

Utah's Top Youth Volunteers Of 2020 Selected By National Program
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The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honors Salem and Bountiful students with \$1,000, medallions and trip to nation's capital
Finalists also named in Provo, Salt Lake City, Lehi and Saint George

SALT LAKE CITY, Feb. 4, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Sydney Ward, 17, of Salem and Owen Hughes, 13, of Bountiful today were named Utah's top two youth volunteers of 2020 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. As State Honorees, Sydney and Owen 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 2020.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 25th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). These are Utah's top youth volunteers of 2020:

High School State Honoree: Sydney Ward
Nominated by Salem Hills High School

Sydney, a senior at Salem Hills High School, works to mobilize young people in her community to become better informed about issues affecting their lives and more engaged in local politics by staging mock elections, organizing town hall meetings with local and state representatives, and spearheading voter registration drives at high schools. When Sydney was 13, her mother took her to a political convention to nominate county and state candidates. She spent most of her day there handing out fliers in support of their candidate and collecting political T-shirts. "I realized then and there that I wanted to have my own voice heard in that process," Sydney said.

On the day before Election Day 2016, Sydney, with the help of her history teacher, organized a mock election at her school that drew participation from 75 percent of the student body. The ensuing conversations fueled her desire to do more. So in 2019, she founded "Project 320" to encourage young people to get involved in the political process. As executive director, Sydney spends roughly 30 hours a week planning social media campaigns, posting candidate platforms on a website, coordinating events with local officials, recruiting volunteers, writing grant applications and securing support from the community. To increase young people's awareness of governmental issues and the political process, her group has hosted a series of town hall meetings to bring students and elected officials together. At one of her meetings, 100 students heard their state representatives talk about upcoming bills that affect them. "After the event, many students said they had no idea state government had such an influence on their lives," she said.

Middle Level State Honoree: Owen Hughes
Nominated by Bountiful Junior High School

Owen, an eighth-grader at Bountiful Junior High School, converted a library into a music and game room at Valor House, a transitional housing facility for veterans, and then initiated a monthly game night for its residents. Owen has always had the utmost respect for America's servicemembers; three of his great grandfathers served in World War II and his brother was in the United States Air Force. "So when I see veterans who are homeless, it makes me feel bad," he said. "I can't really solve their struggles with addiction, homelessness and mental health," he continued, "but I can try to help make their lives a little more fun and help them form friendships."

After gaining approval from Valor House administrators, Owen asked members of his Boy Scout troop to help distribute fliers all over his neighborhood, soliciting donations of games and musical instruments. He also placed a collection box at his church. After he had enough donations, he and some friends cleaned out books from a room that had been used as a library, checked all the games to make sure they were intact, cleaned the games and instruments, and organized them into categories. They also built an outdoor game

cupboard so residents could play on the patio while enjoying the sunshine. When the game room was ready, Owen coordinated the first of many monthly game nights, inviting members of a national veterans group and his soccer team to join veterans at Valor House for games, snacks, a raffle and two hours of fun. "The most memorable part was playing the games and laughing so hard we almost cried," he said.

Distinguished Finalists

The program judges also recognized four other Utah students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion. These are Utah's Distinguished Finalists for 2020:

Ashlyn Anderson, 17, of Provo, Utah, a senior at Timpview High School, has spent hundreds of hours helping refugees around the world by soliciting donations from local businesses, making and selling baked goods, and assembling hygiene kits to send to refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. Ashlyn also educates others in her community about the international refugee crisis, and arranged for a refugee and author to share his story at a lunch event.

Lily Hawkins, 18, of Salt Lake City, Utah, a senior at East High School, helps run "The Ghana Project," which raises money selling traditional Ghanaian masks in her community; her efforts have helped establish a secondary school scholarship for three students and funded a computer lab, internet access and a generator for a Ghanaian school. Lily and her project partner are currently working to expand their efforts to other schools in their area.

Kate Herbert, 18, of Lehi, Utah, a senior at Skyridge High School, serves as an "elementary school pilot," visiting elementary schools in her school system to teach leadership lessons to students; she also organized a drive to help stock her school's new library, which ultimately collected more than 2,000 books. As a dedicated volunteer in her community, Kate has also participated in fun runs, veteran dinners and mental health awareness events.

Brianna Smith, 17, of Saint George, Utah, a senior at Tuacahn High School for the Performing Arts, organized a fundraising concert that raised more than \$1,500 for The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN); her efforts include recruiting participants, soliciting donations from local organizations and choreographing a dance performance. Brianna chose this project to raise awareness about RAINN, sexual violence, and finding your voice again after trauma.

"In our 25th year of honoring young volunteers, we are as inspired as ever by the work students are doing to address the needs of a changing world," said Charles Lowrey, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial, Inc. "We hope that their resolve, their initiative and their perspectives on society's challenges move others to consider how they can make a difference, too."

"Middle level and high school students are doing remarkable things to shape the future of their communities through volunteer service. They inspire all students and schools to drive learning with real-world challenges," said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. "Congratulations to each of the 2020 honorees – it's an honor to celebrate your commitment to creating positive change."

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 Points of Light Global Network members, 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 4, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2020. These National Honorees will receive additional \$5,000 scholarships, gold medallions, crystal trophies and

\$5,000 grants from Prudential for nonprofit charitable organizations of their choice.

Since the program began in 1995, more than 130,000 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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For Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallion graphics, please visit <https://spirit.prudential.com/resources/media>



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