

Tulare County Office of Education
CHARACTER COUNTS! Week 2023
Newspaper Student Representatives



Student Name: Kayla Hernandez

School: Cutler Elementary School, Cutler

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Megan Thiessen

Statement:

When I think of Kayla, I see one characteristic that truly stands out, and that is her caring demeanor. Kayla is a student who goes out of her way to be kind to her classmates and other students in her grade. She shows this by the way she speaks to others in the classroom, on the playground, how she reacts to incidents, and how she acts with grace through challenging tasks. Kayla goes out of her way to ensure that everyone around her is taken care of and has everything they need to be successful. One example that we saw in class was when we were working on an inquiry activity for a science lesson. Kayla helped her group get set up and noticed another group was struggling. She made sure that her group was taken care of and then supported the other group. No one asked her but she saw the need and took the initiative. Incidents such as this one are a common occurrence in our classroom. The love Kayla has for her classmates is evident in everything she does. Students feel safe sharing their ideas because their environment had a nurturer like Kayla Hernandez.

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Student Name: Madison Patino

School: El Monte Middle School, Orosi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Jose Montemayor

Statement:

My name is Jose Luis Montemayor and I am an eighth grade English and History teacher at El Monte Middle School. I am writing this letter to nominate Madison Patino for the 2023 Kids of Character Award, for the Pillar of Responsibility. I have had Madison in my English and History classes since the beginning of the year. I think that she is an excellent candidate because she embodies the qualities of responsibility in her life every day. One reason I feel that she deserves this award is because Madison has turned in every assignment on time or early since the school year started. Let me tell you why that is significant. This amazing student has started doing voluntary conditioning for sports to help her become a better player. Madison gets up every morning at 4:30 a.m. Monday through Friday to train for two hours before school even starts. She then goes to school and has soccer or basketball practice afterwards and she still manages to not only complete her assignments but excel at them. She has never once complained or asked for an extension on any assignment even with her busy schedule. This means she's willing to sacrifice in order to be successful in life. If that is not the true meaning of responsibility, I don't know what is. What is amazing about her is that she is learning these lessons at a very young age and how to apply them to her life. When she comes into the classroom, Madison brings life and vitality with her. She always has a smile on her face and a compliment for her fellow students or myself. She is kind and polite, respectful of the other students and above all she is incredibly grateful to everyone around her. It is very rare to meet someone with so much gratitude in their heart, especially at such a young age. When I look at someone like Madison, I see aspirations of how I would like to be. She is an inspiration to me to be a better teacher for all my students by seeing how she conducts herself. For these reasons I believe she is truly worthy of being selected for the Pillar of Responsibility.

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Student Name: Sofia Mejia

School: Golden Valley Elementary School,
Orosi

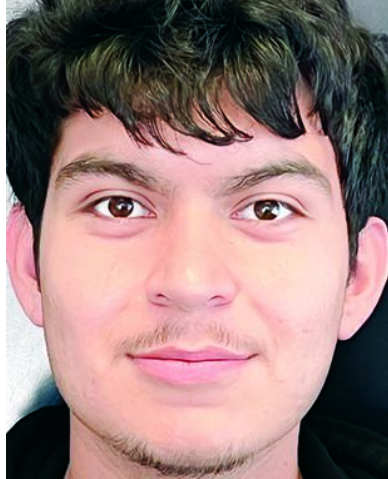
Pillar: Citizenship

Nominator: Norma Lupa

Statement:

When I saw that it was time to nominate Kids of Character, I immediately thought of Sofia. Our paths often cross on campus and she is ALWAYS doing the right thing. She cares about others, uses our playground equipment appropriately, respects her peers, and she notifies staff when she sees something is wrong. One afternoon, I called her home to report that a student had not been respectful toward Sofia. After I talked to her dad, I asked if I might talk to Sofia to get some information regarding the incident. Her dad, "Yes, of course you can talk to Sofia, she is right here next to me doing her homework." It didn't surprise me that this young lady goes home and immediately starts her homework. I applaud Sofia and her parents for sending us this awesome little girl who comes to school ready to learn and ready to be an outstanding citizen every day.

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Student Name: Juan Salazar

School: Orosi Community Based Instruction, Orosi

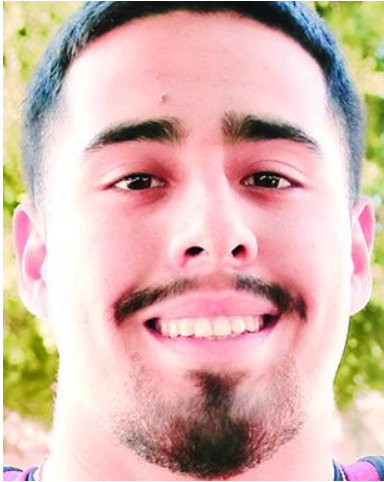
Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Chloe Rodriguez Hernandez

Statement:

I would like to nominate our student Juan Salazar for his outstanding display of responsibility. He is a student at Orosi CBI. He currently works in my K-6 AcCEL class in Cutler as part of his community-based work. Within the classroom he has done an amazing job being an example to our students and giving back to the program that has helped him so much along the way. Juan is not scared to jump right in and help support the students by reading to them and giving them support to complete their work. Juan takes his job very seriously as "Teacher Juan" and takes pride in his work. Juan has not only been a great example to the students in my class but also to the others in his program by setting the example of a hard worker. It has been an honor to work with him.

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Student Name: Andrew Camarillo

School: Orosi High School, Orosi

Pillar: Respect

Nominator: Marlena Celaya

Statement:

It is with honor that I recommend Andrew Camarillo for the Pillar of Respect. As the Principal of Orosi High School and an educator for the past seventeen years, I have yet to see such a respectful, well rounded student athlete as Andrew. Not only was he selected as an All State Running Back as a Junior in high school, but he's also maintained a 3.0 GPA. I've had the privilege of being Andrew's middle and high school principal and have witnessed the respect he gives teachers, teammates, and opponents. During a playoff game last year, Andrew was injured and could not finish the game. After the game, the entire opposing team walked over to him, as he was restricted to the bench with an injured knee and shook his hand. This was a true testimony to the respect he has earned by opposing teams because of the respect he gives. On another occasion, I witnessed Andrew bringing his offensive line donuts on the day after he broke a football record. He is the young man all mothers want their son to be!

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Student Name: Jaylah Alanis

School: Palm Elementary School, Orosi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: David Belman

Statement:

Jaylah is a student that exemplifies responsibility and doing what you are supposed to do! Her most noticeable qualities were self-discipline and accountability. Jaylah does a wonderful job at keeping herself on task and following all directions. She would also look out for her peers and remind them to follow the classroom rules and expectations. This student has a high level of self-discipline and accountability because she would ask for my help whenever she needed additional support. She always seeks to improve in all subjects! Her attitude towards learning is second to none and her growth mindset helps her achieve anything she sets her mind to!

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Student Name: Amalia De La Cruz

School:

Dinuba Community Based Instruction, Dinuba

Pillar: Fairness

Nominator: Randall Steen

Statement:

Amalia is a student who has exhibits and displays the Six Pillars of Character. I chose to nominate Amalia because she is a model student. Amalia helps her peers in class and is always fair and kind to all. She is respectful, and I know when I need something from the students, Amalia I can trust to do what she says she is going to do. Amalia cares about others in her classroom and is fair because she remembers whose turn it is for the special or preferred activities that happen in the class. Amalia will help me remember whose turn it is to go on community outings, volunteer to accept additional responsibilities, and forfeit her turn when she knows others have not had a fair chance to participate. Amalia is currently taking additional classes to earn her G.E.D. and exhibits great responsibility by staying on top of her work and completing her work from the Adult School. Amalia is a joy to have in class, and I know that I and all of Amalia's classmates will be held to the CHARACTER COUNTS! standards.

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Student Name: Sukhdeep Kaur

School: Dinuba High School, Dinuba

Pillar: Citizenship

Nominators: TJ Celaya and Tonya Pennebaker

Statement:

Sukhdeep Kaur, also nicknamed Sandy, is an ideal example of respect as she demonstrates this in everything she says and does at Dinuba High. Currently a Senior, Sandy's character is noticeably admirable to staff and students. As current president of HOSA, one of Dinuba High's largest clubs on campus, Sandy is attentive and caring to the underclassmen and shows this by getting to know them and reaching out to them early in the school year. She continues her care for them by helping them adapt to the challenges of High School and being a mentor. Throughout the year, Sandy continues to make the underclassman feel welcome by creating interactive team building and get-to-know-you activities to ensure they feel comfortable and at home at DHS. Sandy loves being of service to her fellow students and club members. She has served selflessly as an officer in various campus clubs and organizations in many differing capacities.

Her desire to serve has led her to pursue different roles of leadership such as secretary and video technician for NAMI. She has also been secretary of FFA, ACCEPT and Student Council within her high school tenure. As previously mentioned, she is the current HOSA president where she graciously serves her underclassmen and her peers. Sandy is always ready to collaborate with faculty to share in decision-making to execute plans and projects.

Sandy has remained a detail-oriented person that works tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure every club and school event she is involved in is a success. She is active in HOSA as a community service lead for future health professionals in her grade level. Her accomplishments in her service are vast as she has created digital fliers for events in NAMI, HOSA and other clubs. She also leads HOSA meetings and manages the club's social media page on Instagram. Sandy was also a key figure in organizing a care package for the homeless campaign whereby students put together large duffel bags filled with essentials and even Christmas gifts to give to the homeless last holiday season. Despite all of Sandy's accolades and accomplishments, what truly makes her a pillar of respect on our campus and within our community is that she does everything with a servant's heart and with sincere kindness. Sandy's gentle spirit and humility may often go under the radar, but it is these qualities that cause her to be a true and genuine leader.

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Student Name: Addison Moreno

School: Jefferson Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Trustworthiness

Nominator: Maria Mendoza

Statement:

Addison is a very trustworthy student. I can always count on her to be honest and tell the truth. She is an excellent helper and will not tell a lie. She will help and watch other students in the class and help them to stay on task. If not, she will report back to me who was following the rules and who wasn't. She reports to me daily to let me know how our class was in the cafeteria, during recess, or after school. I can always trust that Addison will have her work completed, and that she is ready for the next assignment.

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Student Name: Kevin Aguilera

School: *Lincoln Elementary School, Dinuba*

Pillar: Trustworthiness

Nominator: Courtney Myers

Statement:

Kevin is new to school but is already proving to be a kid of character. I can always count on Kevin to be listening, following directions, and doing the right thing. He is a kind friend to others and eager to help when asked. I love having Kevin in my class and cannot wait to see what he does in his bright future.

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Student Name: David Balderas

School: Ronald Reagan Academy, Dinuba

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Terry McReynolds

Statement:

David is dedicated to his academic success. He expresses kindness to others, sets goals for himself, works hard, and inspires others by being a role model and leader in his school community. David has a growth mindset, a deeply held belief that a person can learn anything given enough time and effort. David is able to break down a big goal, like solving a big problem, innovating or achieving a higher grade, into small bite-sized pieces; therefore, he is more likely to be successful. Also, David is able to see his studies in the context of the wider world. For example, he can relate how argument writing can help him one day in the future if he has to go to court and pay a fine. Mr. Balderas is our RAP (Responsibility, Accountability, Perseverance) student .

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Student Name: Ramiro Hernandez Lopez

School: Roosevelt Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Maricela Ledezma

Statement:

Ramiro is an eleven year-old boy who brings a smile to all his peers and teachers. He demonstrates kindness by helping the educators and friends. He also loves demonstrating his kindness by opening the doors for teachers and classmates in such a chivalry manner that it is heartwarming to see. During clean up time he will help clean without being told. He is such a great helper and loves to learn. He loves to carry items for teachers by delivering folders to the office or books to the library. During classwork, his best friend turns to him for assistance when a task may be challenging. Ramiro always lends a helpful hand and helps his best friend by giving hints as to what the right answer may be. Ramiro also demonstrates generosity. When we are passing out goodies in the classroom, Ramiro always offers his portion to his friends to ensure everyone has gotten a share.

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Student Name: Kailah Mendoza

School: Sierra Vista High School, Dinuba

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Linda Danner

Statement:

I am writing to nominate one of my exceptional eleventh-grade students, Kailah Mendoza, for the "Pillar of Responsibility". In my years as an English teacher, I have had the privilege of witnessing numerous students who exhibit impressive qualities, but Kailah stands out as a shining example of responsibility.

Kailah has consistently demonstrated a remarkable sense of responsibility. Firstly, she is a diligent student who takes her studies seriously. Her assignments are always completed on time, and her work reflects a high level of dedication and thoroughness. She actively participates in one-on-one discussions, showing a commitment to her learning.

What truly distinguishes Kailah is her unwavering commitment to her extracurricular activities. She is actively involved in her 7th-period Friday activities. She is not afraid to try something new and shows great confidence in her abilities. Kailah has consistently demonstrated dependability, taking charge of her responsibilities with grace and integrity, which benefits our school and our community.

Moreover, Kailah exhibits remarkable leadership skills by setting an example for her peers. A few of her classmates turn to her for guidance and support, knowing that she can be relied upon to provide assistance when needed. Her ability to juggle her academic commitments and extracurricular activities is truly commendable.

In conclusion, Kailah Mendoza exemplifies the trait of responsibility in every aspect of her academic life. Her dedication to her studies, active involvement in extracurricular activities, and her role as a reliable mentor to her peers make her an outstanding candidate for the Pillar of Responsibility. I wholeheartedly recommend her for this well-deserved recognition, confident that her actions will continue to inspire others in our school community.

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Student Name: Mia Bravo

School: Wilson Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Maria Lichtenwaldt

Statement:

Mia Bravo has shown responsibility, as well as several other positive character traits, in this new school year. She has been a role model of kindness and integrity to her peers, as well as her siblings. She dutifully helps her twin brothers get to breakfast, then to their kindergarten class, each morning. She has continued to blossom into a responsible and exemplary student that would make any parent proud! We love you, Mia Bravo, and know you will fulfill any goals you set for yourself now and in the future! You are a WARRIOR!

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Student Name: Monserrat Becerra Mendoza

School: Kings River Union School, Kingsburg

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Michelle Etchegoinberry

Statement:

Monserrat Becerra Mendoza represents all the pillars, but caring is where she shines. Monserrat has a heart of gold and advocates for herself and others. She is the youngest child in her family with her first nephew recently being born. She is very proud of her family. The character traits her family has instilled in her carryover into the school setting. She is nurturing, compassionate, empathetic, logical, and mature when it comes to challenging or uncomfortable situations. Monserrat protects her peers and younger students fiercely. She is not afraid to stand up for what is right and for what is safe. She is a member of King River's SAVE Promise Club (Sandy Hook Foundation) teaching students to protect their community. She encourages them to "say something" to protect themselves and others. Monserrat is always willing to help others and to provide comfort when needed. In typical teenage situations, when faced with challenges, Monserrat respectfully removes herself, never creating additional issues. She has created relationships with trusted adults that she will report situations to if needed. This school year, one of her daily highlights is to meet a kindergarten student with exceptional needs at the gate in the mornings to walk him to class. Monserrat is a tremendous young lady and certainly makes the world a better place.

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Student Name: Yovanni Moreno

School: Monson-Sultana Joint Union School, Sultana

Pillar: Respect

Nominator: Mayra Ortega

Statement:

I would like to nominate Yovanni for his exceptional kindness, respect, and dedication to both his peers and the school community. Yovanni's actions consistently exemplify the qualities that make him a deserving candidate for this award.

Yovanni's selflessness and empathy are evident in his interactions with a fellow student who is autistic. He goes above and beyond by voluntarily assisting this student with their schoolwork, demonstrating a deep understanding of the importance of inclusivity and support within the classroom.

Furthermore, Yovanni's commitment to maintaining a clean and organized classroom environment is commendable. He takes the initiative to tidy up the classroom without hesitation, showing responsibility and a genuine care for his learning environment. His willingness to stay after class to pick up chairs, trash, and pencils without seeking recognition or reward speaks volumes about his character.

Not only is Yovanni helpful to his peers, but he also extends his respect and courtesy to both teachers and other adults within the school community. His consistent display of respect and consideration sets a positive example for his fellow students and demonstrates his commitment to creating a harmonious and respectful learning environment.

In summary, Yovanni's kindness, respect, and dedication to helping others, makes him a standout student who embodies the values of respect, empathy, and responsibility. His actions set a high standard for his peers, and he is truly deserving of recognition.

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Student Name: Andrew Alameda

School: Stone Corral School, Visalia

Pillar: Respect

Nominator: Susana Haro

Statement:

Once a month students at Stone Corral receive a CHARACTER COUNTS! presentation that students attend. Andrew Alameda is always attentive to the lesson and participates in a respectful manner. He raises his hands quietly, listens to what his peers say, shares comments and uses good manners. Not only have I witnessed this in the classroom, but his behavior follows him outside in the playground. I have witnessed Andrew do nice acts of kindness to his peers and younger siblings. He is a great student who treats others the way he likes to be treated, he exemplifies being a kid of character while continuously learning and building his character.

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Student Name: Emir Barajas

School: Three Rivers Union School, Three Rivers

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Edmund Pena

Statement:

I am thrilled to nominate Emir for the Pillar of Responsibility. Emir's transformation over the years is a testament to his unwavering commitment to growth and leadership. His journey from struggling with grades to becoming a team leader showcases his exceptional character and determination. Over the three years that I have coached him, he faced challenges with eligibility due to grades. However, this year he has made it a priority to improve his grades to be eligible for participation in sports. Emir has emerged as a true leader within the team. His ability to lead by example ensures that his team members can count on him to set a positive tone and consistently display a strong work ethic, dedication, and sportsmanship. His leadership serves as an inspiration to his peers. Emir's exemplary behavior and dedication have earned him the right to be the team captain. This leadership role reflects his responsibility and commitment to the team's success. As a captain he will undoubtedly continue to lead with integrity and inspire his teammates to reach their full potential. I am extremely proud of Emir.

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Student Name: Fernando Escalante

School: Traver Joint School, Traver

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Linda Navarro

Statement:

Fernando Escalante is just the sweetest student who always has a smile on his face. He comes into the office and tells me good morning and to have a good day or he will come in my office and tell me, I came to give you a hug. He is just a caring student that makes my day!

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Student Name: Julio Cuevas Romero

School: Elbow Creek Elementary School, Visalia

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Cianna Balderama

Statement:

Julio Cuevas Romero is starting off his academic pathway at Elbow Creek Elementary strong and positive. He is a helpful, kind and generous student. The Pillar I chose for Julio is Caring. He comes to HEART every day with a positive and polite attitude. He is always asking students and staff if there is anything he can help with and be assistance. When other classmates are down and upset, he is there to offer them a hug to make sure they are okay. He is constantly boosting students and staff moods with his bubbly personality. During any and all activities we have in the program, he plays with everyone fairly and makes sure that others are involved in the fun as well. We are delighted to have Julio Cuevas Romero be a part of our Heart Ohana here at Elbow Creek.

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Student Name: Kevin Izquierdo

School: Washington Elementary School, Lindsay

Pillar: Citizenship

Nominator: Angel Cortes

Statement:

I come in contact with Kevin daily and he is always exhibiting great citizenship. He is polite and he always asks me how my day is going or how my day went. He is kind and respectful. Every day after school, I supervise a section of the school for dismissal, which just so happens to be an area that Kevin passes on his way home. When I am out for dismissal supervision, and Kevin sees me, he says "Bye" and "Have a good day!" If it is a Friday, he will say "Have a good weekend!"

One event that really pushed me to nominate Kevin for citizenship was when an eighth-grader let me know that Kevin returned her laptop that fell out of her backpack. The student said that she did not even know she dropped it and left it behind until Kevin had tracked her down and returned it to her. Mind you, this was after school, and everyone was going home. I thought this was a big gesture coming from a fourth grader to return it to an older student. I feel like Kevin's polite behavior, in combination with acts of kindness and good citizenship makes a great case for him to be nominated for the Pillar of Citizenship.

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Student Name: David Magallan Velazquez

School: Castle Rock Elementary School, Woodlake

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Brenda Garver

Statement:

David has done his best from day one in the fourth grade. He knew it was his responsibility to improve. He paid attention during class time, always did his homework and even did extra reading with his mother nightly. He made sure he had a new book each time he finished one book. On the smarter balanced test, he improved from a two to a four in ELA and from a three to a four in Math. He is a role model for his fellow classmates.

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Student Name: Cienna Diaz

School: Francis J. White Learning Center, Woodlake

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Daniel Salazar

Statement:

I nominate Cienna Diaz for the Pillar of Responsibility. Cienna is a successful student not only on an academic level, but a character level as well. During the 2022-2023 school year, Cienna exemplified responsibility. She is always prepared for school. Not only is she eager to learn, but she is determined to get all of her school tasks done correctly and on time. She is very organized and thoughtful in her approach to school. Her desk is always neat, her homework is consistently completed. She completes each of the class jobs she had, and follows all the rules regardless if anyone was watching. I could always count on Cienna to do what she was supposed to do!

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Student Name: Alyssa Coelho

School: Woodlake High School, Woodlake

Pillar: Trustworthiness

Nominator: Gene Mendes

Statement:

Alyssa is a member of the Sportsmanship Action Team Youth Council (SAT). The SAT is an extension of the Pursuing Victory with Honor program. We currently have twenty-one student-athletes representing high school athletes from across our county. I would like to nominate Alyssa for the Pillar of Trustworthiness. She is a remarkable young lady who helps to plan various youth driven conferences and she volunteers at many events our office produces. Ms Coelho is not only an above average student, but a student- athlete, deeply involved in her school and has volunteered to help at the Special Olympics and many other community service projects and events. Most recently, she was an important member who, along with the SAT group, planned the Annual Huddle Youth Conference for high school athletes. She is a great young lady we could trust to facilitate and plan and partner to create the topics of the conference, do the research, and create the information that was delivered in her workshops. Along with the other members she had many planning meetings that would take place over the summer. After they spent the day at school, after practice and sometimes after high school games, they would prepare and plan for the conference. Alyssa and these student-athletes are part of the SAT by choice and are trustworthy role models and leaders in their communities.

Being a member of this group there is no grade given, and they do not get paid. She has the drive and desire to help and serve. I am honored and proud to work with Alyssa and this entire group of individuals who WANT to make a difference. In my opinion Alyssa exemplifies what the Pillar of Trustworthiness represents.

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Student Name: Alejandra Aguilar

School: Woodlake Valley Middle School, Woodlake

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Joseph Beltran

Statement:

Alejandra is one of the most caring students at WVMS! She treats everyone with respect. During the first week of school, several students would come up to ask me where their next class was located. Any time Alejandra was in earshot, she would greet the students, exchange names, and walk them to class. I've seen Alejandra buy water bottles for students on hot days. I've seen Alejandra welcome new students to our school. Alejandra is a WEBB leader at WVMS, her positive attitude is consistent, and she is an excellent role model.

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Student Name: Humza Saleh

School: AcCel Yettem Learning Center, Yettem

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Erin Elliott

Statement:

Humza has grown so much over the past year. He has improved in all areas, however, the pillar that jumps out the most is caring. Humza cares about those around him, including his peers and teachers. He is always the first one to share and gets joy from watching others be happy. He is a delight to have in class.