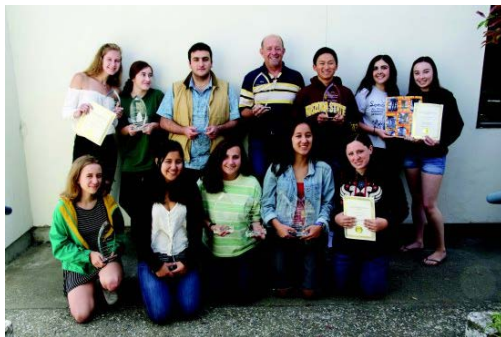


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## Acalanes' Blueprint awarded for excellence in journalism

By John T. Miller



Members of the Blueprint staff at Acalanes High School pose after being recognized at the Dean Leshler High School Journalism Awards banquet held recently. Back row, from left: Sarah Westergren, Lisa Burciaga, Kahren Eloyan, Larry Freeman (advisor), Gareth Kwok, Claire Gallagher and Clare Fonstein; front row: Christine Mitroff, Clara Kobashigawa, Maddie McDonagh, Sierra Fong-Horvath and Natalie Starzcewski. Photo Blueprint photographer Nell Kessenich

In addition, the American Scholastic Press Association awarded the paper with a First Place with Special Merit award out of more than 250 entrants.

The Blueprint also won ASPA's Outstanding Theme for an Issue for their January 2018 series, "Profiles on Courage," detailing 14 Acalanes students who faced adversity.

One of the more impressive awards was garnered by Print Editor Sierra Fong-Horvath, who was named California Journalist of the Year by the Journalism Education Association of California. The JEAC also awarded Gareth Kwok for Best Web Content.

Locally, the newspaper won eight first-place awards and 17 overall in the Dean Leshler High School Journalism Awards, including first place in Overall Excellence and in Best Website. Ten Contra Costa high schools participated.

Fong-Horvath won the Leshler CCC Journalist of the Year, along with first place for Best Feature Writing and second place for Best Feature Writing with fellow Print Editor Clara Kobashigawa.

Fong-Horvath and Kobashigawa teamed with Maddie McDonagh and Kahren Eloyan to garner first place in Best Editorial/Opinion Writing for their coverage of the Parkland Shooting entitled, "To the Survivors in Florida: We Stand With You."

Other first place awards included Best Sports Writing by Kobashigawa and Kwok; Best Personal Column by Sarah Westergren; Best In-depth or Investigative Reporting by Lisa Burciaga and Karen Rosenberg; and Best Editorial Cartoon by Christine Mitroff.

With the graduation of this year's seniors, Freeman now looks forward to rebuilding with his next batch of editors, writers, photographers and designers.

In its 78 years in existence, the venerable Blueprint, a student-driven Acalanes High School newspaper, received a lion's share of awards this spring to cap off a successful year.

Blueprint advisor Larry Freeman, as quoted in an article by Online Feature Editor Sofia Olsson, said, "Thinking of this as an avalanche of awards isn't the right perspective. It's a testament to other people thinking that the Blueprint is doing a great job in its mission of journalism."

Kiara Kunnes, who will take over as a print editor next year said, "It was an impressive year. The stories we tackled were unique for a high school paper and stood out." She expressed gratitude to all the editors and their advisor. "We wouldn't have been so successful without their leadership."

Freeman added, "The group I had this year is one of the best high-powered, collaborative journalists I've ever had in my 28 years here."

In the prestigious Quill and Scroll contest run by the University of Iowa, the Blueprint - vying with 2,065 entries from across the country - fared well, winning nine awards or honorable mentions.

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