



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jerry Fleagle, IOM, CAE
Executive Director
Office: 319-643-5327
JFleagle@HooverPF.org

Three Students take Top Honors, \$6,000 each in Uncommon Scholarship Program

WEST BRANCH, IOWA – Oct. 17, 2017 – Saturday, Oct. 14 was Presentation Day at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum for 14 high school seniors in the Uncommon Student Awards program, sponsored by the Hoover Presidential Foundation.

The students applied for the program as high school juniors back in March. The Foundation selected 14 finalists from across Iowa to participate in the program. Each student developed a philanthropic program of their own design and worked on it over the summer. They returned last Saturday to present their results.

Each student was awarded \$1,000 for their efforts. Three were selected by a panel of judges for an additional \$5,000 scholarship award.

Makayla McMann of Corning was one of the three. Her project was titled, ‘Villisca Summer Day Camps.’ “I created and implemented a Day Camp in a small town which had not held any day camps for their youth for over 10 years,” McMann said. The camp ran every Monday for five weeks and served students in grades K through 6. “I thought I might get 20 to 25, and was greatly surprised to have 65 show up for the program!” she added.

JJ Kapur of Valley High School in West Des Moines earned a \$5,000 scholarship for his project, ‘Iowa Sikh Turbanators.’ “I formed a youth-run organization with the goal to ‘turban-ate’ the negative stigmas surrounding the Sikh faith in Des Moines through awareness building and community service events,” Kapur said. He said the Uncommon Student Award program was a natural fit for him. “In my life I’ve always considered myself to be uncommon, particularly because of my appearance and wearing a turban and looking different among my peers. Being part of this program taught me that being uncommon is a good thing and it’s something to be treasured.”

The third scholarship award went to Kaleb Cook from Linn-Mar High School in Marion. His program, ‘Dancing Away the Stigma,’ provided a 10 lesson dance therapy program for Linn-Mar School District special needs students in grades K-12. “It was really inspiring to be an Uncommon Student,” Cook said. “As I learned about Hoover’s humanitarian work, it was really cool to see the similarities we shared in wanting to impact social change,” said Cook. His program would grow to include the general student body and he’s working on releasing his curriculum state-wide with hopes of seeing it go national.

(cont.)





Wesley Hanson, Union High School, La Porte City, was recognized as the Mariah Becker Volunteer Leadership Award winner for his project, ‘STEM of New Opportunities for Youth.’ 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. She was a student at the University of Iowa in 2002 when she lost a long and courageous battle with cancer. Hanson received a plaque and his name was added to a permanent display at the Library-Museum. To ensure the STEM program carries on, \$250 will be donated to help fund the project when it’s turned over to other students at Union High after he 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.

About the Foundation

The Hoover Presidential Foundation is a private nonprofit organization for the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum and Hoover National Historic Site in West Branch, Iowa. The Foundation fosters the collection, interpretation and preservation of historical resources relating to the life, ideas, values and times of Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States.

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Captions: 5k winners: Leslie Hoover-Lauble (2nd from left) presents \$5,000 awards to (L to R) JJ Kapur and Kaleb Cook.

Makayla McMann (L), accepts her award from Leslie Hoover-Lauble.

Mariah Becker Winner: Wesley Hanson (R) is presented the 2017 Mariah Becker Award winner by Taylor Stout, a 2007 Uncommon Student alumni.


