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CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Present the Accessible Community Task Force student recognition awards

DEPARTMENT: Community Services

SUBMITTED BY: Dawn Portner, City Clerk

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

The Accessible Community Task Force (ACTF) annually recognizes the efforts of students in the community who make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Councilwoman Longenbaugh will present the awards

BACKGROUND:

The annual recognition of area students for their exemplary service and outstanding commitment to removing barriers and stereotypes for fellow students with disabilities has been a long-standing tradition of the City of Naperville. This year’s effort has been led by the ACTF which is a citizen committee formed in August 2016 to complement the efforts of the Advisory Commission on Disabilities (ACD). Whereas the ACD focuses on City of Naperville facilities, programs, and operations, the ACTF reaches out into the community to assist individuals and private companies in the areas of transportation, young adult and youth initiatives, business compliance, employment, education/awareness, and collaboration

DISCUSSION:

All award recipients were nominated by teachers and/or administrators from Community Unit School District 203 and Indian Prairie School District 204. This year, the ACTF would like to recognize six outstanding students. The awards include a personalized certificate of appreciation and a gift card.

Markeesha Carwell - Markeesha is from the Indian Prairie School District #204 Transition Program -

STEPS and is highly dedicated to supporting students with diverse needs. She excels in a high-functioning class while also selflessly assisting students with more severe disabilities. Her gentle but firm guidance and kindness towards her peers are truly impressive.

Brandon Gray - Brandon has shown exceptional perseverance and dedication throughout his time at Connections program despite facing challenges due to his disability. He attends classes at the Naperville School District 203 Connections Transition Program and College of DuPage simultaneously and is close to achieving his welding certification. He excels at his job at Home Depot, is a compassionate friend, and actively participates in community programs.

Brandon Loos - Brandon is a compassionate high school senior at Metea Valley High School. He actively participates in the Special Olympics team, dedicating his time as a peer partner. Brandon's care for others, leadership qualities, and selflessness have left a lasting impression on everyone he meets.

Kate Scardina - Kate is a senior at Neuqua Valley High School and is known for her commitment to inclusivity and supporting individuals with disabilities. Over four years, she has been involved in programs like Best Buddies, Special Olympics, and Peer Partner Physical Education. Kate has demonstrated exceptional leadership, fostered meaningful friendships, and created inclusive environments where everyone feels valued.

Kendall Southern - Kendall is an outstanding student at Naperville North High School who possesses exceptional leadership qualities and kindness towards the multi-needs community. Her ability to understand and adapt to the needs of students with significant disabilities is commendable. Recently, she choreographed a dance for the Airband competition that showcased her commitment to their well-being and inclusion.

Janessa Vargas - Janessa is a junior at Waubonsie Valley High School. She's a peer partner in Adapted Physical Education class. Even though she could switch partners in each unit, Janessa chose to stay with fellow student Bella as her partner. She learned Bella's unique sign language so they can communicate better. Janessa spends time with Bella after school and on weekends, even joining her family on outings. Her commitment to Bella's well-being is a testament to her immense heart.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The City provides each award recipient with a \$50 Downtown Naperville gift card.