

## **Mountain Empire students celebrate first essay contest**

By the Alpine Mountain Empire Chamber of Commerce

PINE VALLEY ---- Excited Mountain Empire Unified School District students, their families, staff and guests enjoyed the district's first essay winners' dinner in Pine Valley!

A crowd of about 350 jammed the Mountain Empire High School gymnasium to celebrate 96 winners from the district's Campo, Clover Flat, Descanso and Potrero elementary schools and Jacumba and Pine Valley middle schools.

Winner Ashley Wallace of Lake Morena was at the 2015 Essay Writers Recognition Awards on June 4 with her daughter, Mahala, a fifth grader winner, for the spaghetti dinner.

"I am over the moon proud of her," Wallace said her reaction to the essay competition and the recognition for her daughter and other students. "She's already talking about going to college and things she wants to do."

The school district and the Alpine Mountain Empire Chamber of Commerce partnered to present the event.

San Diego Gas & Electric, Mountain Health & Community Services, the Alpine Creek Town Center/Westcore Properties, Jacumba Shell, Comfort Keepers, Monday Nite Car Club, Mike Thing Well Drilling and Calvin's Restaurant sponsored it.

"The kids are super excited, just for the opportunity," Principal Gary Brannon of Pine Valley Middle School said. "And they've been improving their writing."

Emcee Donna Burton, principal of Descanso Elementary School, introduced Chamber Chairman and Ambassador Ben Everhart. He congratulated the students for their hard work and read the list of sponsors and businesses that contributed.

"All these businesses put in time and effort to support these students," Everhart said.

Big individual goodie bags full of toys, treats, discounts, coupons, useful items and thick program books containing the essays about local communities delighted students and parents.

"I like Campo bekuz uv the frogs" Campo Elementary kindergartner David Oden wrote in his essay. "I help Campo wen I pik up tra(s)h."

An essay by David Chavez, a Descanso Elementary third grader, said he loves his mountain town "like a chocolate brownie" because it has his favorite neighbors and is so quiet he can hear the "sound of nature."

Pine Valley Middle School seventh-grader Audrey Laskey's essay noted that she thinks a local transportation system would help her community because "many cars make more pollution and smog than one bus."

Businesses and organizations that donated goodie bag items included Albertson's; Alpine Orthodontics ---- Cynthia L. Jackson, DDS & MS; Applebee's Restaurant; Barons Market; Boomers!; Boys & Girls Club; California Bank & Trust; Carl's Jr.; Chuck E. Cheese's; CVS Pharmacy; Greek Village Grill and the Grossmont Healthcare District.

Golden Acorn Casino; McDonald's; Mountain Health & Community Services; Rite Aid Pharmacy; Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory; Rubio's Mexican Restaurant; Salvation Army Kroc Center; Tommy Hilfiger; Usborne Children's Books; Viejas Bowl, Giuseppe's Treasures and Wetzel's Pretzels also contributed.

Congressmen Duncan D. Hunter, a Chamber member, and Juan Vargas; State Senator Joel Anderson, Assemblyman Brian Jones and San Diego County Supervisor Dianne Jacob provided individual Certificates of Recognition for each student.

"I hope they make more events like this," said Karla Diaz, a winner's mom.

The student essay winners are:

Campo Elementary ---- David Oden, Mikailah Bartz, Julie Turner, Palavi Vainuku, Nolan Lees, Victoria Marquez, Monica Davis, William Shipp, Ohah Johnson, Meena Delalat, Ava Dougherty, Adam Grogan, Kaylee Cardinez, Trenidy Wilcox, Karla Diaz, Katrina Kujawa, Jesus Jimenez, Ashlynn VanBuren, Bailey Schuler, Lana Elliott, Haley Barath, Christopher Giles, Andres White, Rose Johnson, Jordyn Alvarado, Mahala Wallace, Frank Paipa, Efrain Penuelas, Reese Schuler, Jonnie Favala, Alllona Paipa, Sean Hodge.

Clover Flat Elementary ---- Breeza Valdez, Johnathon Thorpe, Sydney Giordano, Zoey Cordova, Jaycen Hensley, Orlando Regalado, Cayne Johnson, Jasmine Perez, Joanay Benton, Robert Wilkins, Sierra Giordano, Carolyn Johnson, Gage Curran, Nevaeh Luongo.

Descanso Elementary ---- Makayla Terrazaz, Ben Russell, Angel De La Luz Rueda, Anna Brady, Khloe Perry, Jacqueline Wilson, Wyatt Kowalski, Noah Gray, Vance Welder, Ethan Wilson, David Chavez, Audrey Mallon, Noelle Gray, Kyra Nunes, Kaj Salzano, Nathan Strauch, Hayden McAllister, Rosalyn Real-Kygar.

Jacumba Middle School ---- Julionna Frankenberg, Joseph Maldonado, Carolina Machado, Jazmin Valencia, Manuel Mercado, Kali Mance.

Pine Valley Middle School ---- Brenna Rowley, Jacob Frost, Audrey Laskey, Erin Elena Rodriguez, Farlin Anderson, Samuel Bryan.

Potrero Elementary ---- Ryan Zuniga, Julissa Gonzalez, Adalia Carmona, John Enriquez, Leslie Gonzalez, Marcus J. Cruz Rosas, Emmanuel Rodriguez, Julieta Gonzalez, Anelisse Martinez, Stephanie Argil, Gerardo Esquer, Marcelia Villasenor, Edoardo Ramirez Villasenor, Yarlina Corrales, Felisha Serratos, Andy Lucio, Johanna Mendoza, Adrian Ruiz, Sofia Martinez, Natialia Barnette.