



# CHARTING A COURSE FOR YOUTH TO THRIVE

2026 Asset Champions Awards Breakfast  
YMCA PROJECT CORNERSTONE | March 27, 2026



Welcome to the 2026 Asset Champions Awards Breakfast!

Since the first celebration in 2003, the Asset Champions Awards Breakfast has brought connection, hope, and inspiration to our community. Today, we come together to celebrate the people, schools, and organizations that are helping to chart a course for youth to thrive by providing guidance, support, and opportunities that empower young people to grow into their best selves.

Founded in 1999 by the Youth Alliance, YMCA Project Cornerstone has been leading a community-wide movement to create environments where all youth grow up feeling valued, respected, and known.

YMCA Project Cornerstone is committed to ensuring that every young person has the support, skills, and relationships needed to thrive. Through a breadth of programs and services, we engage youth, families, schools, and community organizations to foster healthy social and emotional development, build positive relationships, and create safe, supportive spaces.

Guided by research-based frameworks from the Search Institute and CASEL, we reach more than 62,000 youth annually, empowering them to stand up against bullying while fostering empathy, inclusion, and a sense of purpose. We also provide parents, guardians, and school staff with effective tools and strategies to build meaningful, positive relationships with youth.

With a presence in hundreds of Bay Area schools and the support of over 4,000 dedicated adults, YMCA Project Cornerstone continues to create lasting, positive change.

Together with our passionate volunteers, engaged families, schools, and communities, we are transforming the lives of youth and building a future where every young person feels supported, valued, and equipped to reach their fullest potential.

To learn more about YMCA Project Cornerstone, visit [www.projectcornerstone.org](http://www.projectcornerstone.org).

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## **2025–26 YMCA Project Cornerstone Funders**

County of Santa Clara School Linked Services  
Gilroy Foundation  
Kaiser Permanente  
Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation  
Peter Likhachev Foundation  
YMCA of the USA Character Development

# Program

**Emcees Welcome** Maribel Martínez, Adult Emcee  
Amy Le, Youth Emcee

**Opening Remarks** John Ehrbar  
President & CEO, YMCA of Silicon Valley

**Featured Keynote Conversation** Natalie Nakase  
Head Coach, Golden State Valkyries  
  
In Conversation With  
Ziem Nguyen Neubert  
Executive Director, YMCA Project Cornerstone

**Awards Presentation** Caring Preschool-Elementary School  
Adult Role Model

**Musical Performance** Libby Einav, Senior, The Neuva School  
Starting Arts Dream Team

**2026 Community Campaign Update** Mark T. Johnsen  
Board Committee Chair  
YMCA Project Cornerstone

**Awards Presentation** Caring Middle School  
Community Values Youth  
Caring High School  
Positive Cultural Identity  
Youth Role Model

**UPstander Pledge** YMCA Project Cornerstone  
Student Leadership Council (SLC)

## About the Speakers and Performers

### **Natalie Nakase Keynote speaker**

2025 WNBA Coach of the Year, Natalie Nakase led the Golden State Valkyries to 23 regular season wins during its inaugural year, a WNBA single-season record by an expansion team, and also became the first-ever expansion franchise to reach the playoffs in their inaugural season. Nakase took the helm of the Valkyries following over 16 years of coaching professional basketball, including 10 seasons in the NBA with the Los Angeles Clippers, and three seasons as first assistant coach with the Las Vegas Aces.

### **Maribel Martínez Adult Emcee**

Maribel Martínez (all pronouns) is a Queer Chicana P'urhépecha brainiac, storyteller, and dream warrior. She received her BA in Political Science and Sociology and an MA in Applied Anthropology. She has worked in the public sector addressing issues of health care access, education reform, mental health services, and neighborhood safety and racial equity. She was the founding director of both the Cesar Chavez Community Action Center at San Jose State University and the County of Santa Clara Office of LGBTQ Affairs. She currently co-leads the Division of Equity and Social Justice for the County of Santa Clara. Maribel is also a community artist, whose works have been recognized by local arts nonprofits including MACLA, School of Arts and Culture, Teatro Vision, and The California Arts Council. She sees her work, whether in the office or out in the community or in the arts, as equity; what healing looks like in public.

### **Amy Le Youth Emcee**

Amy is a sophomore at Evergreen Valley High School (East Side Union High School District) and currently in her second year as a member of the YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council. In this role, she has helped educate youth about bullying prevention and conflict resolution, fostering a safe space for others. In her free time, Amy enjoys camping with her scout family, playing the piano, and spending quality time with friends and family. She aspires to pursue a career that combines her interests in nursing and business.

### **Libby Einav Starting Arts Dream Team**

Libby is a senior at The Nueva School and a musical theatre performer with the Starting Arts Dream Team Conservatory. She is honored to be part of today's special event. Most often, you can find her on stage, where her favorite roles include Anastasia in Anastasia, Emma in The Prom, Catherine in Pippin, Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, Olive in Spelling Bee, Liesl in The Sound of Music, and Annabeth in The Lightning Thief. Offstage, she likes conducting psychology experiments and studying game theory. She was recently admitted to Stanford University. Libby hopes you enjoy the performance!

## UPstander Pledge

Led by members of YMCA Project Cornerstone's Student Leadership Council 2025-26:

Kian Colfer Hernandez	Rithik Gupta	Neerja Maroo	Madeline Rusterholtz
Parsa Faramarzi	Amy Le	Ali Mesroor	Kavya Sathappan
Diego Garcia	Riya Mahajan	Zahra Mottaghian	Marisa Wong

I am an **UPstander**.

I have the power to influence my peers.

I **SAY** something or **DO** something when you need help.

I am there for you.

I will help you get the help you need.

You are not alone.

I have your back.

## 2026 Asset Champions Award Nominees

Alma Wellness	Kevin Bernaga	Raquel Topete
Amaani Sharma	Kiana Munoz	Robert Sanders Elementary School
Ana Mondragon	Kids Kitchen	Rotary Club of Los Gatos
Animal Assisted Happiness	Kori Westfall	Rotary Club of Santa Clara
Anthony Raffetto	Leigh High School	SafeRides of Los Gatos
August Boeger Middle School	Lisa Pereira	Santa Clara Schools Foundation
Brad Boardman	Los Gatos High School	Sarah Rizvi
Carmen Barragan	Margaret Tsai-Heth	Sherinda Gonder
Central High School	Mariah Flanagan	Steve Neese
Claudia Jones	Meredith Nutter	The Sunshine Squad
Connor Keese	Michelle Wu	Taiwanese Student Association at Wilcox High School
Donella Nfon	Mission City Federal Credit Union	Trudy Martinez
Envision Your Pathway	Monica Ulrich	Village School
Fernando Camargo	Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation	Washington Open Elementary School
Garden Gate Elementary School	Nicole Scott	Wilcox High School
Hubbard Media Arts Academy	Oscar Lamas	
Hyde Middle School	Pravin Balasingam	
Jaimee Nguyen		
Jason Fischer		

## Previous Asset Champions Award Winners

### Adult Role Model

Ally Bocchieri, Community Volunteer  
Gretchen Yoder-Schrock, Christopher High School  
Harold Atkins, Each One Reach One Program  
Helen Donald, Girl Scouts  
Jennifer Moyen-Logan, Girl Scouts  
John Rose, San Jose Police Department  
Lauri Scirigione, Lauri Gray's Dance School  
Lisa Jacobs, Almaden Hills, Cambrian Park, and Willow Glen United Methodist Churches  
Lisa Sullivan, Loma Prieta Joint Union School District  
Michael Cellini, Montclair Elementary School  
Michael Fullbright, Milpitas High School  
Mitesh Patel, Fresh Lifelines for Youth  
Nancy Kobel, City of Santa Clara Crossing Guard  
Raul Peralez, San Jose Police Department  
Robert Castro, Mexican American Community Services Agency  
Ron Cooper, Mountain View Police Department  
So'o Poumele, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County  
Sue Gutierrez, Graystone Elementary School  
William Wagner, Good Samaritan United Methodist Church  
Yonit Parenti, Moreland School District

### Caring School Climate

Ann Sobrato High School  
Aptitud Community Academy at Goss  
August Boeger Middle School  
Bagby Elementary School  
Baker Elementary School  
Booksin Elementary School  
Bret Harte Middle School  
Cabrillo Middle School  
Calaveras Hills High School  
Castillero Middle School  
Country Lane Elementary School  
Dartmouth Middle School  
Don Callejon Arts and Design School  
Easterbrook Discovery School  
Educational Options (EdOps)  
Fisher Middle School  
Forest Hill Elementary School  
Graham Middle School  
Gunderson High School  
John Muir Middle School

Leigh High School  
Lincoln High School  
Live Oak High School  
Los Alamitos Elementary School  
Los Gatos High School  
Lowell Elementary School  
L.U.C.H.A. Elementary School  
Luther Burbank School  
Lynhaven Elementary School  
Marshall Lane Elementary School  
Moreland Middle School  
Mountain View High School  
Noddin Elementary School  
PA Walsh Elementary School  
Price Middle School  
Prospect High School  
Quimby Oak Middle School  
Redwood Middle School  
Rucker Elementary School  
Saratoga High School  
Sherman Oaks Dual Immersion School  
Sobrato High School  
South County Community School  
St. Andrew's Episcopal School  
Summit Rainier High School  
Trace Elementary School  
Union Middle School  
Village Elementary School  
Willow Glen Elementary School  
Willow Glen High School  
Wilson High School  
Yerba Buena High School

## Community Values Youth

Bill Wilson Center  
Bill Wilson Peer Education Program  
Canopy  
CASA of Los Gatos  
Children's Musical Theater San Jose  
CommUniverCity San Jose  
Forget Me Not  
The Hub  
José Valdés Math Institute  
Latino Family Fund de Gilroy  
Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation  
McKinley/Bonita Neighborhood Association  
Milpitas Youth Program Team  
San Jose Public Library  
Santa Clara Schools Foundation  
Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action  
SJSU Cesar Chavez Community Action Center  
Sunnyvale Challenge Team  
TeenForce

## Positive Cultural Identity

African American Community Services Agency  
Alum Rock Counseling Center  
Ana Frias, Anne Darling Elementary School  
Annameeke Hesik, Los Gatos High School  
Christopher Temblador, San Jose State University  
Elena Robles, Folklórico Nacional Mexicano  
Fisher Middle School Special Education Team  
International Children Assistance Network (ICAN)  
Jane Babb, Fisher Middle School  
Jessica Tejada  
Joma Briones, Asian Americans for  
Community Involvement  
Leticia Tapia, Payne Elementary School  
Los Dichos Founding Volunteers at Easterbrook  
Discovery School and Anne Darling Elementary  
School  
Louise Gill, Bret Harte Middle School  
Luis Falcon, Downtown College Prep  
Olga Morales Anaya, Girl Scouts  
Outlet Adolescent Counseling Services  
Robert Topf, Frost Elementary School and Indigo  
San Jose Taiko  
Veronica Trejo, Moreland Middle School

## Youth Role Model

Abinaya Sridharan, Quimby Oak Middle School  
Adam Malacara, East Valley Family YMCA  
Adan Lupercio, Washington Youth Center  
Akash Nigam, Kick, Lead and Dream  
Almond Elementary School Cornerstone Club  
Daniel Katz, Monta Vista High School  
Farah Tavana, Van Meter Elementary  
Interact 5170 District Council  
Jessica Wenzel, Breakthrough Silicon Valley  
Johnson Tran, Santa Clara County Youth Task  
Force  
Kianna Giselle Garcia, Hands That Care Bay Area  
Manreet Kaur  
Mario Contreras, East Valley Family YMCA  
Matthew Leffler, Baseball Buddies Foundation  
Nadia Ghaffari, TeenzTalk  
Naireesa Merchant, Fresh Lifelines for Youth  
Nicole Pritchard, Mountain View High School  
Rock Founders, Gunn High School  
Sabrina Ma, Acts of Random Kindness Club  
Tony Aguilar, Fresh Lifelines for Youth  
Unidos Club of Mountain View  
Van Nguyen, Silicon Valley Interscholar Council

## Spark Award Winners

Dave Thornton  
Dr. Barbara Varenhorst  
Linda Silvius  
Mountain View Los Altos Challenge Team  
Ruby Bridges  
Town of Los Gatos  
Youth Bill of Rights

## Lifetime Asset Champions

Anne Ehresman  
Karen Haley  
Kelly Noftz  
Linda Silvius  
Lori Maitksi  
Myrna Pettengill  
Pam Von Wiegand  
Steve Tate



Thank you to CreaTV for production of the awardee videos.

# YMCA Project Cornerstone Programs and Services

YMCA Project Cornerstone understands that the growth and development of youth is largely influenced by their families and communities, including schools. Guided by Search Institute's research-based Developmental Assets and Developmental Relationships frameworks and CASEL's (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework, we engage with families, schools, and community organizations to equip young people with the skills, relationships, and resources they need to thrive. At the same time, we provide adults with tools to build strong, positive connections with youth.

Our programs and services include the following:

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

**Preschool** A bilingual program (English and Spanish) for 3-year-olds, using carefully selected children's books to teach social-emotional skills and foster a love for literature.

**TK/Kindergarten** A 2-year bilingual program (English and Spanish) offering books and activities that build cognitive, social, and emotional skills for 4- and 5-year-olds.

**Asset Building Champions (ABC)** A 3-year program focusing on empathy, inclusion, and becoming UPstanders. Students learn life skills like managing emotions, conflict resolution, and celebrating differences through specially selected children's books and YMCA Project Cornerstone lesson plans differentiated by grade level for elementary-age students.

**Los Dichos** A 3-year bilingual (English and Spanish) program centered on positive cultural identity, with activities that celebrate Latino heritage and teach important social skills using specially selected bilingual children's books and YMCA Project Cornerstone lesson plans. Los Dichos provides a unique opportunity for Spanish-speaking parents to engage in their children's education and development.

**Expect Respect** A leadership program for grades 4-8, focused on empowering students to create an inclusive school community by discussing bullying prevention, empathy, and leadership skills. A YMCA Project Cornerstone staff member leads an interactive 3-hour workshop with 20-30 selected students who represent the school population. Students develop an action plan to implement positive changes at their school with the support of a school advisor.

**Middle School SEL** A 3-year program for grades 6-8, offering modules on topics like stress management, conflict resolution, digital citizenship, and navigating friendships. The curriculum includes slide decks embedded with engaging student activities, a high-interest video clip, and opportunities for peer discussion. A pre-recorded lesson is also available for flexibility in facilitation. Schools determine when the modules are taught (e.g., in homeroom, advisory classes, or during a course such as ELA or PE).

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

**Student Leadership Council (SLC)** A selected group of high school students volunteer as members of the SLC. Students meet regularly with YMCA Project Cornerstone staff and Board Committee members to provide youth voice and participate in projects to enhance and support YMCA Project Cornerstone's programs and services while gaining leadership skills.

**Asset of the Month Toolkit** This toolkit highlights 12 Developmental Assets, providing monthly editable posters and handouts. Each handout includes asset descriptions, discussion topics, and ideas for engaging youth and is designed for use by schools, after-school programs, community organizations, and families.

## WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Parents and community members can participate in a variety of interactive single-session workshops and a 6-week workshop series called Take It Personally (TIP), which focus on tools to strengthen positive relationships with youth while inspiring adults to make a stronger commitment to all youth in their lives and community. Workshops are available in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and can be scheduled in-person or virtually.

## SCHOOL STAFF TRAINING

All school staff play a crucial role in building assets and relationships with students and one another. YMCA Project Cornerstone offers targeted training to help staff seize opportunities to learn and grow with their colleagues to create meaningful connections and safe, caring environments. The variety of training topics focuses on building positive connections with students, bullying prevention and intervention, and incorporating asset- and relationship- building into instructional strategies.

To learn how you can partner with us, visit our website at [www.projectcornerstone.org](http://www.projectcornerstone.org) or email us at [info@projectcornerstone.org](mailto:info@projectcornerstone.org).



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**SJW** SAN JOSE WATER  
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We're proud to ensure that the needs of young children, prenatal through age five, are a priority in all sectors of the community.



[FIRST5kids.org](http://FIRST5kids.org)

# Thanks to Our Committees and Volunteers

## YMCA Project Cornerstone Committee of the YMCA of Silicon Valley Board of Directors

Mark T. Johnsen (Chair), CEO, Wealth Architects, LLC  
Marisa Cidre, Chief Program and Development Officer, Girl Scouts of Northern California  
Sarah Clish, Financial Advisor, Ameriprise Financial  
Jaime Koo, Family and Community Engagement Coordinator, Santa Clara County Office of Education  
Gay Krause, Executive Director, Krause Center for Innovation, Foothill College  
Scott Neely, Managing Partner, Lotus Capital Group (retired)  
Jeff Ostrum, Principal, Financial Architects Partners  
Dr. Jamal Splane, Vice President Teen Development, Boys and Girls Club of Silicon Valley  
Joey Vaughan, Manager of Community Partnerships & Community Benefits, Stanford Medicine  
Children's Health  
Leah Verhoeven, Global Human Resources, AMD

## YMCA of Silicon Valley Board of Directors

Gaurav Vijayvargiya,	Don Lee
Board Chair	David Low
Bob Braham	Katherine Martin
Mei Chui	Rahul Mathur
Leah Cowan	Scott Neely
Shá Duncan Smith	Vince Rocha
John Ehrbar	John Savage
Janice Fry	Sonal Sinha
Mark T. Johnsen	Ervie Smith
David Kennedy	Tom Squeri
Jill Kispert	Dr. Elizabeth M. Vilaro
Gay Krause	Steve Wagstaffe
Michelle Lalljie	Nicole Wright

## Event Volunteers

Tony Allio	Maxine Granadino
Amy Bencomo	Anne Hartman
Linda Chiu	Blaine Mauldin
Sarah Clish	Rik Nicholson
Harpreet Dokal	Sarah Ogle
Nick Downs	Leah Verhoeven
Adrian Famularcano	Kylie Yang
Judy Fong	

## Nominations Review Panel

Amy Bencomo	Jaime Koo
Ally Bocchieri	Chris Miller
Anisa Chandra	Madeline Rusterholtz
René Colato Laínez	John Satterlee
Adam Escoto	Jamal Splane
Karen Frederick	Tim Tom
Kianna Giselle Garcia	Leah Verhoeven
Manreet Kaur	

## Asset Champions Breakfast Committee

Leah Verhoeven, Chair	Kavita Mahtaney
Amy Bencomo	Sarah Moore
Rona Brodrick	Ziem Neubert
Sarah Clish	

## Decorations Committee

Amy Bencomo	Betty Verhoeven
Maxine Granadino	Leah Verhoeven
Marcie Soderquist	Rob Verhoeven

## YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council

Anisa Chandra	Zahra Mottaghian
Emma Chen	Ella Omura
Kian Colfer Hernandez	Vaishnav Prabukumar
Parsa Faramarzi	Smaran Rangarajan
Diego Garcia	Madeline Rusterholtz
Rithik Gupta	Kavya Sathappan
Taranjit Kaur	Damien Singh
Amy Le	Zara Ting-Tee
Siwoo Lee	Vanita Venkatesh
Jolene Luong	Aidan Wong
Riya Mahajan	Marisa Wong
Arnav Mana	Ryan Wong
Neerja Maroo	Austin Yang
Ali Mesrou	
Adrita Mittra	

The Asset Champions award plaques were designed and created by Rob Verhoeven and the YMCA Project Cornerstone Student Leadership Council.

Interpretation by Miriam King

# Kid-sized care for kid-sized people.

Health care designed exclusively for kids



Children's Health

[stanfordchildrens.org](https://stanfordchildrens.org)

# YMCA Project Cornerstone 2026 Asset Champions

## Adult Role Model

### Joanne Bui

Joanne Bui-Quang transitioned into education after a decade in tech, beginning as a preschool teacher before moving into elementary education. She currently teaches in the San José Unified School District and works as a career coach and advisor.

A dedicated leader and volunteer at Williams Elementary, Joanne supports school initiatives, primarily partnering with the YMCA Project Cornerstone Team to champion kindness and empower students to be Upstanders. Believing learning extends beyond the classroom, she has introduced music, theater, chess, art, and other enrichment programs that spark curiosity and creativity. She has also collaborated on beautification projects, including garden upgrades, outdoor bulletin boards, and student backpack hooks. She has served on the Parent Board and School Site Council, and continues designing inclusive, schoolwide events like Heritage Day that strengthen community connections. At the heart of her work is the belief that every child deserves to feel seen, supported, and excited about school. She hopes students reflect on their elementary years with joy, remembering friendships and experiences that foster a true sense of belonging. Beyond campus, she serves on the boards of local youth sports organizations and as a Cub Scout Den Leader.



**“Joanne Bui has a rare ability to make children feel supported and believe in themselves. Through her work with Project Cornerstone, Williams Elementary, and Cub Scouts, she creates environments where kids are encouraged to try new things, grow in confidence, and learn what it means to care for others. She leads with humility and heart, and it has been a true pleasure to work alongside her. Joanne is the kind of adult every community hopes their children will have.”**

– Crystal Rose, Committee Chair, Cub Scouts Pack 272

## Caring Preschool–Elementary School Climate Sartorette Elementary (Cambrian School District)

Sartorette is a nurturing, compassionate, close-knit community of dedicated professionals and supportive families where students are given high-quality academic and social emotional learning that honors each student’s individuality with what they need to grow and thrive. We help students identify their own strengths as well as those in each other, while helping them overcome challenges. Students’ positive contributions to their education and to the school community are celebrated, and restorative practices and a growth mindset are applied toward correcting errors in behavior. Differentiated academic instruction and a wide variety of enrichment and inclusion programs and activities serve the whole child and encourage them to be invested in their own education. The reciprocal relationship between family engagement and student achievement allows us to serve as a team together for the benefit of children. Simply put, we give every member of our school community a voice; we listen, and we follow through. All of this together helps make Sartorette Superstars feel safe, known, valued, and inspired to learn.



**“Sartorette Elementary goes above and beyond to create a truly caring and inclusive school culture. Through a consistent focus on social-emotional learning and thousands of intentional acts of kindness as well as open communications, the staff, students, and families embody being ‘safe, responsible, and respectful’ every day.”** – Sandy Boklund, 3rd Grade Parent

## Caring Middle School Climate

### Peterson Middle School

(Santa Clara Unified School District)

Peterson Middle School is a welcoming and caring community anchored in the core values of Ready, Respectful, Responsible, and Safe (RRRS). These expectations shape daily interactions, guide classroom instruction, and create a schoolwide culture where students feel supported and empowered.

Students are Ready to learn through engaging instruction, clear routines, and opportunities to build confidence and academic skills. A climate of Respect is evident across campus, with students and staff modeling kindness, inclusion, and empathy in every setting. Responsibility is reinforced through shared accountability and consistent expectations that help students reflect, grow, and contribute positively to the school community. Ensuring a Safe environment remains a top priority, supported by strong relationships, proactive supervision, and social-emotional learning.

Peterson deeply values student voice. Students regularly share their perspectives, provide feedback, and take on leadership roles that help shape school-wide initiatives, community-building efforts, and the positive climate on campus.

**“Project Cornerstone has made such a positive impact on our family and school community. I’m so thankful that Peterson Middle School is committed to raising compassionate, confident kids.”**

– Rachel Jansen, Parent



## Caring High School Climate

### Live Oak High School

(Morgan Hill Unified School District)

Established in 1904, Live Oak High School proudly serves as a cornerstone of the Morgan Hill Unified School District, educating students from Morgan Hill, San Jose, and the surrounding communities of San Martin and Coyote Valley. With a student population that reflects the rich ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the region, Live Oak High School is deeply committed to equity, excellence, and opportunity for all learners.

Live Oak High School offers a dynamic and inclusive educational experience designed to support every student’s success. Academic programs include 21 Advanced Placement courses, 28 Career Technical Education courses across 14 career pathways, dual enrollment opportunities, and a dual immersion language program, along with comprehensive services for students with disabilities. Beyond academics, the school prioritizes whole-student development through daily tutorials, peer tutoring, a homework center, college and financial aid guidance, and a wellness center providing counseling services. Students and families are further supported by a dedicated team of professionals, including a psychologist, community liaison, Freshmen on Track coordinator, and a CARE specialist serving unhoused and foster youth. Together, these programs reflect Live Oak High School’s enduring motto: “United at the roots, we are all different branches of the same tree.”

**“As a parent of a senior attending Live Oak I am deeply grateful for the academic rigor and life skills taught by all members of the faculty. The staff works hard to build trust with families by supporting parent involvement, encouraging true collaboration, and building a safe environment for student learning. They have been there to ensure my daughter is not only ready to embark on the next chapter of her life in college, but to also guide and support her through personal stresses, struggles, and successes throughout high school. For this I am forever grateful and proud to be a part of the Live Oak family!”** – Amy Hagopian, Parent



## Community Values Youth Children’s Musical Theater San Jose

CMT San Jose trains and educates today’s youth through musical theater to set and achieve high artistic and personal goals, and to inspire them to become exemplary artists, patrons, and citizens of tomorrow.

Inclusiveness and quality are the touchstones of CMT’s vision. As a nationally acclaimed theater company and the oldest performing arts organization in San Jose, CMT remains dedicated to providing the highest possible caliber of musical and theatrical training to children from ages 4 to 20, spanning all abilities. We stand behind our promise to never turn a child away, regardless of financial or physical limitations.

CMT has received 13 grant awards from the National Endowment for the Arts – a distinguished honor for any theater company and a proud achievement for a children’s theater. CMT stands committed to serving this culturally diverse region through an equitable lens and being an industry leader that promotes systemic change, eliminates bias, and is recognized as a place where young people can be their authentic selves.

**“Thanks to CMT, my child has found a place they feel comfortable, an activity they love, and a community that embraces them for who they are. I can’t tell you how grateful I am for this organization – not just as someone who appreciates the arts, but as a mother who is watching her child grow in confidence, courage, and self-respect.” – CMT Mainstage Parent**



## Positive Cultural Identity Ida Jew Academy and Valle Vista Elementary

Ida Jew Academy and Valle Vista Elementary (IJAVVE) is a TK–8 learning community where positive cultural identity is intentionally woven into every aspect of school life. IJAVVE recognizes that identity is multidimensional, shaped by language, culture, family background, lived experience, and community. The school is committed to creating an environment where every student feels seen, affirmed, and proud of who they are.

This commitment is reflected through a schoolwide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) curriculum taught multiple times each week, Crew Time discussions that center student voice, and leadership opportunities that empower students to learn from and lead one another. Bilingualism and multiculturalism are celebrated through programs such as ALAS, where students engage in civic learning and present their ideas in both English and Spanish, reinforcing language as an asset.

IJAVVE’s positive culture is further strengthened through the Energy Bus framework, which emphasizes kindness, purpose, and positive relationships. Through culturally responsive literature, arts integration, civic engagement, and family partnerships, IJAVVE ensures that identity and belonging are daily practices. Students leave knowing their voices matter, and their identities are strengths.

**“Congratulations to Ida Jew Academy and Valle Vista, recipients of the 2026 Asset Champion Award for Positive Cultural Identity. In the face of school consolidation due to declining enrollment, staff embraced change and came together as one united community. Their shared commitment to inclusion, equity, and empathy—where students’ cultures and home languages are honored as assets—exemplifies leadership and resilience in fostering environments where all students feel seen, heard, and valued.” – Dr. Elida MacArthur, Superintendent, Mount Pleasant Elementary School District**



## Youth Role Model Brandon Pang

Brandon Pang is a senior at Homestead High School and a dedicated youth leader committed to serving his community. He was introduced early to the values of YMCA Project Cornerstone through his mother, who volunteered at West Valley Elementary as an ABC parent and taught YMCA Project Cornerstone's core lessons. Through this experience, he learned the importance of being an upstander, leading with empathy, and taking action to support others. These lessons inspired his passion for community service and youth leadership.

He has led and supported numerous initiatives to uplift underserved communities, including leading Teen Holiday Drives, preparing and distributing homeless care packages, organizing youth sports camps, and teaching STEM 3D printing workshops for youth. He is also the co-founder of FruitSharing, an organization focused on reducing food waste while addressing food insecurity in Sunnyvale and neighboring cities. Through collaboration with community partners and volunteers, FruitSharing has collected and donated over 26,000 pounds of fresh produce to the community.

Brandon's leadership, initiative, and commitment to service exemplify the values of YMCA Project Cornerstone. Through his actions, he demonstrates that youth don't have to wait to make a difference; they can lead, serve, and create meaningful change now.

**"Working alongside Brandon has shown me what true youth leadership looks like. Brandon doesn't just come up with ideas; he turns them into real impact. Through FruitSharing, he has helped reduce food waste while fighting food insecurity in our community. Beyond that, he is a "Bucket Filler," whether by leading homeless care package projects, organizing the Teen Holiday Drive, or teaching youth through his STEM 3D printing classes. Brandon leads with compassion, creativity, and action, and our community is stronger because of him."** – Jacob Su, Co-Founder, FruitSharing and Student, Bellarmine High School



# Caring for our community never stops.

Palo Alto Medical Foundation  
is proud to partner with YMCA  
Project Cornerstone.

[sutterhealth.org/pamf](https://sutterhealth.org/pamf)



# Building stronger futures for families and communities.

We're honored to support Project  
Cornerstone's work with Silicon Valley youth.



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Master new technologies like AI, and build your influence.

Learn More & Apply:

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## (MAKER) SPACE

18 Quarter Unit Program, CA Certificate of Achievement as a  
Makerspace Coordinator

Hands-on learning that empowers educators to participate as makers.

Learn More & Apply:

<https://bit.ly/2026SPACE>

## STEAM LEADERSHIP

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