

Support our 2016 Honorees!

Please help continue the outstanding efforts of this year's honorees by supporting their organizations. To make a donation or to learn more about the organizations mentioned today, please visit the following websites:

Project Enybody

<http://www.enybody.org/>

Unmasked Film Trailer

<http://www.docxproductions.com/#!/watch-unmasked/e1mja>

LGBTQQ Committee

<http://www.pausd.org/committees-task-forces/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-questioning-lgbtqq-committee>

ClickPA

<http://www.clickpa.org/>

**The Palo Alto PTA Council
Annual Honorary Service Awards**

**April 22, 2016
Sheraton Hotel Palo Alto**



**A contribution to PTA's Scholarship and Grant Program
is made in honor of each award recipient.**

As the largest volunteer child advocacy association in the nation, National Parent Teacher Association® (PTA) provides parents and families with a powerful voice to speak on behalf of every child and the best tools to help their children be safe, healthy, and successful—in school and in life.

Scholarships are granted to further various kinds of higher learning and are available to graduating high school seniors and education professionals to commend them for their extensive volunteer service in the school and community.



www.pta.org

Thank you to the Honorary Service Awards Committee

Bill Cortright
Butch Garcia
Lillian Hom
Laura Ma
Pat Markevitch
Roxane Mehta
Ilene Page
Melissa Racz
Susan Usman
Louise Valente
Keri Wagner
Jean Znidarsic

**Kathy Durham
City of Palo Alto Retiree and Community Volunteer**

Kathy began bicycle commuting when she moved to the Palo Alto area in 1977. As her children came closer to starting school, Kathy became interested in transportation/commuting issues for families with students. She began her long and accomplished career in 1989 as a PTA volunteer with the city/school district committees devoted to school commute safety, and was honored by the PTA Council with a Sally Siegel award along the way. Kathy joined the city to continue her advocacy, holding several positions over the years and culminating in the Safe Routes to School Coordinator. The Palo Alto Council of PTAs thanks Kathy for her profound contributions to our community. We wish her good health and happiness in her well-deserved retirement!

**Katherine Baker
Chief Academic Officer, Secondary Education**

Ms Baker served the PAUSD school district for 6 years, most recently as Director and now Chief Academic Officer of Secondary Education. Katherine began her teaching career in Oak Grove School District, where she taught for seven years before moving on to serve as a middle school assistant principal, an elementary principal, and then a middle school principal. She came to PAUSD in 2010, when she was hired as principal of Terman Middle School. Katherine plans to enjoy her retirement by spending more time with her family and perhaps traveling. Thank you, Katherine, for your long-standing service to education and PAUSD.

**Nancy Pang
Coordinator Library and IT**

Nancy came to PAUSD 8 years ago after working for many years in the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District. Nancy has played a critical role in the education of teachers and other staff. Each year Nancy creates and maintains a catalog of courses that enables staff to learn from each other about topics as diverse as the blended classroom, AAC and special education, filmmaking, Schoology, Chromebooks, and iPads. Nancy has not only recruited teachers and encouraged staff to participate in these classes; she has also reached out to PTA volunteers and others to ensure that they are aware of district's direction and any opportunities to participate in classes or conferences themselves. For this and many other things, we recognize Nancy for her years of service to PAUSD and community.

Crossing Guards Certificate of Appreciation

Rain or shine, their bright yellow vests and stop signs greet our students as they arrive for their school day, and again as they head for home. With a smile and, “How are you doing?” or a high-five, the PAUSD crossing guards make sure students are safe and welcomed as they walk and bike to school.

We are fortunate to live in a community that values and encourages green transportation, which includes walking and biking to school. And yes, we adults do need to be reminded to slow down when children are around and to come to a complete stop and pay attention to the road.

With twelve elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools to watch over, Palo Alto crossing guards cover a lot of intersections, many on busy streets. A team of thirty crossing guards and two alternates tackles the challenge each school day, ensuring the safety of our children. District students often find a tough day brightened by the encouragement and camaraderie of these amazing people. Many guards, such as Dante at Walter Hays, have been with the district for years and have formed strong bonds with the school community.

Overseen by Don Shamp, Supervisor, Crossing Guards Palo Alto and San Carlos Unified School Districts, who was once a guard himself, the team includes:

Judy at Addison; Arthur at Barron Park; Julius and Robert at Duveneck; Eileen at El Carmelo; Oscar at Fairmeadow/JLS; Dante at Walter Hays; Theodore, Sandy, Marilyn and Glen at Hoover; Yahai, Raymond and Bob at JLS; Paul, Dan and John at Jordan; Helen at Juana Briones; Bob at Ohlone; Glenn, Jill and Michael at Palo Verde; Diana at Escondido and Soula,,Steve, Donald, Masako, Wendell, Michael and Shao at Terman. Alternates: Brandy Olsen and Michael Lee.

With gratitude for their outstanding efforts to keep Palo Alto children safe on their way to and from school, the Palo Alto PTA Council is proud to present to Don Shamp and his team of crossing guards a Certificate of Appreciation.

**Palo Alto Council of PTAs is proud to participate in the
California State PTA**

Honorary Service Awards Program

This annual Program Celebrates PTA’s Local Partnerships
and Honors Community Volunteers for Exemplary Service to
Palo Alto Children, Youth and Families

ORDER OF EVENTS

Welcome

Jean Znidarsic

Acknowledgements

Bill Cortright

State of the PTA Council

Susan Usman

Award Presentations

Elizabeth May

William Zhou

Shashank Joshi

Susan Usman

Annie Bedichek

Jessica Ferrell

Keri Wagner

Sunny Dykwel

Mary Bussmann

Isabelle Blanchard and William Zhou

Jean Znidarsic

Pat Burt

Nana Chancellor and Sara Woodham Certificate of Appreciation

If you say “Education,” Sara Woodham says, “I’m in.” Likewise, Nana Chancellor has never shied away from a challenge when it comes to helping the community. Fortunately, both of these parents signed on to lead the campaign to pass the 2015 Parcel Tax for Palo Alto schools.

A full-time job, the campaign began with strategic planning, followed by six months of endless calls, meetings, debates, blogs, interviews, email storms, phone banking, fund raising, volunteer searches, event planning, community outreach, and consensus-seeking deep into the night.

Born and raised in Denmark, Nana Chancellor has always had a passion for helping others. During her high school years, she worked as an aide, visiting people who were elderly or disabled in their homes. Measure A is just one of her many contributions to the local schools and community, such as fundraising, site council, room parent, teacher appreciation, carnivals... you name it.

Growing up in Jamaica, Sara Woodham learned the importance of good education early on, observing the positive impact access to good teachers and school resources can have, as well as the important role of the parents. A well-known advocate for the under-served through her leadership of PASS (Parent Advocates for Student Success), an organization devoted to helping families get the most out of PAUSD opportunities, Sara’s tireless work on Measure A demonstrated her commitment to all students.

As a result of their efforts, Measure A received more than 3 Yes votes for every No vote, ensuring the renewal of a tax that generates more than \$12 million for the PAUSD budget each year, along with an additional \$2.3 million annually to “preserve excellence in academic programs, including science, engineering, math, reading, writing, arts, and music. It is also used to attract and retain qualified teachers and to advance health, well-being, and equitable opportunities for every student.”

A great win for the Palo Alto school community!

With thanks for their outstanding contributions toward improving the educational environment and opportunities for all PAUSD children, the Palo Alto PTA Council proudly presents Nana Chancellor and Sara Woodham a Certificate of Appreciation.

Diane Downend Sally Siegel Award

The saying *It Takes a Village* refers to parents like Diane Downend, always willing to bring the team snack, the donuts, or the whole lunch if needed. From the first time she turned up at PAUSD, Diane rolled up her sleeves and got to work, bringing with her an unflinching sense of humor and a down-to-earth approach that swept other volunteers, students, and teachers along.

As her three children made their way through PAUSD, Diane was always on the front lines. When her children entered Nixon elementary, she served as room parent/treasurer for 18 classrooms, and chaired the 5th grade promotion. At Terman, she served as PTA treasurer, theater volunteer, and co-chair of the 8th grade promotion.

As her children moved on to Gunn, Diane took on PTSA roles such as president, executive vice president, and treasurer. She participated in the 2010 Youth Forum, coordinated campus mindfulness training, and organized the back-to-school mailings for many years. During her tenure at Gunn, Diane formed the Challenge Success Committee and revived the dormant Gunn Parents Community Service Boosters. She took on volunteer roles in athletics, choir, and theater, and co-chaired grad night twice, in 2012 and 2015.

Alongside her school PTA work, Diane was active on the PTA council for several years as treasurer and auditor. She continues on the Partners in Education board for the 6th year, currently serving as Treasurer, Director of Finance.

Meanwhile, Diane’s day job for the last dozen years is Chief Financial Officer for Edenbridge Homes, a successful regional home builder. She served on the Mid-Peninsula Housing Corporation Board of Directors for 20+ years, as board chair, treasurer, secretary, and chair of the audit committee.

Now with three children in college, the Bay Area native is winding down her school-related activities. Diane can be found cheering her family, Team Z, at art shows, theatre performances, sporting events, and pumpkin-growing competitions.

For her years of unstinting generosity and hard work on behalf of our students, the Palo Alto PTA Council is proud to present Diane Downend the Sally Siegel Award.

Matt Hall and Lisa Hall Continuing Service Award

This year, Gunn's Student Executive Council and Paly's Associated Student Body sought to unify two high schools, two student leadership groups, two student activities directors, and work together as one community. Lisa Hall, Gunn's Student Activities Director for the past 11 years, and Matt Hall, Paly's Student Activities Director for the past 5 years, guided their students in looking beyond the cross town rivalry, and helped them discover that they really aren't that different from each other.

The first joint activity the students organized was the Paly-Gunn Night Rally, which included friendly competitions such as relay races and a staff vs. student volleyball game. Together, the cheer and dance teams from both schools created and performed a new routine for this special event.

At a planning retreat, the students decided on more events for the two high schools to enjoy together. The first Palo Alto-Gunn High School Winter Dance held at Mitchell Park Community Center broke attendance records for a school dance.

Both Halls have teaching responsibilities in addition to their student government roles. Lisa teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Gunn. She encourages students with different abilities to join the SEC, noting that different skill sets are particularly suited to positions such as the Commissioners for Diversity and Wellness. Lisa works with the SEC as an advisor, steering the students to brainstorm, organize, and manage many of the activities themselves.

A renowned juggler and master juggling instructor, Matt also teaches Japanese at Paly. He has worked to shift the definition of service for his students by helping them see that service involves the sacrifice of time, talent, and personal will for the benefit of others, not the self. He hopes to move the ASB in a slightly different direction – one in which students seek office not for the name and prestige, but for what they can contribute to their Paly community.

Both high schools benefit from the Halls' unique partnership. Clearly, Lisa and Matt are living examples of how *We're All In This Together*.

For their unique approach to building bridges within the Palo Alto community and their hard work mentoring and guiding students, the Palo Alto PTA Council is pleased to present to Lisa and Matt Hall the Continuing Service Award.

Shannon Yang Very Special Person Award

Gunn High School junior Shannon Yang's peers say she is one of the most involved and caring people they've met during high school.

Shannon served on the PAUSD Minority Achievement and Talent Development Advisory Committee, bringing a student voice to the challenges that minority students face in high school. She provided key insights on problems that were universal to all students as well as those specific to underrepresented students. Shannon's honesty, the caliber of the questions she asked, and her commitment to equity enriched the discussions greatly.

As the Oracle-Student Executive Council Liaison, Shannon is a contributing writer for the Gunn newspaper *The Oracle*. For the paper's January feature on diversity, her article *Minority Students Speak About Prejudice: Stereotypes on Campus*, examined the observations of four minority students at Gunn, pointing out the need to increase awareness on campus.

Shannon currently serves on the City of Palo Alto Teen Advisory Board and Project Enybody, which serve the entire Palo Alto teen community. Project Enybody focuses on raising awareness of and combating climate change through education. The word "Enybody" is intentionally spelled with an "E" instead of an "A" forming an acronym for "Earth Needs You."

Shannon is the cofounder of Students United Against Cancer. SUAC provides awareness and education about cancer to the community, and works to provide support to those impacted by the disease through events and a speaker series. Shannon is also the Social Media Manager for ClickPA, a one-stop site for teen events in Palo Alto and surrounding areas.

In her spare time, Shannon is a Camp Everytown City of Palo Alto delegate and a member of the TEDxGunnHighSchool Leadership Team. She volunteers for Financial Literacy for Youth (FLY) to provide a peer-to-peer financial education to middle school students, and for Girl-Up Palo Alto, a city sponsored group dedicated to changing policies and raising funds to support United Nations programs that help girls around the world who are in need.

For her leadership and excellent contributions as a student, the Palo Alto PTA Council presents to Shannon Yang the Very Special Person Award.

Andrew Baer and Christian Leong Very Special Person Award

Filmmakers Andrew Baer and Christian Leong began planning a documentary on teen mental health following the tragic events in Palo Alto in 2014-15. They assembled other interested students from Paly and Gunn high schools and founded a production team: DocX Films. In addition to Baer and Leong, the team of 13 students included Josh Yuen, Joseph Kao, Daniel Cottrell, Leslie Garcia, Natalie Snyder, Stas Ilyasov, Zack Gibson, Yui Sasajima, Lydia Sun, Tanner Kerrins, and Rachel Rothberg.

Throughout the summer of 2015, they interviewed and filmed students, families, community members, and physicians. To minimize any possible negative effects of opening this sensitive subject, team members consulted mental health experts and followed recommended guidelines for journalists covering issues around suicide and mental health. Their film, *Unmasked*, premiered in September 2015.

“The message of the film,” says Baer “is to encourage conversation between youth and adults throughout the community and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.”

Although the film has won several awards, beginning with the Award for Best Short Film in November 2015 from the Big Asian Festival in Los Angeles, and including the Student Filmmaker Awards Tournament, its creators remain focused on their original goal. “It’s nice to have the film recognized in competitions,” says Leong “but the real sense of accomplishment was getting a film out to impact the Palo Alto community in a positive way.” He sees that one benefit from entering the film into contests is exposure. “With each audience member viewing the film, we were able to spread our messages [to promote mental health], and raise awareness about the rising issue of teen suicide.”

Christian and Andrew are passionate about promoting hope and look forward to highlighting issues that promote mental health for all students. “We want teens to realize that there is a lot to live for and that if problems do arise, many adults in the community are open to listening and working together to find solutions.”

For their outstanding efforts in reaching out to promote well-being among teens in their community and beyond, the Palo Alto PTA Council presents to the creators of *Unmasked*, Andrew Baer and Christian Leong, the Very Special Person Award.

Carmen Muñoz Continuing Service Award

When we think about people who have made a difference, Carmen Muñoz immediately comes to mind. Carmen has worked relentlessly to enhance our schools so that they are more inclusive, cohesive, and supportive to all families. Her work has been successful at multiple levels: individual schools, the district, and the community at large.

Carmen’s involvement started over 10 years ago when her daughter was in kindergarten at Walter Hays. When she learned about the Voluntary Transfer Program, she realized that many VTP families spoke little English and needed help “navigating school.” Carmen began to act as a liaison for those families, partnering with Walter Hays staff, including Principal Mary Bussmann, along with the PTA to help parents who had not traditionally been heard. Through these partnerships, Carmen helped to pioneer several Walter Hays traditions including the Cultural Festival, Community Conversations, Homework Program, and the Community Outreach Dinner, which support the integration of the entire community at Walter Hays.

Carmen’s impact does not stop at Walter Hays but spans the entire Palo Alto community. She served on the Minority Achievement and Talent Development Advisory Committee assembled by Dr. McGee. In her role as PTAC VP of Community Outreach, Carmen has continued her mission to augment the inclusive environment and mentor minority parents within the district, all the while encouraging parents to take leadership roles in the community and striving to bring many of the programs that have succeeded at Walter Hays to other schools in the district.

Carmen’s dedication to creating a more inclusive community has caught on, with the result that families of different backgrounds are more connected to the district and the surrounding community. In return, they are able to give back by taking on leadership roles, volunteering their time, even making donations, all of which has a positive impact on the community!

For her boundless energy toward building connections for PAUSD students and their families, the Palo Alto PTA Council proudly presents Carmen Muñoz the Continuing Service Award.

Joy Henry Hinton Honorary Service Award

With her strong sense of family and community, Joy Henry Hinton wears many hats. Tirelessly donating her time and more to benefit all of our district's students, Joy has held multiple leadership positions on PTA executive boards while often chairing several events throughout the year.

Positions she has held include: PTSA President at Gunn for two years, PTSA Executive Vice President at Gunn, and PTA President at Terman. She has chaired Gunn's most highly anticipated event of the year, the Annual Turkey Feast. One of Joy's most significant roles is that of the New Family Ambassador, in which she welcomes all new Gunn families with a community potluck dinner. As a result, our new arrivals have the opportunity to meet each other and the administration team, learn how to navigate the high school system, and know where to ask for help.

For the past few years at Juana Briones School, Joy has chaired the Great Gatherings Silent Auction events, which are teacher-and family-sponsored community-building parties. Joy and her husband Andrew host several events themselves each year, which might include a family hike or an exotic evening of cooking and wine tasting.

Recently, Joy's diplomatic skills have soothed our parent community during stressful times. Her tact and candor lead our families to trust her actions and seek her opinion.

The PTA Council started the 2015-16 school year without an eNews coordinator. Because eNews is critical to PTA communication throughout the district, this presented a significant challenge. Joy was one of two people who stepped up and volunteered to take this on, and she does an absolutely superb job, responding to every difficult situation that arose throughout the year in a thoughtful, timely manner.

Outside of her school activities, Joy supports political and educational causes and is an accomplished attorney. To understand her passion for family and community, you need only look at her children, Sarah and Eric. They mirror Joy's strength, talent, and pride in a job well-done.

For her many contributions and for stepping up in a time of need, the Palo Alto PTA Council is pleased to present Joy Henry Hinton the Honorary Service Award.

PAUSD LGBTQQ Committee Honorary Service Award

We know that students learn best in a safe and welcoming school environment where they feel included, engaged, and accepted. Creating this climate takes a village, including teachers, principals, aides, volunteers, students and, of course, parents. The District's LGBTQQ Committee is comprised of such individuals, dedicated to fostering inclusive communities through advocacy, education, awareness, outreach, and collaboration to ensure the success and well-being of students regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

This year saw the culmination of a multiple year effort by the committee to advance an inclusive and affirming set of district policies and administrative regulations recognizing the rights and dignity of gender diverse and transgender students. PAUSD policy now serves as a model for districts around the Bay Area, and indeed the nation, for reducing stigmatization and ensuring the integration of transgender and gender diverse students in educational programs and activities at all levels.

In addition, the committee has continued to raise awareness of the needs of LGBTQQ students and families, and to advocate for training and education. The resulting comprehensive gender diversity training program is a model for building capacity and expertise within a school district. From supporting individual students to providing resources for school sites, as well as championing district-wide change, the LGBTQQ Committee is at the forefront of fostering inclusive communities to ensure the success of all students.

To highlight the work of one long standing committee member: Sara Armstrong recognizes that many of the norms and practices at schools needlessly damage a student's sense of identity and ability to authentically express themselves. Sara calmly and resolutely raises awareness, educating people across the district, including administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and journalists about LGBTQQ needs, challenging the inertia of the status quo, and leading us to think through and take action on what is right for everyone.

Committee members also include: Carolyn Benfield, Kathleen Bransfield, Debbie Cain, Jose Corado, Austin Davis, Jennifer DiBrienza, Lara Ephron, Elizabeth Estrada, Alexandra Gatley, Catherine Harkness, Lillian Hom, Diane Ichikawa, Emily Kingshill, Pier Angeli La Place, Kristin Little, Debbie Lombardi-Lytle, Dafne Luna, Stephanie Martinson, Anthony Ross, Stephanie Sheridan, Susan Usman, Kathy Viet, Thomas William and Xiaoxia Zhu.

In grateful awe of the work of its members, with the goal of improving the lives of all our youth, The Palo Alto PTA Council presents the LGBTQQ Committee the Honorary Service Award.

Barbara Best Honorary Service Award

Barbara Best comes from a family of public education professionals who have spent most of their careers teaching in low-income communities. When she learned that lunch may be the first meal of the day for over 500 low-income PAUSD elementary school students, she decided to establish a free breakfast program for these children at all of the schools they attend. At a series of meetings with district personnel and community leaders, she presented research proving students who eat breakfast have improved behavior and cognition. Barbara convinced them that this would bolster the district's efforts to close the achievement gap, and the resulting Elementary School Free Breakfast Program is scheduled to be up and running in the fall of 2016.

While raising a current JLS student, a current Gunn student, and a recent Gunn graduate, Barbara served as VP of Communications at Gunn and at JLS. She has also served on several committees, including the Gunn WASC leadership group, the district Safe and Welcoming Schools Committee, the Gunn Challenge Success team, and the JLS Site Council. Her successful projects include the installation of a large sound system in the JLS multi-purpose room and her close work with the City of Palo Alto on an equitable, transparent funding stream for the Middle School Athletics Program. In addition, she has taken the lead in many theater, sports, and elementary school groups.

In her current roles as president of the JLS PTA and co-president of the Gunn PTSA, Barbara has been a strong force for inclusion of all students, staff, and parents. She has established standardized PTA infrastructure that ensures the smooth transition of events and volunteers from one year to the next, created new and expanded existing programs that build community and reduces parent stress (a particular passion of hers), and worked to ensure consistent and clear communication.

Next year, Barbara will continue her leadership as co-president of the Gunn PTSA. Where others might see only problems, Barbara recognizes opportunities, and she will continue to revamp the PTSA's processes for greater efficiency and enjoyment for the volunteers. Barbara's endless energy will be put to work on school climate and encouraging parent-teacher partnerships throughout the district.

For her steadfast advocacy of student well-being, along with her many other contributions, The Palo Alto PTA Council proudly presents Barbara Best the Honorary Service Award.

Chuck McDonnell Honorary Service Award

A tour of schools in the Palo Alto Unified School District provides numerous examples of the scope and effectiveness of the work of Landscape Operations Director Chuck McDonnell. Chuck has done an outstanding job of maintaining, safeguarding, and beautifying the school sites, which enhances the experience of everyone who spends time at our schools. In addition to well cared for trees and other plants, one can find edible garden spaces and native landscapes as well.

Working collaboratively with principals, teachers, parents, and community organizations to bring these improvements into fruition, Chuck demonstrates a willingness to incorporate the vision of the larger school community while keeping the focus on sustainability and aesthetics in the finished.

The projects he has made possible not only enrich the learning experience for district students, but at times engage surrounding neighborhoods. Recent innovative water saving measures have resulted in special recognition from the Silicon Valley Water Conservation Coalition.

A water conservation award granted to PAUSD on March 23, 2016 was due in large part to Chuck's work converting irrigated turf grass to drought resistant native plants and meadows. In total 20,000 square feet of turf have been converted, and more than \$42,000 generated for the district through water saving rebates.

For his outstanding contributions to the beauty and sustainability of PAUSD landscapes, improving the experience of everyone who spends time at district schools, the Palo Alto PTA Council would like to present Chuck McDonnell the Honorary Service Award.