



Uncommon Students Present the Future of Iowa

Fifteen Uncommon Students gathered in the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum's Figge Auditorium on Oct. 22 to present the results of their summer projects. The Hoover Uncommon Student Awards Stanley and Helen Howe Presentation Day event is an opportunity to showcase each student's project and the work they've accomplished. Presentations are made before a panel of judges who select four from the group as \$10,000 scholarship recipients. Each of the 15 students earn a \$1,500 cash award for being chosen as an Uncommon Student.

The presentations and award ceremony were broadcast on Facebook and may be viewed on the Foundation's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HooverPresFoundation.

The program serves Iowa high school students who apply in their junior year. Selections are made in May and the students are invited to spend a weekend in West Branch in June where they receive a healthy dose of Hoover history and tips and mentoring to help them get started on their projects.

The students spend the summer working on their projects and as seniors in high school, return to West Branch in late October to present their results. Emma Allen from State Center was the recipient of the Corinne and Stanley Barber \$1,500 award with her project, *'See Color.'*

The award was endowed by Ann Barber Doyle and her brother, Scott Barber, in honor of their parents who were long-time supporters of the Foundation and the Uncommon Student Award program.

Other award recipients included Josie Boyle of Peosta, who was awarded the Pete and Meredith Hoover \$10,000 scholarship award.

Pete Hoover was a supporter of the Uncommon Student Awards from the very beginning, 25 years ago. This program was so important to Pete and his wife Meredith they included the Uncommon Student Award in their estate plan, providing a gift of support to the program that will last for decades to come.

'Feeding my Community to Help Lessen the Impact of Meat Shortages' was the title of Boyle's project, where she raised broiler chickens and acquired hundreds of gallons of milk and other foods to distribute in her community. "I sold my prize-winning hog to help fund my project," Boyle said.

Claire Gu of West Des Moines received the Innovation \$10,000 Scholarship Award.

Kimber Lockhart, a 2003 Uncommon Student, gave an endowed gift to cover a \$10,000 scholarship to the project that focuses most on innovation, technology or entrepreneurship.

'AI for IA' was the title of Claire's project, where she created elementary school clubs to introduce fifth and sixth grade girls to the rapid growing field of artificial intelligence (AI). Using

a variety of STEM principles, the students got hands-on learning of AI concepts and algorithms to explore how AI can improve daily life.

“AI is technology’s newest frontier,” Claire said. She would like to see more women entering the field.

Connor Fogarty of Clive was also one of the \$10,000 award recipients.

‘Devs Do Good Hackathon’ was the title of his project where he connected students interested in computer science with nonprofits lacking resources or funding to advance their digital initiatives.

“We hosted ‘hackathons’ where students spend the day collaborating with a nonprofit on their technology project and get real-world experience solving issues for their clients,” Fogarty said.

Ethan Strecker of Cedar Rapids was a \$10,000 scholarship recipient as well.

He offered a STEAM leadership program to create more student leaders to help teach other STEAM principles.

“My project help fill education gaps, Ethan said. “ Students are becoming enthusiastic volunteers, assisting with STEAM education while growing into confident career-ready leaders.”

Ethan was also recognized as the Mariah Becker Award recipient. The award is in memory of Mariah Becker, a member of the Hoover Uncommon Student Class of 2000. She was a student at the University of Iowa in 2002 when she lost a long and courageous battle with cancer.

The award recognizes a student project that embodies or promotes the spirit of volunteerism and leadership. While many projects have a defined beginning and end, some projects lend themselves to continuation after students graduate from high school. Those projects are eligible for the Mariah Becker Award and receive a \$500 gift toward its continuation.

Narrowing the field of 15 scholarship recipients was a difficult job. Three of the judges, Dr. Kenneth Brown, Tippie Children Professor of management at the Tippie College of Business, Steve West, Chairman of West Music, and Bill Mann, Owner of the Mann Company, pooled their resources and offered a fifth scholarship to Ethan Hooten of Waterville.

Ethan’s project, *‘Wolfpack Theater Company,’* established an all-inclusive student-led theater company that puts on productions for charity. The company focuses on building participants leadership skills and teaches them the importance of giving back to their communities.

“We have roles for everyone,” Ethan said. “You could run for a touchdown on Friday night and be singing in a musical Saturday night.” The group’s first production was so successful, it not only covered expenses for the rights to the play, but had enough left over to treat the cast to a Des Moines performance of Hamilton.

Our congratulations go out to each of the 2021 Uncommon Students!

Applications for the Uncommon Student Class of 2023 open this month at UncommonStudent.org. The program is open to all high school juniors in Iowa. Application deadline is March 15.