

**Two Maine youth honored for volunteerism at national award ceremony in Washington, D.C.**  
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**Olympic gold medalist and World Cup champion Lindsey Vonn pays tribute to Boothbay and Brunswick students**

WASHINGTON, April 30, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Maine's top two youth volunteers of 2018, Lillian Sherburne, 17, of Boothbay and Blakely Austin, 14, of Brunswick, were honored in the nation's capital last night for their outstanding volunteer service during the 23rd annual presentation of The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. Lillian and Blakely – along with 100 other top youth volunteers from across the country – each received \$1,000 awards and personal congratulations from Olympic gold medalist and World Cup champion Lindsey Vonn at an award ceremony and gala dinner reception held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, sponsored by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), named Lillian and Blakely Maine's top high school and middle level youth volunteers in February. In addition to their cash awards, they each received an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip with a parent to Washington, D.C., for four days of recognition events.

Lillian, a senior at Boothbay Region High School, is now president of her school's Student Health Advisory Board (SHAB) after playing a leading role for several years in board initiatives that promote healthy and safe lifestyles for students. As the youngest child and only girl in her family, Lilly said she was always trying to get her voice heard. But then she entered seventh grade and joined the Student Health Advisory Board. "I had been searching for a place where I would feel heard, where I could learn to lead, and this group was exactly what I'd been looking for."

Lilly started by attending weekly meetings and leadership conferences, where she helped brainstorm projects that could make her community a healthier place. Over the years, she has worked on many different health and wellness initiatives dealing with topics such as domestic violence, substance abuse, nutrition, gender equality and sexually transmitted diseases. Her most significant project was the production of an award-winning public service announcement designed to educate classmates about the dangers of smoking. Lilly and fellow board members researched the topic and then spent more than 200 hours scripting, filming and editing the PSA, which has now been seen by young people across Maine. "My work with SHAB has fostered my love of advocacy and volunteerism, showing me that my voice matters and that I am able to create change not only in my life but in others' lives as well," said Lilly.

Blakely, an eighth-grader at Brunswick Junior High School, has performed a wide variety of volunteer roles – totaling over 1,200 hours – for a local animal shelter over the past six years, including fostering more than 75 sick and abandoned cats in her home. "For as long as I can remember, I have loved animals," said Blakely. At 8 years old, she found a way to live her passion in a big way – at the Coastal Humane Society Animal Shelter in Brunswick.

Over the years, Blakely has worked at the shelter's pet adoption events at local stores, attended community events to promote the shelter, raised more than \$500 for shelter expenses, served as a counselor at the shelter's summer camp, and dressed up as a dog mascot for birthday parties at the shelter. Her favorite activity and greatest inspiration is fostering cats with medical needs in a special room in her family's house. She's worked with veterinarian technicians to learn how to administer medication, spent her own money to buy heating pads and cozy "cat condos," launched a website to showcase her animals, and negotiated adoptions as a certified adoption ambassador. "Even though an animal is very sick, frightened and has no home, I can help it get well, gain trust and find a wonderful forever home," said Blakely.

"These honorees exemplify something we've known for a long time – that young volunteers have the power to bring meaningful change to their communities," said John Strangfeld, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial, Inc. "These students have shown leadership and determination well beyond their years, and it's a privilege to celebrate their service."

"Through their acts of service, these honorees drive home a powerful lesson for their peers: that one student really can make a difference," said Daniel P. Kelley, president of NASSP. "We are honored to shine a spotlight on the compassion, drive and ingenuity of each of these young volunteers."

Youth volunteers in grades 5-12 were invited to apply for 2018 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards last fall through schools, Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and affiliates of Points of Light's HandsOn Network. More than 29,000 middle level and high school students nationwide participated in this year's program.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program was created in 1995 to identify and recognize young people for outstanding volunteer service – and, in so doing, inspire others to volunteer, too. In the past 23 years, the program has honored more than 120,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

For more information about The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards and this year's honorees, 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 principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. 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. Learn more at [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

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**Editors: For pictures of the Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallions, visit**

<https://spirit.prudential.com/resources/media>.

For B-roll of Maine's honorees at the 2018 national recognition events, contact Prudential's Harold Banks at (973) 216-4833 or [harold.banks@prudential.com](mailto:harold.banks@prudential.com).

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