

**Colorado's Top Youth Volunteers Of 2018 Selected By National Program**  
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**The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honors Aurora and Broomfield students with \$1,000, medallions and trip to nation's capital**  
**Finalists also named in Littleton, Denver, Arvada and Lone Tree**

DENVER, Feb. 6, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Savannah Rock, 17, of Aurora and Addison Kleinhans, 13, of Broomfield today were named Colorado's top two youth volunteers of 2018 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. As State Honorees, Savannah and Addison each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip in late April to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for four days of national recognition events. During the trip, 10 students will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2018.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

These are Colorado's top youth volunteers of 2018:

**High School State Honoree: Savannah Rock**  
***Nominated by Grandview High School in Aurora***

Savannah, a senior at Grandview High School, began a campaign in 2011 to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in all aspects of school life, and to change the way her whole community views and engages with people who have traditionally been excluded because of disability, race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Savannah's inspiration was her older brother, who was born with a genetic disorder that causes cognitive delays. "I watched as he struggled with school, being bullied and excluded from activities in and out of school," she said. "I saw the way schools and communities viewed people with disabilities and only identified them as their disability, not as the kind and loving people they truly are."

Savannah's "Project Unify" sponsors and organizes a series of programs and events designed to celebrate inclusion and bring students with and without disabilities together for meaningful interaction. These include school "spirit weeks," music concerts, parties, sports activities, youth leadership meetings and camping outings. Savannah also helps lead unified sports activities, and was chosen to represent Colorado as a youth leadership ambassador to the Special Olympics USA Games. "My mission is to make all schools and communities inclusive and unified for all, to create a new way to embrace each other's uniqueness and leverage our abilities to make the world a better place," she said.

**Middle Level State Honoree: Addison Kleinhans**  
***Nominated by Colorado Digital Academy in Lakewood***

Addison, an eighth-grader at Colorado Digital Academy, has delivered more than 130 speeches to raise money for childhood cancer causes and to motivate others to stay positive in the face of adversity. Life changed dramatically for Addison a month before his sixth birthday. He had a high fever, so his mother took him to the doctor. "Sadly, we found out that I had cancer," said Addison, who ended up undergoing 38 months of chemotherapy to treat his leukemia. One day a doctor asked if he would share his story with hospital donors. He did, describing how the hospital had become "my home," and crediting the hospital staff with helping him "to not be scared."

That event raised so much money that Addison was soon asked to speak at other fundraisers and events. "At first, I didn't know what to say, but I learned all you have to do is speak from your heart," he said. Even though some of his medications made him drowsy and he had difficulty breathing in the proper places during a speech, Addison never turned down a chance to speak; he considered it his way of giving back. Chosen as Boy of the Year by his local chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Addison helped raise tens of thousands of dollars to combat these cancers. Although he says he will continue to give speeches to raise money and awareness for childhood cancer, Addison also has begun giving motivational speeches at

schools. "I am teaching others to find the bright bit of sun even on the grayest day and to remember they are not alone," he said.

### **Distinguished Finalists**

The program judges also recognized four other Colorado students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion.

These are Colorado's Distinguished Finalists for 2018:

**Jonathan Ferry, 18, of Littleton, Colo.,** a senior at Rock Canyon High School, dedicated more than 1,400 hours to raising and training a puppy for Guide Dogs for the Blind, then presented her to a man who had lost his sight after intensive radiation treatment. Jonathan found that his 16-month training regimen with Bellina the black lab, which included regular meetings and monthly outings, helped him to manage his Asperger's syndrome.

**Matine Khalighi, 16, of Denver, Colo.,** a sophomore at Smoky Hill High School, is vice president of "Helping the Homeless Colorado," a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing the homeless with basic necessities and raising awareness about the challenges they face. Matine dedicates at least eight hours a week, and sometimes as many as 50, to helping to run the nonprofit; he estimates that the organization has reached more than 8,000 homeless people with the help of more than 100 volunteers.

**Leslie Miller, 16, of Arvada, Colo.,** a junior at Ralston Valley High School, has collected and donated more than 125 gently-used leotards for gymnasts in need through her "Leos With Love" foundation, in addition to raising awareness about how to protect girls from sexual abuse. Leslie was inspired to serve by her experience being molested by a coach, and by a tornado that devastated a community where she'd just competed.

**Andres Pulido, 17, of Lone Tree, Colo.,** a senior at Highlands Ranch High School, volunteers in the community in a wide variety of ways, serving with programs from his town's teen court and youth commission to the leadership team for an apraxia fundraising walk in Denver. Andres also worked with two friends to start a sustainability club that now includes 20 members, and represents his state senate district on the Colorado Youth Advisory Council.

"Prudential is proud to recognize these remarkable young people for using their energy, creativity and compassion to bring meaningful change to their communities," said Prudential Chairman and CEO John Strangfeld. "We hope their stories inspire others to consider how they can do the same."

"These middle level and high school students have not only improved the lives of the people and communities they've served – they also set an important example for their peers," said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. "These honorees prove that you're never too young to make a difference."

### **About The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards**

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards represents the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteer service. All public and private middle level and high schools in the country, as well as all Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and affiliates of Points of Light's HandsOn Network, were eligible to select a student or member for a local Prudential Spirit of Community Award. These Local Honorees were then reviewed by an independent judging panel, which selected State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists based on criteria including personal initiative, effort, impact and personal growth.

While in Washington, D.C., the 102 State Honorees – one middle level and one high school student from each state and the District of Columbia – will tour the capital's landmarks, meet top youth volunteers from other parts of the world, attend a gala awards ceremony at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and visit their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. On April 30, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2018. These National Honorees will receive additional \$5,000 awards, gold medallions, crystal trophies and \$5,000 grants from The Prudential Foundation for nonprofit charitable organizations of their choice.

Since the program began in 1995, more than 120,000 young volunteers have been honored at the local, state

and national level. The program also is conducted by Prudential subsidiaries in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Ireland, India, China, Brazil and Poland. In addition to granting its own awards, The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program also distributes President's Volunteer Service Awards to qualifying Local Honorees.

For information on all of this year's Prudential Spirit of Community State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com> or [www.nassp.org/spirit](http://www.nassp.org/spirit).

### **About NASSP**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States. The association connects and engages school leaders through advocacy, research, education, and student programs. NASSP advocates on behalf of all school leaders to ensure the success of each student and strengthens school leadership practices through the design and delivery of high quality professional learning experiences. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council. For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, VA, visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

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***For Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallion graphics, please visit <https://spirit.prudential.com/resources/media>***

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