



## Awards & Honors: Roosevelt student named top youth volunteer in Oregon; students excel in geography, math

Roosevelt High School senior Kaiya Laguardia was named one of Oregon's top two youth volunteers of 2020 by the [Prudential Spirit of Community Awards](#), a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism.

Kaiya and the other state honoree received a \$1,000 prize and an all-expenses-paid trip in May to Washington, D.C., to join other state honorees for four days of events and the opportunity to be named one of the 10 top youth volunteers in the country.

Kaiya, whose mother was born on the island of Okinawa in Japan, produced a documentary film to raise awareness of the planned construction of a military base in Okinawa and the opposition of the native Uchinanchu people, who fear major damage to their beautiful ocean.

Kaiya sold cookies to fund the project, then spent weeks in Okinawa shooting footage and conducting interviews. She edited the footage back in Portland in Roosevelt's computer lab into the finished product, "Our Island's Treasure." The film has served to raise awareness of the potential environmental disaster and was one of the student-made films shown at the [inaugural Best of PPS Film Festival](#) in September.

[\(Watch "Our Island's Treasure"\)](#)

Another PPS student, Lincoln High School senior Elliot Shin, was a Prudential finalist. Elliot was honored for founding and running Olivenbaum, a nonprofit that provides academic tutoring and music lessons to refugees in the Portland area.

**ACCESS, Sellwood students excel in math competition:** Teams from ACCESS Academy and Sellwood Middle School finished first and second, respectively, in the chapter MathCounts Competition Series for middle school students held at Mentor Graphics in Wilsonville.

Sage Moriyama, an ACCESS sixth-grader, finished first in the individual competition and was on the school's four-student lineup that won the team competition. Sage was joined by eighth-graders Theodore Miranda-Zellnik and Max Rose-Innes, and sixth-grader Manu Isaacs.

Sage and Manu were among the four ACCESS students who advanced to the state competition, joined by eighth-graders Angela Zhang and Alex Vassilev. The ACCESS team is coached by math teacher Amy Mackinnon and teacher-in-training Yongkang Chen

Sellwood finished second in the team competition with a lineup of eighth-graders Celia Leedy and Theodore Hildebrand-Faust, and seventh-graders Alex Vennebush and Eli Vennebush. Alex Vennebush finished second individually. Sellwood's team is coached by math teacher Linda White.

**Students set to compete for state title in geography:** Can you answer these questions: Among the countries of Moldova, Angola and Ireland, which does not border the Atlantic Ocean? The Matterhorn is on the border between Switzerland and what other country? Minnesota and Vermont – which of these states is located west of Lake Huron?

Nine students in Portland Public Schools did well enough on these and other geography questions to earn spots in the National Geographic GeoBee competition for Oregon on Friday, March 27 at Western Oregon University in Monmouth.

The competition, for students in grades 4-8, is being held for the 32<sup>nd</sup> year. It started with school competitions, with 8,661 students becoming school champions around the country. The school winners took an online qualifying test to whittle the field to 100 competitors in state competitions. The nine PPS students from who qualified for Oregon's state meet are:

- Corey Cohen, ACCESS at Vestal, 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- Mason Wunderle, ACCESS at Lane, 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Nathan Lauruhn, Alameda, 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- Johannes Toll, West Sylvan, 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Calder Baker, Robert Gray, 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Jasper Bohem, Mt. Tabor, 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Harrison McDonell, Sellwood, 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Paul Oellrich, Vernon, 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Jefferson Furlong, Winterhaven, 7<sup>th</sup> grade

Competitors will vie for a \$1,000 first-place prize, as well as a berth in the national championship that will be held in May at the National Geographic headquarters in Washington, D.C.

**Dance teacher honored:** Oluyinka Parsons-Akinjiola, who teaches dance at Harriet Tubman Middle School and Faubion K-8, was named Oregon Dance Educator of the Year by the Oregon Dance Education Organization. Her artistry and pedagogy blends dances of Africa, the African Diaspora, modern dance and social justice issues.

Parsons-Akinjiola received her award at the ODEO annual conference in Eugene last month.