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COLUMNISTS

- Ronna Adler
- Judith Allender
- Dr. Bill Atwood
- Dwight Barnes
- Daniel Blodgett MD
- Cathie Campbell
- Tom Elias
- Jim Flanagan
- Elizabeth Gabriel
- Grace Grady-Barnes
- Bryan Greeson
- Mike Hackworth
- Al Joyal
- Tony Krizan
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- Earlene Ward

EDUCATION

Top seniors receive Pitmans

By Earlene Ward / Special To The Sierra Star

(Updated: Thursday, May 15, 2008, 11:32 AM)

Yosemite High School's top 13 seniors were honored Thursday at the annual Paul and Martha Pitman Awards Banquet.

This event, hosted by Sierra Telephone, recognizes the valedictorians of the graduating class. These are students who have achieved a 4.0 grade point average or higher during their four years of high school.

Honored this year are: Brittany Cunningham, Caroline Fruth, Jessica Fullmer, Benjamin Hand, Kelley Harrison, Wesley Jackson, Samuel Kelly, Jordan Nicholson, Colleen O'Neil, Nicole Rogers, Hannah Stutzman, Gina Tempesta and Julianne Warmerdam.

Each of the 13 students received gift packets that included a variety of gifts from community businesses, organizations and individuals. They also each received a \$400 check from Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Lovett of Outback Materials.

The class valedictorians have not only achieved high academic grades, they have been active in a wide variety of activities throughout their years in school, including music, drama, athletics, Academic Decathlon, Peer Communications and dance.

Career plans include Fullmer's dream to be a marine animal trainer specializing in animal assisted therapy for autistic children and Harrison's desire to work with troubled kids to give them a chance for a brighter future.

Jackson wants to ultimately earn a doctorate in computer science, leading research in nanotechnology, robotics, or bioinformatics. Nicholson's goal is to find a career that will allow her to travel, to help people in any way and to use her talents as an artist.

O'Neil's dream has always been to be a doctor. She wants to help everyday people with everyday problems and make a difference in someone's life.

"I want a job that matters and a job where I have the opportunity to help people every time I go into the office," she says.

Rogers plans to become a journalist. Stutzman wants to use her knowledge of art and graphic design to communicate environmental problems to the public.

Tempesta hopes to one day return to YHS as a teacher and "inspire youth like my teachers have inspired me." Warmerdam also plans to teach. She is considering the elementary school level because "I love being around kids and working with them."

The valedictorians' reflections on high school and their advice to other students are varied.

Cunningham says essentially life is good and she advises people to "Enjoy it while you can and realize you are blessed, because there are probably a million people who are willing to trade spaces with you!"

Fruth has found high school to "be an amazing experience overall -- filled with authentic friendships and lessons learned both in and out of school."

Hand's early dreams to be a college basketball player ended one night in a football game when he injured his knee. Over the next months he came to realize that athletics had been merely the outlet he'd chosen for his creativity, intelligence, and work ethic.

"The same qualities that made me successful on the basketball court or football field could be applied to the theatre, Academic Decathlon, or philosophical enquiry," he said.

Kelly, who plans to major in Biblical studies, reflects that "education is like anything else man approaches, it must be sought with diligence and desire."

Harry Baker, who called himself an "early catalyst" in the formation of Yosemite High School, presented awards to the students along with YHS Principal Steve Raupp.

The awards banquet is named for Paul and Martha Pitman, two of the key people in bringing Yosemite High School to Oakhurst. The high school opened in September, 1976.

Jean Gibson, another person active in forming the high school district, attended the dinner and assisted with gift presentations.

Dr. Bill Atwood was master of ceremonies.



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