli Mexican Dance Company since the age of four, an experience she values greatly as she feels it allows her to connect to her cultural roots, as well as those of her father. Viviana's academic record also speaks for itself: she has a 3.90 GPA and is an active member of the Honor Society, where she tutors students, sets up after-school events, and helps out at events such as bake sales. She has challenged herself repeatedly throughout her tenure at Art and Design High School, enrolling in various AP classes, and she has been recognized for a variety of awards – several of which are specific to achievements in architecture. Viviana hopes to study Architecture at City College of New York, Cornell University, or Drexel University.

## **MICHAEL CHUMBAY**

Engineering - **BRONZE**

Major: Mechanical Engineering

GPA: 4.00

High School: Aviation High School

Heritage: Ecuadoran

Michael Chumbay's interest in Mechanical Engineering stems from his childhood, where he recalls standing alongside his father at six years-old, watching him fix the family car. Michael knew nothing about cars or its components at the time, but he was immediately fascinated by the way it worked, and this curiosity has only compounded over time. In fact, Michael has started his journey already – he applied for, and was accepted, into Aviation High School, where he has had the opportunity to work under the supervision of the Federal Aviation Administration. As a student pursuing his Airframe and Powerplant Maintenance Technician license, Michael's understanding has expanded rapidly to include electrical systems, avionics, engines, schematics, and more. He is also a cadet in his high school's Air Force JROTC and has participated in various walks, parades, and community service activities dedicated to raising awareness about a variety of causes. When asked what he would tell his younger self about community service if given the chance? He said, "Taking part never feels like work." In addition to his extracurricular activities, Michael is also an impressive student. Even with a host of AP and Honors courses ranging from Physics to Calculus under his belt, he still manages to maintain a perfect 4.00 GPA. According to his teachers, he is one of the brightest, most hard-working students in his class, always eager to master new material and tackle new challenges. A mature, respectful, and well-liked young man, Michael hopes to study Mechanical Engineering at City College of New York, New York University Tandon School of Engineering, or Cornell University, and if his future academic career is anything like high school – he is bound to succeed.

# JOHANNA CAMPOS

Entrepreneurship - **GOLD**

Major: Fashion Design and minor in Business

GPA: 4.00

High School: Huntington High School

Heritage: Salvadoran

Success in entrepreneurship often requires having a knack for understanding the wants and needs of a given market, and this is something Johanna Campos clearly has. When the pandemic began and the general public was being urged to wear masks, she quickly realized that this was a product she could sell. She put her sewing skills to use and immediately started making masks nonstop. However, though Johanna's business acumen is impressive, it's matched by her willingness and desire to give back. Community service runs in her blood, and both her mother and uncle passed along the importance of supporting the people around you, especially those in need. Whether it was driving a neighbor to the hospital at two in the morning, or organizing special events at their local church, her family's desire to help others has clearly permeated. That's why when her mask business began to take off, she decided to donate 100% of the proceeds to the people of El Salvador. Apart from designing and manufacturing the masks, Johanna also marketed them on social media, designed packaging, and created a policy of transparency to show her customers how the funds were being dispersed. On top of the pandemic, El Salvador had been hit with bad storms, leaving many on the streets. With over \$5,000 raised, she created baskets of clothes, groceries, vitamins, and medicine and partnered with a network of people, including the Red Cross in El Salvador to distribute not only the packages but also mattresses. The logistics of a project like this are immense, but for someone of Johanna's age, they are particularly impressive, which is why there is no doubt that she has success awaiting her in the future. Johanna is also outstanding academically, and even amid her extracurriculars, maintains a 4.00 GPA with a host of AP classes and acknowledgements under her belt. She plans to continue on her way to opening a business with a nonprofit arm by studying Fashion Design and minoring in Business at Fashion Institute of Technology, Cornell University, or Rhode Island School of Design.

## **SADALYS PEÑA**

Entrepreneurship - **SILVER**

Major: Business Administration and minor in Real Estate

GPA: 3.80

High School: All City Leadership Secondary School

Heritage: Dominican

Sadalys Peña first discovered her passion for business during an internship at a law firm, where she participated in mock contract negotiations between her client, a popular artist, and a record company. Though she took on opposing counsel excellently and agreed on a decision with her client, the experience taught her two things: first, that law was not for her, and second, that business definitely was. At the time, her high school did not offer any business electives, but what Sadalys learned didn't come from a book – it came from the front desk at her mother's small shop. She learned by observation, watching how her mother took inventory, managed the ladies with whom she worked, and networked with beauty product sellers. One could even say, she inherited her business potential from her mother. In her senior year, her high school offered a Business, Finance, and Marketing course, and Sadalys found herself infatuated by business and marketing. A career in entrepreneurship is no easy feat and requires dedication, leadership, and a hefty dose of fearlessness – all qualities Sadalys has. In addition to her business experience, she has shown her intelligence and leadership both inside and outside the classroom. Sadalys serves as her school's Student Body President, a seat she secured with relative ease, as her work tends to speak for itself. She is also deeply committed to giving back and is a member of her neighborhood's block association, the only teenager involved. Sadalys is a proud Dominican and believes, in her words, that "there will be no progress if we are not proud of sharing out culture with others. America is a melting pot, and it is our responsibility to bring the seasoning to the pot." Already a role model, her academic record speaks for itself. With a GPA of 3.8, a slew of AP classes to her name, and various awards and recognitions, she is well on her way to success. The next step? A degree in Business Administration with a minor in Real Estate at University of Southern California, New York University, or Washington University in St. Louis.

## **MIRANDA ZANONI**

Entrepreneurship - **BRONZE**

Major: Business

GPA: 4.00

High School: High School of American Studies at Lehman College

Heritage: Colombian

Miranda Zanoni was not the average eighth grader. While other girls her age may have been watching whatever was popular on television, Miranda was glued to the screen watching Shark Tank. Entrepreneurship has been at the forefront of her thoughts ever since, and the summer before her junior year, she participated in the Bossgirls Bootcamp, a joint program with the City University of New York and Standard Chartered Bank. With guidance from experts, she immersed herself in the world of business and entrepreneurship, learning about powerful women who had built their businesses from the ground up. As part of the program, Miranda and her team had to design a new business ideas. Their solution? Globaloka, a product that connected consumers to authentic cultural restaurants and experiences in their own city. According to Miranda, it was the diversity of her group and the city of New York that inspired the idea, and well-inspired it was, as they ultimately won the final pitch competition. Apart from her innovation, Miranda is also dedicated to giving back. For over a year, she has tutored seventh and eighth grade students in her school's Local Outreach Tutoring program, which prepares students for the Specialized High School Admissions Test. Miranda feels a special connection to the students she tutors because she was once one of them. A well-rounded individual, Miranda is also a member of her school's track team and thanks to her leadership skills became an unofficial team captain with a handful of other people. According to her teacher, Miranda's collaborative ability, her natural intelligence, and her diligence and commitment to her work are some of many traits that set her apart from her peers. This is clearly exemplified by her rigorous academic schedule and her perfect 4.00 GPA. In short, Miranda is a caring, conscientious young woman with bountiful energy and a deep desire to succeed. Her next step is a degree in Business from Columbia University, Georgetown University, or University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and after that? Well, we'll just have to wait and see.

## **DOMINIQUE GOODEN**

Healthcare & Science - **GOLD**

Major: Neurobiology or Cell/Molecular Biology

GPA: 3.78

High School: Storm King School

Heritage: Panamanian

Dominique's passion for healthcare was born from being on the patient-side of the interaction as a neurosurgery patient. The knowledge she acquired from the physicians and researchers who managed her treatment fueled her desire to help others like her. Since then, she has dived deeper into the STEM subjects to equip herself for a future career in healthcare, taking classes such as Biochemistry Techniques, which were offered at her high school. But Dominique has never been one to back away from a challenge, so she enrolled in the New York University Science Technology Entry Program (STEP), which helped expand her knowledge and pursue research along qualified mentors in the field. Every Saturday, she and her research team would discuss ideas, create health surveys, presentations, and abstracts, and their hard work paid off when they were able to present their findings at STEM expos across New York City. Part of what drives Dominique and so many others to careers in healthcare is the opportunity to give back. She has already shown this capacity in many ways, serving as a peer tutor and eventually co-leading her school's National Honor Society peer tutoring program. She has also showcased exceptional leadership skills as the Junior Class President and a senior member of the Student Council. According to Dominique's teacher, she is an insightful, articulate, and incredibly clever young woman, always willing to engage in meaningful discussion and lend a helping hand to her peers. Her growth throughout her high school career have shown confidence and maturity, and there is no doubt that she will meet her lofty goals. With a GPA of 3.78 and a wide range of AP and Honors courses under her belt, Dominique plans to study Neurobiology or Cell/Microbiology at Fisk University, Howard University, or University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## **LUSANGELIS RAMOS**

Healthcare & Science - **SILVER**

Major: Neuroscience and minor in Political Science

GPA: 4.00

High School: Rachel Carson High School

Heritage: Venezuelan

Lusangelis's interest in neuroscience is an ironic "no-brainer" for her. As a member of the International Youth Neuroscience association, she has taken various summer introductory courses and delved into neuroscientific research. Absolutely fascinated by the way the brain works, she hopes to be able to contribute to the transformation of the world of medicine. Lusangelis's research has spanned from Parkinson's disease to the connection between the human microbiome and neurodegenerative disorders, in an attempt to reach beyond what is already known. However, her interest in healthcare goes beyond her love and curiosity for neuroscience. In fact, her proud Latina heritage plays a strong role. According to her, Latinas are largely underrepresented in healthcare and STEM fields, and she hopes to serve as a role model and inspiration to other young Latinas that may not have considered careers in these roles. According to Lusangelis's chemistry teacher, she possesses a quiet confidence and a deeply ingrained motivation to always commit her best to everything she does. And that's clearly evident in her academic record, as well. With a 4.00 GPA and a roster replete with AP and Honors classes, she has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for learning, even in the midst of a pandemic. Lusangelis is also grateful for opportunities to give back to her community. In fact, she has further honed her leadership and collaboration skills by volunteering to be the student coordinator for her district's Black History Month Event. Despite the difficulty of ensuring the event ran smoothly, Lusangelis was thrilled with the result, and it is this dedication that prepares her so well for her future academic and professional endeavors. Lusangelis plans to continue her academic trajectory and major in Neuroscience with a minor in Political Science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia University, or Yale University. Wherever she winds up, her positive attitude and dedication will certainly serve her well.

## **ISABELLA IPPOLITO**

Healthcare & Science - **BRONZE**

Major: Cell Biology/Molecular Biology/Neurobiology and minor in Spanish

GPA: 4.00

High School: Victor Senior High School

Heritage: Mexican

Isabella Ippolito has a natural affinity for the organic world, as well as helping others. Her introduction to the world of healthcare came from her high school's Medical Explorers Club, which showcases various medical techniques and technology – all things that piqued her interest and encouraged her to learn more about the strategies and machines that help keep people alive and healthy. Isabella has immense compassion for healthcare workers and sees their commitment to others as something that she too embodies. From an academic perspective, she is also fascinated by science and thoroughly enjoys learning about life systems all the way down to the molecular level. Science is a means of exploring the patterns in the world, and Isabella is already on her journey. Her compassion is also self-evident in her volunteer work. As part of Cares Club, a club offered at her school that works to provide support for people in the community, she has put together care packages and delivered them to families in need. She is also the President of the Wellness Club, an organization dedicated to providing a supportive refuge for those in need emotionally. With the ongoing pandemic, mental health support is needed now more than ever, and Isabella's compassion and commitment to helping others is one of the reasons the club has been so successful. In addition to her achievements outside the classroom, Isabella is also an academically gifted student. According to her teachers, she sets clear goals for the future, exhibits impressive leadership capabilities, and her positive and warm attitude make her loved and admired by peers and teachers alike. With a perfect 4.00 GPA, Isabella is primed for the rigors of a degree in Cell Biology, Molecular Biology, or Neurobiology and a minor in Spanish in whatever program she chooses. She plans to attend University of Rochester, Colgate University, or SUNY Binghamton to continue her education and move forward on her quest to provide quality support and care to others.

## **NATALIE DE LA CRUZ**

Media & Entertainment - **GOLD**

Major: Film under an animation concentration, Illustration or Animation

GPA: 4.00

High School: Notre Dame School

Heritage: Ecuadorian, Puerto Rican, Dominican and Guatemalan

Isabella Ippolito has a natural affinity for the organic world, as well as helping others. Her introduction to the world of healthcare came from her high school's Medical Explorers Club, which showcases various medical techniques and technology - all things that piqued her interest and encouraged her to learn more about the strategies and machines that help keep people alive and healthy. Isabella has immense compassion for healthcare workers and sees their commitment to others as something that she too embodies. From an academic perspective, she is also fascinated by science and thoroughly enjoys learning about life systems all the way down to the molecular level. Science is a means of exploring the patterns in the world, and Isabella is already on her journey. Her compassion is also self-evident in her volunteer work. As part of Cares Club, a club offered at her school that works to provide support for people in the community, she has put together care packages and delivered them to families in need. She is also the President of the Wellness Club, an organization dedicated to providing a supportive refuge for those in need emotionally. With the ongoing pandemic, mental health support is needed now more than ever, and Isabella's compassion and commitment to helping others is one of the reasons the club has been so successful. In addition to her achievements outside the classroom, Isabella is also an academically gifted student. According to her teachers, she sets clear goals for the future, exhibits impressive leadership capabilities, and her positive and warm attitude make her loved and admired by peers and teachers alike. With a perfect 4.00 GPA, Isabella is primed for the rigors of a degree in Cell Biology, Molecular Biology, or Neurobiology and a minor in Spanish in whatever program she chooses. She plans to attend University of Rochester, Colgate University, or SUNY Binghamton to continue her education and move forward on her quest to provide quality support and care to others.

## **DANIEL VENTURA**

Media & Entertainment - **SILVER**

Major: Jazz Studies - Piano / Music Technology

GPA: 4.00

High School: North Kingstown Senior High School

Heritage: Portuguese

Music brings immense joy to Daniel Ventura's life, and he sees it as the perfect outlet to express himself. In fact, its sharing that music that he finds so captivating and rewarding – to see it fill and affect its listeners in a way nothing else can. According to his music teacher, Daniel is the single-most gifted student he has ever worked with in his 22 years of teaching at North Kingstown High School. Although he spends much of his free time in the music department, Daniel also excels academically. His schedule is rife with demanding Honors and AP courses, and he is a member of the Engineering CTE program, as well as on the Robotics team. As impressive as his resume reads, it is Daniel's humble demeanor that makes him stand out. Despite being annually ranked as the number one student jazz pianist in the state since seventh grade, he seeks no fame or credit for the music he adores. Yet his confidence shines through in every performance. In fact, his teacher and conductor calls him the heart and soul of his high school's jazz program, always eager and willing to help his classmates and serve as an example. Daniel is also deeply committed to serving his community and has participated in numerous musical performances to support charities, fundraisers, school functions, and other public events in his area. Ultimately what Daniel loves most is bringing joy to others, and fortunately his exceptional talents allow him to do just that. With a host of AP classes ranging from Music Theory to Computer Science, Daniel's strong academic standing – he maintains a 4.00 GPA – combined with his artistic prowess result in an extremely well-rounded individual. He has also been the recipient of various academic and musical awards, and hopes to continue inspiring others through his musical talents by studying Jazz Studies – Piano or Music Technology at Indiana University Bloomington, Oberlin College, or McGill University.

## **MAYA DELMONT**

Media & Entertainment - **BRONZE**

Major: Women and Gender Studies and minor in Music

GPA: 4.00

High School: Institute for Collaborative Education

Heritage: Venezuelan

At her very core, Maya Delmont is an artist. In fact, her interest in acting, music, writing, and drawing has been around for as long as she can remember. For the last six years, she has been a professional actress, working on feature films, short films, and theatrical productions. She learned to play the piano at the ripe old age of five, then adopted violin for the next eight years, which later morphed into guitar and bass lessons that continue to this day. In tenth grade, Maya started an original punk rock band with two other girls, and the three play at professional venues, even traveling to two other states for performances. Apart from her experience as an artist of various sorts, Maya is also a compassionate, self-motivated, and community-oriented young woman with the capacity to dig deep into the human experience and convey it with insight and beauty. Through writing workshops with Writopia, Maya honed her craft and enthusiasm for storytelling, with her work often underscoring the importance of social justice and equity. A skilled public speaker, who engages her audience with poise and wit, Maya is also a valuable member of her high school's internship program, where she assists instructors in weekly workshops and served as a role model for young writers. Fierce in her convictions, funny, diligent, and sensitive, she is well-loved by both peers and supervisors and evokes a warm, honest presence wherever she goes. In addition to her artistic endeavors, Maya also boasts an exceptional academic record. She is a straight-A student, maintaining a perfect 4.00 GPA amid various college level and honors courses, and hopes to continue her studies at Smith College, Wesleyan University, or Ithaca College, where she hopes to pursue a degree in Women and Gender Studies with a minor in Music. With talent like hers, we can't wait to see where her journey will take her next.

## **TIFFANY RODRÍGUEZ**

Public Service - **GOLD**

Major: Political Science

GPA: 4.00

High School: Archbishop Molloy High School

Heritage: Colombian

Tiffany Rodríguez is many things: humble, conscientious, and committed, but it is her dedication to others that makes her truly stand out. In the summer before her junior year, she was offered the chance to participate in the Hispanic National Bar Foundation 2019 Future Latino Leaders Summer Law Institute, a prestigious program that let her interview and seek advice from different types of lawyers in Washington, DC. The experience was eye-opening for her, and she quickly realized that no matter the direction she chooses, what matters most is her dedication and the work she is willing to put in. As a proud Latina, Tiffany looks to role models like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez as inspiration for her future. She hopes to fulfill a similar role, first becoming a lawyer, and then using her platform to serve the public. Tiffany has given back to her community in various ways already – through her school, she has tutored her peers in Algebra, French and Spanish, and off campus, she reads to young children at her local library during the summer. One particularly exceptional example of her willingness to give back is her participation in the Peer Group program at her school where she serves as a Peer Group Leader, mentoring and counseling younger students at her school. Tiffany is an A+ student, with a 4.00 GPA, a wealth of upper-level coursework, and an NHS membership to boot. Bilingual in both English and Spanish, she also decided to take three years of French, and dedicated to this trend of “threes” squeezed three AP classes into her schedule (the maximum allowed) as both a junior and senior. When a tone-deaf social media post was published by the school in an attempt to express solidarity after the murder of George Floyd, Tiffany was one of the first selected to join a student group intended to advise the school. According to Tiffany, the Hispanic/Latinx community is one with an unbreakable bond, but they are tired. Fortunately, we have strong and capable youth leaders like Tiffany to help us move forward, take advantage of the opportunities she is given, and effect change on a global scale. Tiffany plans to continue on her journey into politics by studying Political Science at Boston University, Columbia University, or Fordham University.

## **MARLEN MENDIETA-CAMARÓN**

Public Service - **SILVER**

Major: Political Science and International Relations and minor in Latino Studies

GPA: 3.94

High School: Midwood High School at Brooklyn College

Heritage: Mexican

Marlen's career wish-list has changed and adapted over the years. At age 7, she wanted to be a teacher; at 12, she considered being a doctor; at 15, she thought she'd be a gynecologist; only a year later, she'd changed tack to pursue lobbying; and now she's refined that goal and is focusing on becoming an education equity lobbyist. Though varying titles, the thread remains the same: she wants to empower others and support change for underserved communities. Activism and service to others is the driving force behind Marlen's career goals, and she is deeply involved in her community. Through her work with Teens Take Charge, she and a team member helped plan a school strike to fight for educational equity. Amid chants of "Integrate NOW" and "Education is a right, not just for the rich and white", she felt emotion overtake her – this is what she was meant to do. Public service can at times seem daunting, and Marlen is no stranger to feelings of hopelessness, but with steps both big and small comes change, and she is more committed than ever. As Operations Leader for Teens Take Charge, she continues to create spaces where social justice can take place and push for equitable opportunities of leadership for people of color. In addition to being a staunch activist, Marlen is also deeply proud of her Hispanic heritage and community. She has always been taught that family is everything – and they, and only they – are the ones she should rely on. While family is still a cornerstone of her life, her work in activism has proven that fighting to define and engage with a community of people from different backgrounds has incredible benefits. And in many ways, members should be able to rely on their wider community, as well. In addition to her exceptional extracurricular activities, Marlen maintains an outstanding 3.94 GPA amid a range of upper-level courses spanning AP English to AP Macroeconomics. She plans to continue her activism and study Political Science and International Relations with a minor in Latino Studies at Macalester College.

## **NANAMI SANTA CRUZ**

Public Service - **BRONZE**

Major: Criminal Justice and minor in Psychology

GPA: 4.00

High School: Townsend Harris High School

Heritage: Peruvian

Nanami's identity has been shaped by her immigration journey and hybrid heritage. Born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Peruvian father, she has truly internalized the norms and values of both countries. When she moved to New York City at the age of five, she had no English language skills and was faced with her first challenge. Within two years, Nanami had mastered English, and she is now thriving as a top performing student. In fact, Nanami's academic results speak for themselves – she is a straight-A student despite embarking on rigorous curricula, and is extremely invested in serving community. In fact, public service forms a large part of Nanami's extracurricular activities. A member of her high school's Senate, she was elected to represent her history class and advocate for on behalf of her peers' concerns. She also volunteered at a phone bank as Election Day approached to remind people to vote and answer questions about absentee ballots and candidate policies. Nanami's commitment to her community does not solely hinge on government. She also regularly volunteers at the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, dedicated to feed the hungry and homeless populations in New York City, is part of the data-gathering team for Student Wellness Club at her high school, and has competed as a member of her volleyball team. Her superior mathematics abilities earned Nanami a spot in the prestigious Mu Alpha Theta honor society, and her hefty range of AP courses and 4.00 GPA illustrate just how impressive her academic prowess truly is. Nanami hopes to continue serving the public and her community by studying Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology at New York University, Binghamton University, or Pennsylvania State University.

## **AVA BAEZA**

Social Justice - **GOLD**

Major: Women and Gender Studies and minor in Hispanic Studies

GPA: 4.00

High School: Camden Hills Regional High School

Heritage: Cuban and Chilean

If Ava Baeza is one thing, it's committed. Committed to her studies, to giving back to her community, and to embracing and embodying her proud Latina heritage, all while cultivating an outstanding academic prowess. A passionate activist, Ava has explored her social responsibility through her work with the League of Women Voters of Maine, where she learned the ins and outs of voter engagement while co-moderating a candidate forum for a Maine U.S. Senate race. Soon after, she set up a voter registration and helped all eligible seniors register to vote. Her success got her an invitation to sit on a voter engagement panel at the Blaine House – Maine's Governor's Mansion – in Augusta, where she was the only student sitting alongside a Colby College professor and a city council member. These experiences introduced her to Maine's political leaders and have served as a foundation for her to lead others in fighting for positive change in government. Ava also serves as Co-President of the Maine Teen Advocacy Coalition, which has enabled her to stay active and fight for social justice within her own community. For instance, when the realities of COVID-19 became stark and many of her extracurricular activities had been sidelined, she initiated a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest with over 150 students and community members joining in. Ava's teachers are also extremely impressed with her resourcefulness and commitment to justice. The Gifted and Talented Program Coordinator at her high school says that Ava is naturally curious, especially about politics and civil rights issues, passionate, and meticulous. Her transcripts also reveal her drive and willingness to take on a challenge: with a perfect 4.00 GPA combined with extremely challenging coursework, including the AP Capstone series, she has shown time and again that success is well within her reach. Ava plans to continue her fight for equality and justice by studying Women and Gender Studies with a minor in Hispanic Studies at Wesleyan University, Bowdoin College, or Brown University.

## **PEYTON HALL**

Social Justice - **SILVER**

Major: Biology and Chemistry

GPA: 3.75

High School: Half Hollow Hills High School West

Heritage: Puerto Rican

Peyton Hall is a woman of action, integrity, and a commitment to justice, particularly when it comes to issues of racism in the United States. After reading about how Black women are up to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes, she dove into research regarding racism permeating women's healthcare in the United States. But research in and of itself can only accomplish so much. Since she completed her study, she has continued to advocate for maternal health equity by sharing her findings with organizations such as Jack and Jill of Suffolk County and at various town halls through the Women's Diversity Network. In addition to advocacy, she intends to become an OB-GYN, a profession where she can have a direct impact on the mental and physical well-being of Black women and other women of color and ensure equitable treatment. Women's health isn't her only passion – this past summer, in the height of the pandemic, the news of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and several others left Peyton feeling devastated and overwhelmed, like so many. She knew she couldn't sit idly by and felt called to do something. So, she did. After initiating an email to the superintendent, Peyton developed and distributed surveys to BIPOC students and families in her district. After results showed a majority had encountered some form of discrimination in the school district, she devised a 5-point plan to address the issues, involving creating an inter-district committee to address implicit bias and foster disclosure. She presented her findings to the superintendent with smashing success, and she was invited to curriculum writing sessions with English teachers to diversify literature throughout the district. As if that weren't impressive enough, Peyton is also the leader of two clubs – Women's Empowerment Initiative and the African-American Student Organization – and regularly volunteers her time to the community. She is also an exceptional student with a 3.75 GPA and a course load filled with AP courses ranging from Biology to United States History. She plans to continue her academic endeavors by studying Biology and Chemistry at Georgetown University, University of Southern California, or University of Virginia.

# GÉNESIS MÁRQUEZ CAMPOS

Social Justice - **BRONZE**

Major: Nursing

GPA: 4.00

High School: Claremont Academy

Heritage: Salvadoran

According to her teacher, Génesis Márquez Campos is a supremely hard worker, always looking for ways to go above and beyond what is asked of her. Persistent and unfailing in her pursuit of excellence both inside the classroom and out, she refuses to settle for anything less than the best she is able to offer. Even more so than her undeniable work ethic, he says, he admires Génesis for her passion for others and her unending commitment to helping her classmates unprompted. Her commitment to others is clear in the work she has managed to accomplish even in the few short years of high school. In 2020, she and her peers started a nonprofit organization aimed at uplifting a local low-income community. Recognized as founder and president, she raised hundreds of dollars for homeless outreach in her community, also facilitating and organizing clothing and fresh produce drives for families in need. Founding a nonprofit is no easy task, and it's clear that Génesis has remarkable leadership skills, but as she says, being a leader is not always easy. Fortunately, she seems more than up to the task. As a Hispanic immigrant, Génesis says she is constantly promoting her cultural pride – “no matter where you come from,” she says, “you should always try your best because you are not only representing yourself but an entire community”. In her case, she represents her proud Salvadoran heritage, and the best she can offer is absolutely exceptional. In addition to her extracurricular activities, Génesis maintains a perfect 4.00 GPA with a course load packed with AP classes ranging from Biology and Statistics to Research. Social justice and advocacy are clearly immensely important to her, and she hopes to continue helping those who need it most by pursuing a career in nursing, though she is considering a pre-med track. Génesis hopes to attend College of the Holy Cross, Harvard University, or Boston College to continue her path toward making the world a better place.

## **NADEYA DE DIAGO**

Technology - **GOLD**

Major: Computer Science

GPA: 4.00

High School: Maria Regina High School

Heritage: Peruvian

STEM fields require intellectual curiosity, inquisitiveness, and a propensity for problem-solving, all traits that Nadeya De Diago embodies. A diligent and determined student, her passion for computer science stems from her aspirations to use technology to develop innovative ways of solving problems within and beyond her community. Nadeya was first introduced to computer science through her participation in the Tiger Tech and Tiger Coding clubs at her high school. As part of a project in the club, she helped develop a bracelet designed to alert its wearer of possible dehydration and remind them to drink water. This is just one of many examples that demonstrate Nadeya's incredible innovation and resourcefulness. Nadeya is no stranger to hardship, but according to her, this is one of the reasons she feels so dedicated to helping to others - she understands how it feels to be on the receiving end. Always looking for ways to give back, Nadeya is a strong proponent of community service and she says "as little as any action may seem, there is always someone looking for your love and kindness". One of her most memorable experiences was when she helped a family from Colombia who were short on resources apply for a scholarship for their daughter. In addition to her extracurricular activities, Nadeya is an impressive student, maintaining a perfect 4.00 GPA and serving as president of Tiger Tech, where she can be found encouraging and teaching girls to engage with coding. She also boasts an impressive course load of AP classes ranging from Calculus to Psychology, and has been recognized with various awards including National Italian Honor Society, National Italian Examination: Gold Medalist, and National Honor Society. She hopes to continue her pursuit of a career in Computer Science at New York University, Cornell University, or Columbia University.

TECHNOLOGY PRESENTED BY **T-MOBILE**

## **MARÍA AZCONA BÁEZ**

Technology - **SILVER**

Major: Chemical Engineering and minoring in Computer Science

GPA: 4.00

High School: Academy for Science and Design

Heritage: Dominican

María was introduced to computing and technology in fifth grade when her class had to complete one of the “Hour of Code” exercises, exposing her to block-based programming languages. Although interested in computer science when she was young, she fully immersed herself in the subject in ninth grade, when she took Foundations of Computer Science, and engaged with various topics including HTML and Python. With her new knowledge in Python, María made mini-games and expanded her knowledge in the coding language through Code Academy. Her interest in the field of computer science was further fueled through her participation in the MIT Beaver Works Summer Institute, where she had to use Python to program a racecar to autonomously complete an obstacle course, which helped her understand how object-oriented programming works. María’s dedication to learning more and helping others with their learning is evident from tutoring Algebra, as well as being a teacher’s assistant for an Honors Chemistry Class. Whether assisting with grading homework and tests, or setting up and supervising labs, María feels passionate about guiding younger children in their learning pursuit. Her academic achievements speak for themselves, with a perfect GPA of 4.00, as well as winning several academic awards including AP Scholar with Distinction, a National Merit Scholarship, a Certificate of Merit from the Society of Women Engineers and the Highest Honor Roll. With several AP classes to her name, María is well equipped to excel in her further studies of chemical engineering and computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, California Institute of Technology or University of Rochester.

# **ASHLEY GARCIA CERVANTES**

Technology - **BRONZE**

Major: Computer Engineering

GPA: 4.00

High School: Uniondale High School

Heritage: Ecuadoran

Ashley Garcia Cervantes grew up in a developing country with limited access to technology. When she moved to the US, she was suddenly surrounded by it, and what began as curiosity has bloomed into a passion for knowledge, learning, and innovation. She started watching videos about algorithms and data science in her free time, and this past summer, she participated in the Girls Who Code immersion program, where she learned even more about different styles and coding languages. As a bilingual speaker, reading and writing in a foreign language is a skill she had long ago achieved, so tackling Python and other coding languages was a challenge she was primed for. In Ashley's own words, technology is a field that is constantly and rapidly evolving, but she is dedicated to exploring and learning about it for the rest of her life. Ashley has demonstrated strong leadership skills as the Secretary of the National Honor Society at Uniondale High School, as well as her willingness to give back to her community. She has volunteered as a junior friend at the public library, where she has assisted in serving food for children and their families, reading to younger children, and teaching reading and writing to older children in the community. This experience has taught her patience, perseverance, and problem-solving skills, all necessary qualities for a successful engineering student. A straight-A student, Ashley has excelled academically with a GPA of 4.00, and participated in a host of AP classes, including Physics 1: Algebra-based, Research, Statistics, Spanish Language and Culture, Language and Composition, and Seminar. Ashley wants to continue pursuing her passion for technology, by studying computer engineering at Hofstra University, Stony Brook University or Farmingdale State College.