



***Dorothy O. Finley
Outstanding Teen Citizens***

2020

Top 10 Outstanding Teens



**METROPOLITAN
EDUCATION
COMMISSION**

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards

Preface

Dorothy O. Finley

July 13, 1920 – February 20, 2013

As a strong supporter of education and youth, Dorothy O. Finley dedicated her life to community leadership for Tucson's future.

Dorothy was born on a ranch in Douglas, AZ on July 13, 1920. Dorothy grew up on Arizona ranches until the age of 14 when her family sent her to high school in Pasadena, CA. She returned to Tucson and attended the University of Arizona where she graduated with honors from the College of Education. During that time, she belonged to many organizations and was a proud letterwoman. At the age of 40, she obtained her M.S. Ed from the U of A.

Her teaching career began in 1943 at Wakefield Junior High and later Pueblo Gardens Elementary School, where she was principal between 1961-1974. She then accepted a principal position at Schumaker Elementary where she retired in 1980. After retirement, Dorothy continued her strong support for education and for children in Tucson, Arizona and the United States. She was a role model for Tucson and Pima County's young citizens as they assume their leadership roles in our community.

The Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards were established in 1994 through a partnership between the Metropolitan Education Commission and the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Department to recognize students who have overcome significant hardships, are involved in their community, exhibit positive leadership, and rebound from adversity by becoming more successful academically, socially, and personally.

**Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Honorees**

2020

OUTSTANDING TEEN CITIZENS

Abdullah Jamal, Rincon High School, Tucson Unified School District

*Azariyah Gulley, Tucson High School, Tucson Unified School District

Daniel Garcia, Sunnyside High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

Diana Ojeda, Rincon High School, Tucson Unified School District

*Irlando Reyes, Star Academic High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

Raphael Abeytia, Flowing Wells High School, Flowing Wells Unified School
District

Skylar Petz, Presidio High School, Presidio School District

Trevor Lusk, Pantano High School, Vail Unified School District

Yasmine Galindo, Teenage Parent High School, Tucson Unified School District

Yaxiri Ortiz, Sunnyside High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

***Crystal Apple Youth Award Honoree**

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Abdullah Jamal
Rincon High School, Tucson Unified School District

Abdullah Jamal is participating in the Upward Bound program for high school students. He attends Upward Bound while simultaneously attending Rincon High School. This young man has done an amazing job to overcome his personal hardship. When Abdullah was born his safety and the future security of his education was unknown. His family applied for refugee status and finally he and his family were approved to come to the United States. Even as young as 6 years old, he remembered how safe he felt arriving in his new country. The happiest day in my life was when he became a naturalized citizen.

However, when Abdullah first started elementary school, he participated in English Language Learner classes for which he was bullied for being different and this was very painful for Abdullah. As he learned English, he began to understand how to communicate with the bully for which they eventually became friends. What he learned the most from this experience, is the power of being kind and welcoming to others. As a participant in the Upward Bound program at Pima Community College downtown campus, Mr. Jamal contributed in the Pima County Extension/University of Arizona Healthy Living Ambassador program. Also, he participated in the University of Arizona Village Farm project picking vegetables for local citizens in need of healthy food. Furthermore, Abdullah, with his upward bound peers, participated in the University of Arizona Credit Wise Cats program about financial literacy.

Abdullah Jamal is a kind individual who welcomes the friendship of others. It is an honor to nominate him for the 2020 Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award.

Submitted by:
Joy E Barr
Rincon High School
Upward Bound Program

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Azariyah Gulley
Tucson High School, Tucson Unified School District

It is my pleasure to nominate Azariyah Gulley for the 2020 Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards. When I read the requirements of your award, I instantly thought of her, as she is one of the most resilient and caring teens I know. She is black and proud of it, and on her campus at Tucson Magnet High School, that puts her in a visible minority, as only four percent of our ~3,500 students are black. She is overcoming many hardships, including the death of her mother around two years ago, and currently being kicked out of her dad's home. She spends her free time volunteering at the Boys and Girls Clubs here in Tucson. She is a model of positive leadership, both in class and the community. I teach English at Tucson Magnet High School, and Azariyah truly stands out among my freshmen for so many reasons. She is mature, hard-working, and truly puts her best effort into all we do in class. I love reading her writing assignments because she is an excellent writer who puts her heart and soul, and plenty of sly humor, into whatever she writes.

Azariyah spends almost all of her free time, every day after school, doing what she loves most, which is volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club. She's attended their programs since age seven, and the director, Michael, is a role model who is "like family." She has been helping out since age seven, but started volunteering regularly and taking on a bigger leadership role at age 13, over a year ago. Every day, she gives her whole afternoon to helping the kids with their programs, with discipline, and with their social skills. I love that she devotes so much time and effort to paying it forward to other kids. Unfortunately, Azariyah faces many microaggressions in class, as her peers in class are mostly male and none are black. She deals with it admirably: she stands up for herself in a way that shows she will not tolerate disrespect from anyone. She is never mean, but always assertive, and for me that makes her a role model for all womankind. She has a mature self-regard that must be hard-earned from years of dealing with such nonsense. In addition to those daily burdens, she has survived her mother's death.

I so admire her for persevering through all she has and still thriving at school, respecting herself, and giving her time and her positive energies to disadvantaged kids. Please consider her for this award!

Submitted by:
Abbie McCracken
Teacher
Tucson High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Daniel Garcia
Sunnyside High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

Although I only met Daniel Garcia at the beginning of the year, he immediately left an impression that is difficult to replace. Every afternoon, I am given an opportunity to meet with this scholar and it is through our informal sessions, I have come to learn his incredible story. His resilience in the face of great difficulty and his dedication to his education and to his community is evident in every venture he commits himself to and is the reason I believe he is deserving of the Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award. He is an inspiration to me and a reminder of what good can be accomplished despite the challenges.

As a young boy, Daniel enjoyed a life of luxury in Mexico. With both parents providing for him, he was the envy of most children as he had everything he could possibly desire. This all changed when his parents divorced and his father came to the United States. His mother scrambled to make ends meet and started working long nights. Daniel lost what he had grown accustomed to, but gained a new set of values; values that honored hard work and dedication. He knew that although he did not have the material items he used to, he had food on the table and that meant more.

Daniel dedicated that work ethic to his education, but his schooling was threatened as he entered junior high. During his middle school years in Mexico, gang members began approaching him and coercing him into committing wrongdoing. The more he refused, the more dangerous it became. By the end of his seventh grade year, it had escalated and the threat became final: if Daniel did not do what was asked, he would be shot. His mother immediately packed up his things and sent him across the border to live with his father; a man he had not seen in nearly ten years.

Daniel dreaded leaving and had an initially rocky start to his schooling. He did not speak the language and struggled in classes due to that barrier. Additionally, he was experiencing a culture shock unlike any other. To ease the transition, Daniel was encouraged to get involved which was advice that he took to heart. He threw himself into his studies and by the end of his eight grade year, he had learned English and by his sophomore year in high school, had transitioned into the Honors and Advanced Placement English courses. As he acclimated to the environment, he became more involved in his school community. As an active volunteer, he participates as a member of the YES Club, Upward Bound Talent Search (TRiO), and National Honor Society. Additionally, he serves as the Historian for the Biotechnology Program.

Daniel has told me that thinking about his past saddens him and I have asked if he feels any relief when he thinks about how much he has accomplished. He tells me this, "Miss, I know that had I stayed in Mexico, I would not be alive today. Because when someone is out to damage you or your family, it will happen. I am just glad to be alive today and to be able to take advantage of everything there is to offer." In the fall, Daniel will attend the University of Arizona to study Molecular and Cellular Biology with a minor in Biochemistry. I am left with an indescribable sense of awe at how far this young scholar has come despite the odds and I have the greatest admiration and respect for everything Daniel has earned. His resilience in the face of insurmountable difficulties, his compassion for his community, and his inexhaustible work ethic is the reason I believe he deserves this recognition. He is an inspiration to anyone who meets him.

Submitted by:
Danielle Khambholja
Counselor
Sunnyside High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards Diana Ojeda

Rincon High School, Tucson Unified School District

I am pleased to recommend Diana Ojeda for the 2020 Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards. I had the privilege to meet Diana when she came to my office last year; she was told by the College and Career Counselor that I could help her. Diana said “Miss, I have no immigration status, I want to go to college and I know that you can help me to make that happen”. I was impressed with her honesty and boldness and I decided that I would do whatever it was on my power to help this young lady to fulfill her academic goals.

Diana’s father came to Unites States and left her behind when she was 8 months old; during that time, she lived with her mom and grandmother to whom she adored. Although she was really little when she left Mexico to join her father, she was 4 years old, she remembered crying because she was leaving behind a loved one. Her parents have been very supportive and do whatever they can to give her the best. Unfortunately, when she was in sixth grade she became aware of their immigration status when her father was arrested and sent to jail and treated as a criminal. Diana remembers the fear of not seeing her father again and cried every night and was troubled and anxious about their future; she also saw the struggles her mother had to face because there was nobody else leading their household. In spite of her young age, Diana decided that from that moment on she would follow every rule and would do her best at school, at home and in the community. She also realized that even though that moment was difficult to endure, there was always a tomorrow; she seemed to gain wisdom from these hard events. Her father was released and giving a working permit, but the struggles the family faced during that time, forced Diana to be exposed to a system of injustice.

Diana qualified to be a DACA recipient on August 2017 but due to the political climate, by the time she gathered her information to submit her application on September 2017, the government ruled that no new DACA applicants would be accepted. Once again, with her heart broken, she continued to do the best she could and continue to do the right thing and follow the rules as a good citizen. Diana is a remarkable 12th grade student; she holds a 3.9 GPA, participates in extracurricular activities such as sports, College Club, Student and Site Councils; she is the Vice President of the Rincon HS DACA support group and of the National Honor Society.

I have coached her regarding scholarships and higher education’s choices. She has applied to various colleges and universities and has been accepted to GCU, University of New Mexico, Himline University, Central College in Iowa and she is still waiting for other schools to respond so she can decide where she is going. Her academic goal is to study Law, Criminal Law in particular because she noticed that most of the undocumented cases are treated in the Criminal courts; she wants to be sure that undocumented people are treated fairly and humanely. She knows first-hand what is like to be treated unfairly due to immigration status. Diana greatest fear is to be deported, “I grew up here in the USA, I call this place my home”. “I always prepared for the worse so if the best happens it is all good but if the worse happens then I have prepared for it.” I saw Diana holding back tears.

I see Diana as a “Comeback Teen”, although she is facing many challenges, she is honest, brave and always ready to do the right thing and help others. She is wise and wants to help others, her desire is to fight for fairness and justice for those that cannot do it for themselves. I have great respect for this young lady, and I hope you consider this nomination.

**Submitted by:
Juana Ambrose Office Manager, Rincon High School**

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards

Irlando Reyes

Star Academic High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

I am thrilled to nominate Irlando Reyes of Star Academic High School for the Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award. I have taught Irlando for two years at Star Academic High School, and he is truly an outstanding student and member of our school community. Irlando is thoughtful, considerate, polite, and helpful. He is one of the best students I have ever taught in my career.

Irlando has been a member of our student leadership group since I became its advisor in 2018. As a member of the group, he has served as my classroom teaching assistant, helping our student members to complete their work for the class managing the room when I have been absent.

Irlando has faced several challenges in his young life, not the least of which is his mother being deported by ICE last September. As one of 13 siblings, he is largely responsible for helping raise his eight sisters and 4 brothers. In addition to losing the presence of his mother, he lost his aunt, who passed away last month, leaving him even more responsible for tending to his younger siblings.

Irlando has participated in several community activities through our student leadership group, including running a blood drive, a library card sign-up event, and a voter registration drive. He also has attended several leadership conferences in Tucson. In short, Irlando says “yes” to anything that is asked of him, even if it increases the load of responsibility he shoulders.

Irlando and his family have faced homelessness, a challenge exacerbated by having such a large family and needing affordable housing that is an adequate size for his family. Despite his personal challenges, Irlando is an A student who has excellent attendance. He has won numerous awards at Star for his attendance and his grades and has been nominated by several teachers for the Outstanding Student of the Term award.

I not only enjoy having Irlando as a member of my student leadership team; I enjoy having him as a student in my English class. Irlando is engaged, prepared, and eager in his education. He understands that education will be the key to his eventual success and is serious about doing well enough in school to obtain a scholarship to further his education after high school.

Submitted by:
Tara Baxter
Teacher
Star Academic High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Raphael Abeytia

Flowing Wells High School, Flowing Wells Unified School District

Raphael Abeytia has had a handful of challenging experiences during high school that he has persevered through. During his freshman year, he fractured five neck vertebrae while competing for the Flowing Wells High School swim team. He had to wear a neck brace for three months, have bimonthly x-rays, and went through three months of physical therapy. It was a challenge physically but also emotionally and socially. It was a hard set of circumstances to handle while also trying to make connections, transition to high school and find his social circle.

Raphael also had to endure the divorce of his parents after eighteen years of marriage. It was devastating to him because he felt it was not an expected or a desired outcome. As a result, his relationship with his father has been somewhat sporadic, and his family's financial situation changed drastically. Raphael has moved three times in three years. In addition to the expected teenage emotional adjustments, Raphael also became comfortable with his sexuality and has come out as a gay man to close family and friends. The reception has not always been welcoming or accepting, but Raphael has grown as a person from dealing with each of those situations.

Raphael is an outstanding student. He has maintained a 4.0 grade point average all four years while being involved in Academic Decathlon, National Honor Society, College 101 Club, drama, swimming, and tennis. He placed 2nd at SARSEF for an engineering project his freshman year where he developed an adaptive spoon for neck injury patients. He also took part in the University of Arizona Ted McGuire Entrepreneurial Camp. Raphael was accepted to the Cesar Chavez Leadership Academy at Arizona State University and Boys' State at Northern Arizona University. He chose to attend Boys' State as both opportunities occurred the same week. One of Raphael's biggest accomplishments in high school was being named a National Hispanic Merit Scholar. Aside from academics, he loves helping out in the Flowing Wells community and has spent several hours volunteering.

Submitted by:
Lisa Lipins
Counselor
Flowing Wells High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Skylar Petz
Presidio High School

It is an honor to recommend Skylar Petz, a student in the Federal TRIO Upward Bound (UB) program. He participates in UB while attending high school. This amazing young man learned very early how to persevere as he embraced a foster child with Cerebral Palsy. It was painful for Skylar to assist and watch this child go through painful everyday movements that most people take for granted. As you can imagine, Skylar grew close to this little boy and was delighted when Skylar learned that his parents were adopting this child into Skylar's family. Skylar is motivated to focus on a career in designing the mechanical components for a better brace (more movable and less restrictive) so the technology is more "intuitive" for people with cerebral palsy.

Skylar aspires to make it easier for his foster brother and has been instrumental in providing love, a sense of family, and much needed cuddling to new brother. Skylar is determined to be strong and resilient for his brother. As you can imagine, this experience has made a huge positive impact on Skylar's life for which he embraced life's challenge through helping to care for those innocent handicapped children. In return, Mr. Petz learned how important it is to be empathetic, compassionate, and give back to your community no matter how small the person or the medical condition they may have. Today, Skylar is a stronger person who is definitely a role model for us all. It is an honor to nominate this kind young man for the 2020 Dorothy Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award.

Submitted by:
Joy E Barr
Presidio High School
Upward Bound Program

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards

Trevor Lusk

Pantano High School, Vail Unified School District

What Trevor Lusk has overcome is certainly impressive, but what really defines him is what he's doing about it now and how he's working towards preventing it for countless others.

Trevor was never really strong at building relationships. In fact, school became such a place and source of terror for him that his anxiety continually built through the years. Panic attacks every morning were his norm. While his parents work to support him, a father's back injury led to alcohol abuse, and his mother's lupus diagnosis rendered her nearly incapable of helping Trevor. Finally, he switched to an online school with the idea that once he felt better, he'd be back... but it was always the same story. A few days back, and it was back to online schooling where he fell further and further behind. When high school rolled around, Trevor enrolled at Andrada Polytechnic High School thinking if he were focused on technical things, he'd do better... wrong. So, his sophomore year he attended Vail Academy a High School where there are only 60 students per grade level. He left his sophomore year with a total of eight high school credits due to excessive absences. Something had to change.

So, Trevor decided to give Pantano High School (Vail's non-traditional high school) a try... just long enough to get back on his feet. He started seeing a medical doctor as well as a psychologist and put in the time to help himself. When he got to Pantano, he found many students who were there not because they were intellectually challenged, but because life has also thrown them a curve ball. And, Trevor discovered that HE could help them.

Since he started school at Pantano, Trevor has maintained a 4.0 GPA, has completed his 20 hours of shadowing a school psychologist at another high school in Vail, and is working through his application to the University of Arizona. Further, every morning he packs lots of extra fruits, veggies, and healthy snacks to hand out to his "family" of friends who are less fortunate. He tutors his peers in math and science.

But, his jumps beyond his social anxiety don't end there. When Pantano earned its most recent A+ Distinction Award from the Arizona Education Foundation, he was asked to deliver a formal speech at the celebration where state and district dignitaries, as well as the student body and his teachers were in attendance. He took his 20 minutes to prepare, stood with confidence, and shared his story of going from terror in walking out the door to standing there speaking to them!

Trevor plans to become a psychologist so he can work to help people who are capable of overcoming life's special curve balls. One thing is certain, Trevor's future is bright, and the lives he will positively impact will be countless!

Submitted by:
Monica Wright
Principal
Pantano High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Yasmine Galindo
Teenage Parent High School

It is my honor to nominate Yasmine Galindo for this year's Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award.

Ms. Galindo is a senior at the Teenage Parent High School (TAP), in the Tucson Unified School District. She is truly a "comeback teen" because she has persevered through significant challenges. In early 2019, Yasmine was preparing to go to junior college on a softball scholarship, but her plans were put on hold when her baby girl was born.

As a new teenage mother, Ms. Galindo put all of her focus and energy into building a stable and loving home for her new child. As a result, Ms. Galindo was no longer eligible to play softball on her high school team, and she lost her scholarship. This was a devastating loss for Ms. Galindo because softball was her passion and her path to college.

She refused to give up on her dreams, though, and in mid-2019, Ms. Galindo enrolled at the Teenage Parent High School in order to complete her high school diploma with her daughter by her side. Ms. Galindo's attendance and grades have been outstanding at TAP, and it's been a pleasure to have her in my English 12 and American History classes. She doubled-up on classes in her first quarter at TAP in order to make up for lost time, and she is on track to graduate in May. Ms. Galindo stands out among many dedicated teen parents at TAP because she consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that she excels in her academics *and* as a parent.

In fact, in December, Ms. Galindo was awarded an Outstanding Performance Award for her work with the babies in TAP's newborn Early Childhood Education Lab. Ms. Galindo is committed to the TAP community, and this award recognized her service to other teen parents and their babies.

What really sets Ms. Galindo apart, however, is the perseverance she's shown in rejoining her high school softball team this spring. Despite the challenges of being a teen parent and attending a different school, Ms. Galindo has forged a path back to her passion and reclaimed her future. She plans to attend Pima Community College in the fall and play softball as an Aztec.

We are extremely proud of Ms. Galindo. She is a leader and role model as a TAP student and parent, and we highly recommend her for this year's Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award.

Submitted by:
Jennifer Flagg
Teacher
Teenage Parent High School

Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards
Yaxiri Ortiz
Sunnyside High School, Sunnyside Unified School District

I met Yaxiri Ortiz at the end of last year and she has made an unforgettable impression. Her story is a tale of resiliency, leadership, and compassion. Yaxiri's concerns lie not in her own abilities, but the laws and propositions of our state and country that have created barriers to her education. Yaxiri was born in Mexico . Her mother had desired a greater life for her in the United States and hoped to have her on U.S soil; however, she was too late. When Yaxiri came to this country as a young child, she understood the sacrifices her family had made in order to give her opportunities. Despite the consistent fear she feels for her family and herself, she works tirelessly to contribute to a country that is constantly attempting to reject her.

At the eve of her junior year, Yaxiri was offered an internship position at the University of Arizona. Her incredible performance as a member of the Biotechnology program of which she is president of, paved the way for opportunity. Yaxiri applied and was invited for an interview. She was immediately offered a position and her excitement skyrocketed. Her hopes were scorched when residency became a requirement for participation. Yaxiri was willing to volunteer any hours necessary simply for the experience; however, they denied her requests. She was no longer permitted to participate.

As a high school student, Yaxiri has remained one of our top students and is highly involved in the school setting. Despite her accomplishments, she will not be receiving the majority of scholarships she has been offered. This is not because she is not deserving, it is because of her immigration status. Whereas other students would be receiving full rides to a university, Yaxiri is expected to pay higher rates without assistance from financial aid or institutional scholarships. Where others would become disheartened and dispirited, Yaxiri rises more resilient than before. While highly active in the school setting, she is working to destroy the barriers that stand in her way and the way of others in similar situations. As a member of Existimos, a group to support DACAmented and undocumented youth, Yaxiri has brought attention to these issues all the way to the superintendent level. Yaxiri has made great strides in bringing attention to this issue and making change on our campus.

I have the greatest respect for Yaxiri Ortiz and all that she has done to help others despite the odds. I believe that she is deserving of this award because her resiliency in the face of such circumstances is highly admirable and has the power to spark change at a greater level. She is deserving of the Dorothy O. Finley Outstanding Teen Citizen Award.

Submitted by:
Danielle Khambholja
Counselor
Sunnyside High School



METROPOLITAN
E D U C A T I O N
C O M M I S S I O N

Youth Advisory Council

Selection Committee

Youth Advisory Council/Tucson Teen Congress

Selection Committee

Henry Harms, University High School, Tucson Unified School District
Elayna Mack, Empire High School, Vail School District
Mazalina Marshall, Empire High School, Vail School District
Milana Marshall, Vail Academy High School, Vail School District

TUCSON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Brent Dennis, Director
Terry Nierzwicki, Recreation Supervisor
Santino Almazán, Recreation Coordinator



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