PRESS RELEASE

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Three Poway Unified students named 'Most Remarkable Teens in San Diego'

(San Diego, CA) – Three students from Poway Unified School District were named among the *25 Most Remarkable Teens in San Diego County*. The teens were honored by the San Diego County Public Defender's Office during its fifth annual awards ceremony on Thursday, November 10.

The Most Remarkable Teen program recognizes San Diego youth ages 13-19 for their contributions and efforts in 25 categories including environmental advocacy, arts and culture, technology, civic involvement, entrepreneurship, courage to overcome adversity, and other outstanding accomplishments. The 25 teens were selected from a pool of more than 155 nominees after virtual interviews and a review of supplemental materials by a panel from the Public Defender's Office. The 25 Most Remarkable Teens in San Diego County are set apart from other teen award honorees because students selected to be "Most Remarkable" are not only talented, but are driven to succeed, overcome adversity and are passionate about civic issues or projects.
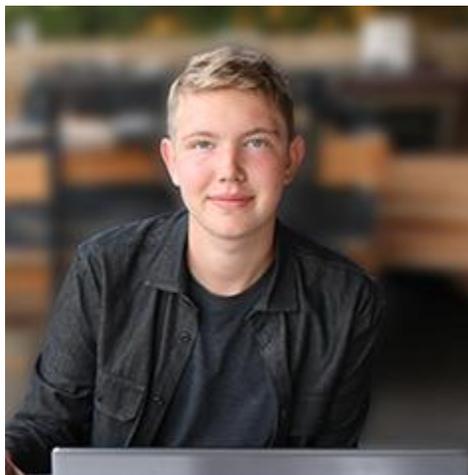
Remarkable Teens from Poway Unified School District:

Ellen Xu, Senior at Del Norte High School: Ellen received the Public Defender's Award of Excellence for her research at the UCSD Kawasaki Disease Research Center and Rady Children's Hospital. This research was inspired by her younger sister who was diagnosed with Kawasaki disease. Ellen was an integral contributor to the development of an artificial intelligence image recognition algorithm early diagnostic tool for Kawasaki disease which is key to increased survival rates among young patients. She has presented her findings at the International Kawasaki Disease Symposium in Tokyo, and at multiple other scientific conferences. Ellen was inducted into the Sigma Xi Scientific Research Honor Society and honored with multiple awards. In addition to her scientific achievements, Ellen has also represented the US in competitive fencing at the Romania Cadet World Cup and captained the Junior Olympic silver medalist team in 2020. She leads a cybersecurity organization for girls of military families, serves as the co-editor in chief for Del Norte's literary magazine, and sits on the PUSD Literature Adoption Committee.

Roshan Shah, Senior at Westview High School: Roshan received the award for Public Health: Innovation for his work connecting students with special needs with communication devices after graduation. After volunteering in classrooms with students with special needs, he realized that students with communication needs were not able to take their school issued communication devices (tables, iPads, PCs) with them after graduating, leaving these students with no way to communication online. Communication devices with the designated apps can cost nearly $1,000 – an expense many families cannot afford. Roshan created *VoicesGo.org*, a website he developed to help families understand the avenues available to fund and secure a device. VoicesGo has helped students obtain devices which has allowed them to participate in society, register to vote, gain employment, and interact with those around them. The problem of leaving a public school district without a communication device affects thousands of students across California. Roshan drafted a bill for the California State Legislature which would cost taxpayers nothing but would enable students with disabilities to procure a device before leaving public school.

Reed Ganzer, Junior at Poway High School: Reed received the award for the Technology: Robotics category. He served as outreach lead for two years on his robotics team, First Tech Challenge Cerulean Centaurs, and for two years on the Green Griffins robotics team. Since 2018, he has volunteered at over 80 outreach robotics events and has mentored five younger First Lego league teams. After school, Reed also mentors young students in computer programming through his job at Code Ninjas in Poway. In addition to leading the younger students around him, Reed created the STEM to STEAM initiative to repurpose waste from robotics competitions. Robotics competitions often require metal or plastic that are thrown out at the end of the competition season. To reduce this waste, Reed partnered with local colleges and donated robotics materials destined for the landfill to art programs at San Diego State University and Southwestern College.

View a full list of the *25 Most Remarkable Teens of San Diego County*, as chosen by the San Diego Public Defender's Office, here.

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