

Arizona's Top Youth Volunteers Of 2019 Selected By National Program
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The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honors Phoenix students with \$1,000, medallions and trip to nation's capital
Finalists also named in Litchfield Park, Glendale, Gilbert, Tucson and Goodyear

PHOENIX, Feb. 5, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Nathaniel Simmons, 18 and Eden Sapien, 13, both of Phoenix, today were named Arizona's top two youth volunteers of 2019 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. As State Honorees, Nathaniel and Eden each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip in early May 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 2019.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 24th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

These are Arizona's top youth volunteers of 2019:

High School State Honoree: Nathaniel Simmons
Nominated by Sunnyslope High School

Nathaniel, a senior at Sunnyslope High School, is a founding board member of a nonprofit organization that has mobilized young people to collect hundreds of thousands of unwanted school supplies, toys and shoes for kids in need in Arizona and five other countries. While visiting a school in Africa in 2012, Nathaniel was struck by how little its students had in the way of tools to support their education. He was even more shocked after he returned home and saw how many decent school supplies were discarded by his classmates at the end of the school year – "supplies that would be cherished in the African school," he said. Seeing an obvious opportunity, Nathaniel began recruiting young volunteers and schools to collect surplus school supplies for African kids, and also for homeless shelters in Arizona.

At the end of each school year, this "Re-Pack Project" delivers empty boxes to participating schools to encourage students to donate supplies that would otherwise be thrown away. He and his fellow volunteers then gather, clean and sort the donations, package them in backpacks, and ship them off to local shelters and overseas schools. Nathaniel's initiative collected supplies through seven schools in three states last year, and is now partnering with schools and organizations in Arizona, Mexico, South Africa, Peru, Thailand and Fiji to distribute the donations. In addition to school supplies, the organization has collected toys and shoes for thousands of children in need. "Everything I have discovered through this five-year journey has given me faith in the world, in people, and in their ability to come together and support each other," he said.

Middle Level State Honoree: Eden Sapien
Nominated by Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council

Eden, an eighth-grader at Stetson Hills Elementary School, assembled nearly 1,000 toiletry bags of soap, shampoo, conditioner and lotion collected from local hotels, and then delivered them to a rescue mission that serves the homeless in her community. Her project sprang from an article about a charity that recycles soap from hotels for people living in poverty in other countries. "I thought it was a great idea," said Eden. "I see more and more people who are living on the streets and don't have the basics that we all take for granted, and I wanted to help."

She visited the Phoenix Rescue Mission and learned that handing out soap and other hygiene products not only prevents disease, but also is key to creating trust with homeless people and encouraging them to accept other available services. So Eden sent 30 letters to hotels in her city, asking for used bars of soap and empty shampoo bottles. With hardly any response, she made personal visits to each of the hotels on weekends. Finally, three of them agreed to her request. After winning a \$500 grant to buy soap-making

supplies and shampoo, Eden recruited 18 friends and family members to shred, melt and mold soap bars in her backyard, and fill bottles with shampoo, conditioner and lotion. Over two days, they packaged 965 toiletry bags for the mission to distribute. Eden also provided people experiencing homelessness with 144 toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes and deodorant products.

Distinguished Finalists

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

These are Arizona's Distinguished Finalists for 2019:

Vivian Clarke, 17, of Litchfield Park, Ariz., a junior at Sunnyslope High School, used her love for music and passion for business to create "Chords for Comfort," to donate guitars and music resources to children of divorce. Having navigated her own parents' divorce by learning multiple instruments, she implemented her research on the positive effects of self-expression on children of divorce by raising \$1,500, forming partnerships with charitable organizations and businesses including Fender, and successfully converting the business to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Aditi Galande, 18, of Glendale, Ariz., a senior at Mountain Ridge High School, led fundraising efforts that helped to collect more than \$107,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society as part of its Student of the Year initiative. Galvanized by her uncle's death from cancer, Aditi enlisted the help of local businesses and other students to raise money for the cause during the seven-week campaign; she now helps the organization nominate other student leaders to support the journey to end cancer.

Joel Joseph, 17, of Gilbert, Ariz., a senior at Mesquite High School, sourced, assembled, and donated more than 300 health-supply kits for homeless people in his community, working with his church to provide supplies including bandages, gauze pads and saline solution; this organizing and fundraising became his organization, "Bridges4Hope." With the help of computer professors, he is now developing two software applications to empower people in need to connect with resources on their own.

Sydney Loudermilk, 16, of Tucson, Ariz., a member of Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona and a sophomore at Brownstown Central High School, wrote, self-published and publicized Ordinary People Extraordinary Achievements, a book for readers ages 7-12 about three friends who explore 25 hiking trails in Pima County. While managing a team of 35 people, she has donated more than 500 books to elementary and middle schools and inspired many new hiking clubs; she has also sold books in multiple states and in Guam.

Brittany Sharp, 18, of Goodyear, Ariz., a senior at Verrado High School, progressed from planning free events for local families at her local public library to starting a book club for kids ages 12 to 18 —managing the program, coordinating with school librarians, choosing the books and leading group discussions. Through her leadership of the club, she has sparked students' interest in fiction and critical reading as well as building social skills; she has also put a succession plan in place for a continuation of the club after she graduates.

Aviel Waxman, 18, of Glendale, Ariz., a senior at Desert Heights Preparatory Academy, helps educate and raise awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault through social media and fundraising, publishing three posts a week with statistics, news stories and resources for people experiencing abuse and assault. He established both a campus organization and a curriculum about the dating violence that affects one in three teens, and plans to undergo the training to teach a course himself.

"These young volunteers learned and demonstrated that they can make meaningful contributions to individuals and communities through their service," said Prudential CEO Charles Lowrey. "It's an honor to recognize their great work, and we hope that shining a spotlight on their service inspires others to consider how they might make a difference."

"Each of these honorees is proof that students have the energy, creativity and unique perspectives to create positive change," said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. "We commend each of the 2019 honorees for their outstanding volunteer service, and for the invaluable example they've set for their peers."

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 May 6, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2019. 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 125,000 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 and Brazil. 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.

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.

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SOURCE Prudential Financial, Inc.

Contacts: Harold Banks, Prudential Financial, (973) 802-8974 or (973) 216-4833,
harold.banks@prudential.com

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