



NEWS RELEASE

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Hoover Uncommon Students Take Home Over \$60,000 in Awards

WEST BRANCH, IOWA – Oct. 30, 2019 – Fourteen ‘Uncommon Students’ presented the results of their summer service projects during the 22nd Annual Herbert Hoover Uncommon Student Award Stanley and Helen Howe Presentation Day, held Saturday, Oct. 26 at the Hoover Presidential Library and Museum in West Branch. Each student earned at least a \$1,500 award.

High school juniors from across Iowa apply to the program in March of each year, detailing a public service program they’d like to lead in their community. If selected for the program, they then work their project over the summer and present the results before a panel of judges during Presentation Day. Three are chosen who will earn an additional \$10,000 scholarship, among other accolades.

The recipient of the Pete and Meredith Hoover \$10,000 scholarship was Seth Hoffman of Muscatine. His project, *Ramps and Pathways to STEM for Muscatine Students* was developed to get pre-kindergarten students off to a strong STEM start. “I raised over \$26,000 of support and launched an on-going research-based proven program (from UNI) at our schools,” Hoffman said. His program is an inquiry-based play environment which fosters growth in STEM thinking so that students are prepared for STEM success as they move into K-12 classrooms.

Kathryn Wittrock of Urbandale also earned a \$10,000 scholarship for her project, *Recycling Instruments for Needy Kids (RINKS)*. “I started a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization named RINKS to distribute instruments from basements or attics into the hands of students who could not otherwise afford to participate in band programs,” Wittrock said. Her goal is to eliminate the financial barriers preventing underprivileged students in Central Iowa from participating in school music programs.

The third \$10,000 recipient was Alexi Mast of Ankeny. She created a program called, *Filling a Need: Water Aerobics for Adults with Special Needs*. Her project brings together adults with disabilities to build relationships while having the chance to be physically active in a welcoming environment. “My inspiration was to provide an activity for my special needs siblings and other adults with disabilities who often struggle to find a place where they can be part of the community,” Mast said.

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Emma Blair of Ogden attends Ogden High School and was recognized as the Mariah Becker Volunteer Leadership Award winner for her project, *Bringing Art Back to the Youth of a Small Town*. This award is presented by the Uncommon Student Alumni group in memory of Mariah Becker, a member of the Hoover Uncommon Student Award Class of 2000. Becker was a student at the University of Iowa in 2002 when she lost a long and courageous battle with cancer. Blair received a plaque and her name was added to a permanent display at the Hoover Presidential Library. To ensure her advocacy for art programs in Ogden elementary and middle schools carries on, \$500 will be donated to the schools next year after she steps down to attend college.

The Uncommon Student Awards program annually identifies and honors up to 15 Iowa high school juniors who propose and then accomplish a project of their own choosing and design. Grades, test scores, essays and financial need are not evaluated. Application is open to all Iowa high school juniors and is due by March 15.

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About the Foundation

The Hoover Presidential Foundation promotes and supports the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum, National Historic Site, and other programs that enhance the understanding of Herbert Hoover as president and humanitarian.

Photo Captions (no credit needed):

\$10k winners: Seth Hoffman, Kathryn Wittrock and Alexi Mast each earned a \$10,000 scholarship to the school of their choice in the Hoover Uncommon Student Award program.

Alexi Mast: Alexi Mast of Ankeny is presented a \$10,000 scholarship by Leslie Hoover-Lauble, President Hoover's great-granddaughter, at the conclusion of the Hoover Uncommon Student Awards program in West Branch.

Kathryn Wittrock: Kathryn Wittrock of Urbandale is presented a \$10,000 scholarship by Leslie Hoover-Lauble, President Hoover's great-granddaughter, at the conclusion of the Hoover Uncommon Student Awards program in West Branch.

Seth Hoffman: Seth Hoffman of Muscatine is presented a \$10,000 scholarship by Leslie Hoover-Lauble, President Hoover's great-granddaughter, at the conclusion of the Hoover Uncommon Student Awards program in West Branch.

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Mariah Becker Award Winner: Emma Blair of Ogden receives the Mariah Becker Volunteer Leadership Award from Pat Hand at the Hoover Uncommon Student Award program. The award recognizes a student project that embodies the spirit of volunteerism and leadership.

