

Highlighting SLO County's Young Leaders!

Weyhrich Leadership Awards Recipients 2026

Samantha Coloma



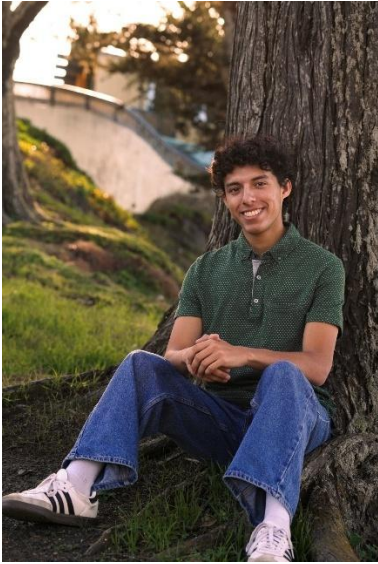
Atascadero High School

Leadership Characteristics: Good Listener – Determined - Prioritizes Peer Growth

Samantha's dream school is UCLA. She is also considering the University of San Francisco as well as CSU Long Beach and hopes to major in Biomedical Science or Public Health. She is a member of the National Honor Society/California Scholarship Federation, President of the Key Club, Social Media Director /treasurer of the Earth Club, Vice President of the Tennis Team, Co-captain, MVP, & Scholar Athlete. Samantha volunteers as an academic tutor, tennis coach, and helps in a rural hospital in the Philippines; Student Elections Ambassador: partnered with League of Women Voters and the SLO County Elections Office to help outreach efforts and pre-register 70 students.

Samantha said that community service is intrinsically rewarding. With each volunteer role, she grew and was exposed to lots of different people she would otherwise be unaware of. She said "It has changed how I see the world. Through community service I can see the good in the world."

Matthew Aguilera



San Luis Obispo High School

Leadership Characteristics: Empathy – Service to Others – Goal Oriented

Matthew Aguilera hopes to attend UC Irvine where he will study Biology, Bio Medical Science and Public Health, with the goal of becoming a Physician.

Matthew's life experiences shaped his world view that an important part of leadership is empathy. A family member's rare medical condition and disability crystallized his resolve to serve others, especially the most vulnerable in our society. His compassion for others makes them feel heard and seen.

Matthew volunteered at Womenade in San Luis Obispo throughout high school and named one of its directors as a person who had mentored and inspired him throughout high school. He also took a Sports Medicine class in high school where he was able to learn medical techniques through hands-on learning and was secretary of the medical club, where he arranged guest speakers for the group. Matthew is an articulate student with a clear career goal and an emphasis on service to and validation of the needs of others, especially the most vulnerable.

Wyatt Stapp



High School: San Luis Obispo Classical Academy

Leadership Characteristics: Curious – Passionate – Takes Action

Wyatt Stapp plans to attend Humboldt State University where he will pursue studies in Environmental Science and Wildlife Management. The first sentence of Wyatt's personal essay piqued the committee's interest: "Since I was 10, I have measured my days in the number of snakes I have seen." He is a young man whose passion for the outdoors, especially snakes, has driven his course of study in high school and choice of major in college. When Wyatt was 12, he discovered a rookery of rattlesnakes on a local ecological preserve, and contacted Dr. Emily Taylor, who runs the Physical Ecology and Reptile Lab at Cal Poly, rerouted the hiking trail and installed a "snake cam." This led to a collaboration where Wyatt has accompanied Dr. Taylor's class on field surveys and studies and led him to take a class at Cuesta College which took field trips to the Mojave desert to study snakes. Wyatt was also accepted into an international organization, The Society of the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wyatt's senior project was to publish a field guide for the Wildlife and Geography of San Luis Obispo. In addition to his passion for herpetology and the outdoors, Wyatt also played 4 years of both basketball and volleyball, where he served as team captain as a senior. Wyatt has transformed his passion for snakes and the outdoors into a calling. He is becoming a leader in his field at an early and impressive age. He believes in the importance of getting outside and experiencing nature and minimizing the time spent in front of screens.

James “Russell” Carter



Central Coast New Tech High School

Leadership Characteristics: Compassion – Grit - Drive

Russell plans to attend University of Oregon or another school and study Environmental Science. He is the Leo Club Vice President, Varsity Water Polo (Capt), Varsity Swim (Capt.). He participates in Link Crew, Speech & Debate and is a Boy Scouts Eagle Scout, Sr. Patrol Leader, New Life Food Pantry Volunteer and Summer Swim Instructor

Russell recognizes that everyone has challenges and he strives to align himself with causes that make a difference for people. He wants to positively impact as many people as possible. He is unassuming, quick-witted, compassionate and hardworking. He described his early experience on the swim team where they only had a handful of members and morale was very low. Russell began holding team game nights and other bonding activities which boosted the team’s confidence and success in the pool, and eventually grew the team. Russell is a lover of nature, camping and hiking and as a longtime Boy Scout, he mentored younger scouts and brought the troop together around common goals. Russell described himself as “an ordinary guy surrounded by extraordinary people,” but his heart for others and strong desire to grow and push himself reveal himself as a strong leader and collaborator.

Anna Schalk



Coast Union High School

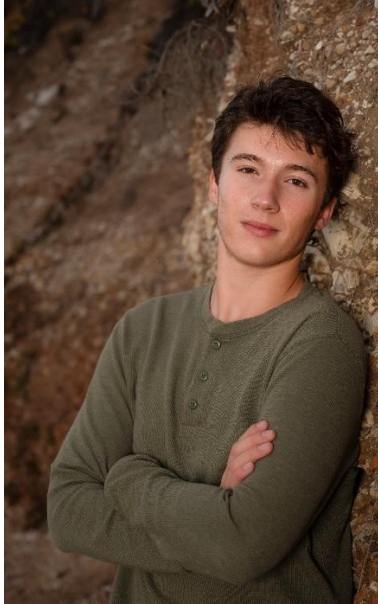
Leadership Characteristics: Inclusive - Confident – Inspiring

Anna hopes to attend UC Berkley and major in Neuroscience with plans to do research to help abused children.

She is the Founder & President of Art Club, Friday Night Live, County Student Board Treasurer, Varsity softball, Santa Cruz Island Field Studies Collaborative. Spring Break, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards – Selected and attended weeklong workshops. Anna is a Freelance Artist, working for students, school faculty, and others by commission for murals, theatre backgrounds, school yearbook cover, artwork, etc. She participates in Mock Trial and Girls State.

Anna volunteers with Bronco Blooms, creating monthly themed bouquets for clients, and HART Cambria Animal Rescue Service helping care for homeless cats, and with Lions Interact Club serving several fundraising organizations in Cambria and mentored incoming club members. She has a love of helping people and a desire to give back to her community. Anna loves to bring positivity to others.

Kingston Lacy



Paso Robles High School

Leadership Characteristics: Great Work Ethic – Compassion - Take-Charge Attitude

Kingston hopes to attend Boston College, Pennsylvania State or Gonzaga University and major in Nursing with the goal of becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant.

He is the Basketball Varsity Co-Captain, earned the Lions Club Sportsmanship Award, is the Interact Club Vice President. He is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a camp counselor for basketball players at an FCA sports camp, member of the Lifesavers Club, Vacation Bible School Leader and volunteers for CASA, Honor Flight and other local nonprofits.

Kingston has a passion to lead and teach. He is entrepreneurial, starting his own firewood business, connects with driven people, surrounds himself with motivated people to motivate himself, which drives his leadership. He is the first generation in his family to go to college and is an example to his siblings and to others.

Maria Alcantar



Arroyo Grande High School

Leadership Characteristics = Bravery – Confidence – Strong Communication

Maria plans to attend San Jose State University and major in Nursing, Public Health or Healthcare Administration.

She is President of Hispanos Unidos. Vice President of the Red Cross Club. Secretary of the Interact Club. Member of Hosa Club, LINK Crew, AGHS Riders and AVID. Maria also led the development of the first ever “College Night” for Latino students.

She volunteers with Boys & Girls Club, the Oaks of Nipomo Senior Residence, City of Arroyo Grande holiday events, Central Coast Athletics Foundation track meets, Wyndham Senior Residence (and works as a dietary aide there), as a Poll worker during elections, an AP Spanish tutor and with her church. She impressively initiated, on her own, a sun protection project for farmworkers, because she saw firsthand the need from her family members working in the fields. The project included distributing information/education – in both Spanish and English – about the importance of sun protection and distributing kits of items (hats, bandanas, sunglasses, sunscreen) purchased from money she raised selling candy bars. Maria was a caregiver for her grandmother which inspired her to help others. She is very focused on her community, listening and engaging, and giving without expecting anything in return, and through that work has realized she can make an impact. She says, “Leadership is not merely guiding others or taking control, it’s about stepping up, engaging and creating opportunities for everyone to reach their full potential.”

Reese Kelly



Morro Bay High School

Leadership Characteristics = Outgoing – Good Listener – Inclusive

Reese hopes to attend Colorado State in Fort Collins or UCSB to study Environmental Science/ Marine Biology.

She actively participates in the Surf Team as team captain, Volleyball (all league and MVP), Soccer, Environmental Club, and Softball (team captain).

Reese has worked as a Morro Bay life guard, at Wavelength Surf Shop, the Sea Shanty Restaurant, and as a deckhand on an albacore fishing boat. She loves being involved in the small town of Cayucos and helping make it a better place to live. Reese has a great deal of self-confidence and has very clear goals of wanting to enlist in Air Force ROTC and learn search/rescue skills and work in surf rescue.

Addison Blake



Mission College Preparatory High School

Leadership Characteristics = Courage (to think outside the box) – Positivity – Always Puts Forth Her Best Efforts

Addison wishes to attend Cal Poly or another university where she can study Agriculture or Animal Science.

She is Volleyball 9 -12 (team captain), Leadership class 9 – 12, FFA 10 -12 (secretary and president, Varsity Basketball 12th, Fellowship of Christian Athletes 9 -12 (co-president), and Kairos Leader. She operates her church's sound booth, helps with her family's vineyard and ranch, helps with church youth group activities, and does a lot of babysitting. Addie does community service so she can see all different parts of her community. She has fantastic skills to share and has a ton of personality. She exudes a lot of confidence and is a natural leader.