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ALERT FEATURED

Sons of the American Revolution recognizes 'Outstanding Citizens' in Bloomington

D. Jack Alkire

Apr 4, 2024



The 2024 Class of the Gen. Joseph Bartholomew chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution Citizenship Awards.

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D. Jack Alkire

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BLOOMINGTON — Twenty high school seniors from area schools were honored for their work ethic and aspirations during the annual Citizenship Banquet hosted by the local chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.

The students came from 20 different high schools in McLean and Woodford counties for a special luncheon Thursday at the Bloomington Country Club, where each awardee received a letter of recognition and a challenge coin.

Challenge coins are commemorative markers usually associated with military units and veterans denoting various types of service.

Three students received scholarships of varying amounts for their future education, with two being named Outstanding Citizens.

For 25 years, the Gen. Joseph Bartholomew chapter of the SAR, a national patriotic organization, has been recognizing high schoolers for their accomplishments and representation of the nation's founding principles, said chapter president Jay Cummings.

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Former president of the local chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution Gordon Bidner, right, congratulates the 2024 Class of Citizenship Awardees before their luncheon Thursday at the Bloomington Country Club.

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The SAR also recognized four adults with long ties to the community with the Citizenship Award.

"A big part of the mission of the SAR is really education, education about our founding principles," Cummings said. "We still firmly believe in the founding principles of our country and, you know, as seasons go, sometimes those get lost."

So the chapter actively seeks out local students who embrace those ideals as leaders in their communities, he said.

Diverse, remarkable

Gordon Bidner, former president of the chapter, delivered opening remarks and acted as the master of ceremonies for Thursday's luncheon.

"The class of 2024 is really a great class," Bidner said.

"They're involved in health, architecture, biology, economics, art, engineering, finance, computers, sports communications, biochemistry, elementary education and astrophysics and criminology, and business, and one person wants to be a veterinarian," he told the crowd.

"I'd say that's a diverse group."

In fact, Bidner received a similar recognition when he was a young man around 70 years ago.



Twenty-one students and four adults were recognized at the 25th annual Citizenship Banquet held by the Gen. Joseph Bartholomew chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution on Thursday at the Bloomington County Club.

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During a group photo before the ceremony, Bidner told the students that, if he were to apply for the Citizenship Award in their class, they all would have outshined him.

Besides the 20 students receiving the Citizenship Award, Shreya C. Nallamothu from University High School was recognized for winning the local Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest.

Nallamothu will go on to compete at the state contest and then, if she advances, the national contest, according to her provided biography.

Succeed together

Echoing Bidner's praise for these students, Cummings said he is somewhat comforted about the community's future leaders.

"I think for us to pull these kids together and see them and hear what they've done, what they've accomplished already and where they're going — it just kind of warms our heart to know that we have leaders like this coming up."

The key speaker for the luncheon was a former recipient of the same award.

Adam Hickman received the Outstanding Citizenship Award from this same chapter 22 years ago, when he was heading to the University of Illinois to study actuarial sciences.

"I was much younger, bright eyes, of course," said Hickman, who now lives in Arlington Heights and works for PNC Bank.

Bloomington tent encampment temporarily helps uplift, serve homeless population

"(I was) appreciative to be here with a bunch of great students. I didn't expect to win the outstanding citizenship award," he said. "It was really a shock at the time."

But, that shock pushed him in the right direction and helped him put his best foot forward, he said.

Being an Outstanding Citizen means caring about your community and your neighbors, even when the issues they face do not affect you, Hickman said.

And he had some advice for this year's class, as well.

"Success today can be very narrowly defined, and it doesn't have to be," he said. "It's something that can be shared. It doesn't have to be transactional. And so, if we can all work together, hand in hand, I think we can all benefit without having to step on each other to climb to the top."

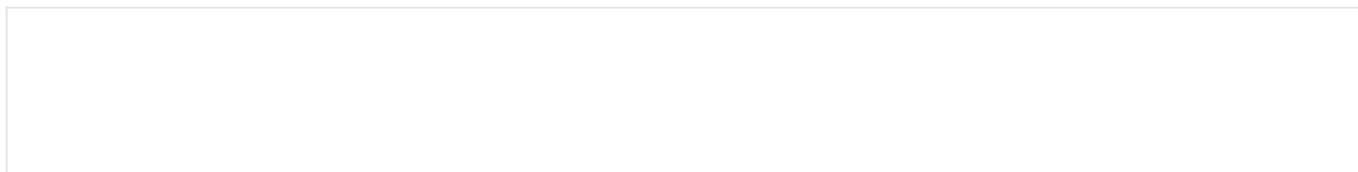


"The Wall That Heals" mobile Vietnam veterans memorial and education center travels to the Woodford County city of Eureka.

Clay Jackson

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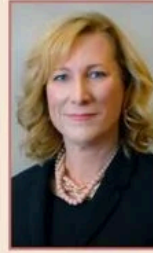


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Student Citizenship Awardees

- John C. Bierman, Tri-Valley High School
- Sarah A. Cross, Olympia High School
- Tyler J. Curl, Prairie Central High School
- Alex O. Dahlhauser, Heyworth High School
- Sara K. Edwards, Ridgeview High School
- Annabelle E. Fortner, Fieldcrest High School
- Addison M. Heineke, Roanoke-Benson High School
- Allison L. Ince, Normal Community High School
- Scarlett E. Kennedy-Hinkle, Calvary Christian Academy
- Thomas R. Pilcher, Central Catholic High School
- Kole B. Rigsby, El Paso-Gridley High School
- Rolen J. Schlipman, Normal Community West High School
- Richa Shukla, University High School
- Travis J. Stanfield, Lexington High School
- Andrew J. Stone, Metamora Township High School
- Allison L. Straub, Bloomington High School
- Cora G. Strawn, Eureka High School
- Matthew L. Stuepfert, LeRoy High School

- William J. Thoma, Cornerstone Christian Academy
- Bricen C. Wilson, Lowpoint-Washburn High School

Scholarship Awardees

- Annabelle E. Fortner, Fieldcrest High School, \$1,000 for Outstanding Citizenship
- Rolen J. Schlipman, Normal Community West High School, \$1,000 for Outstanding Citizenship
- Shreya C. Nallamotheu, University High School, \$250, winner of the local Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest

Adult Citizenship Awardees

- Chris Koos, mayor of the Town of Normal
- Sandra Bidner
- Adam Hickman
- Jo Ellen Gordon

By D. Jack Alkire

General Assignment Reporter
