



**JANET BARRESI**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Janet Barresi *JCB*  
**DATE:** March 6, 2013  
**SUBJECT:** Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The State Department of Education recognizes students for special awards received for service and contributions to community.

Students selected as Oklahoma's Top Youth Volunteers are as follows:

Perrin Duncan, Senior; Edmond Public Schools  
Mason Harvey, 8<sup>th</sup> grader; Guthrie Public Schools

Students selected as Distinguished Finalists are as follows:

Ellise Crawford, Senior; Grove Public Schools  
Garrett Dollins, Senior; Perkins-Tryon Public Schools  
Elisabeth Willis, Junior; Canadian Public Schools  
Kaylee Young, Sophomore; Young Creations Homeschool

JCB/ey

Attachments



THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

HONORING OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE BY YOUNG AMERICANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 5, 2013

Contact: Harold Banks, Prudential Financial  
(973) 802-8974 or (973) 216-4833  
[harold.banks@prudential.com](mailto:harold.banks@prudential.com)

**OKLAHOMA'S TOP TWO YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SELECTED  
IN 18<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM**

**Edmond and Guthrie students earn \$1,000 awards,  
engraved medallions and trip to nation's capital**

**Honors also bestowed on youth volunteers in  
Grove, Stillwater, Canadian and Norman**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. – Perrin Duncan, 17, of Edmond and Mason Harvey, 13, of Guthrie today were named Oklahoma's top two youth volunteers of 2013 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. Perrin was nominated by Girl Scouts of Western Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, and Mason was nominated by Guthrie Junior High School in Guthrie. The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 18th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Perrin, a senior at North High School, was a dedicated fundraiser for an annual charity drive at her school before becoming co-chair of its 2012 campaign, which yielded more than \$280,000 for the Sooner Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. In 1994, students at Perrin's high school began a tradition of raising money for a different charity each year. Perrin had heard about the annual campaign, called BALTO ("Bring A Light To Others"), from her older brother and friends. They "told me what an amazing philanthropic fundraiser it was," she said. "I wanted to get involved as soon as I could, as I have always had a desire to help others."

As soon as Perrin entered high school, she volunteered to raise funds for the campaign. She wrote letters, planned events, and participated in a variety of other fundraising activities. That year, Perrin personally raised \$3,600. The next year, inspired by a fellow student who was battling terminal

## OKLAHOMA'S TOP TWO YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SELECTED/Page Two

cancer, Perrin raised \$5,000 for Oklahoma's Children's Hospital Foundation. In recognition of her passion and commitment, she was named co-chair of BALTO the following year. Working with her fellow co-chair, Perrin picked the state's Cystic Fibrosis Foundation to be the beneficiary of the 2012 fundraising project, decided on a theme for the campaign, selected 130 students to be official fundraisers, and oversaw 20 special events. "Money started flowing in October and with every event, a new record was set," she said. The final tally, \$282,145, exceeded the year's goal by more than 40 percent. "It was one of the most rewarding and stressful years of my life," said Perrin, "but I wouldn't change my experience for anything."

Mason, an eighth-grader at Guthrie Junior High School, has become a crusader against childhood obesity after shedding 85 pounds in the seventh grade. "Once upon a time, I was very unhealthy, overweight, and picked on by bullies," said Mason. "In the sixth grade, at my heaviest, 206 pounds, I told my parents I was sick and tired of being sick and tired." He started exercising and making smarter food choices, and by the beginning of the next school year, he had dropped an astonishing 85 pounds "and felt awesome!" he said.

Recognizing that childhood obesity is a big problem nationally, Mason figured he could use his example to persuade other overweight kids that they, too, can slim down. Since he regarded 85 as his "magic number," he resolved to meet 85 important or famous people who could help him tell his story, and host or attend 85 events to raise awareness of childhood obesity. So he spends much of his free time reaching out to people and planning or appearing at special events. His celebrity encounters have included First Lady Michelle Obama and the mayor of Oklahoma City, who invited him to the State of the City address. He has organized several fitness events and participated in many others, and works hard to promote each one. In addition, Mason speaks in front of school assemblies and other groups, accompanied by a slide show. "I am the boy that could barely finish exercise during football and now I run 5Ks," he said. "Don't let people tell you it can't be done. Believe with all of your heart and do it."

As State Honorees, Perrin and Mason each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for four days of national recognition events. During the trip, 10 students will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2013.

### **Distinguished Finalists**

The program judges also recognized four other Oklahoma students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion.

These are Oklahoma's Distinguished Finalists for 2013:

**Ellise Crawford, 18, of Grove, Okla.**, a senior at Grove High School, has raised \$50,000 through a series of fundraisers over the past two years to build "Emmanuel's House," a home in Ghana, West Africa that will shelter 25 children who have been rescued from slavery. Ellise, who first became aware of the tragedy of child slavery when her family adopted a young African boy who was rescued from it, has organized the fundraising projects and increased awareness of the need for the home, which will be completed this winter.

**Garrett Dollins, 17, of Stillwater, Okla.**, a member of the Payne County 4-H and a senior at Perkins-Tryon High School, has raised \$1,400 to purchase new first aid supplies for his school through his program, "Scrap 4 Helping Schools." Garrett, who was injured playing basketball and realized first aid supplies were insufficient, raised the funds by recruiting a team of volunteers to help him collect and sell scrap and unused metal.

**Elisabeth Willis, 17, of Canadian, Okla.**, a member of the Pittsburg County 4-H and a junior at Canadian High School, has been an active volunteer with the Therapeutic Equestrian Association of McAlester for seven years and, in the past two years, has raised \$10,000 to support the organization. Elisabeth, who raised the funds by coordinating two music festivals, has donated the money to help build new riding facilities for the organization, which supports children with special needs.

**Kaylee Young, 16, of Norman, Okla.**, a member of the Cleveland County 4-H and a sophomore at Young Creations, has collected nearly \$11,000 and 60,000 items for care packages she has sent to the military through The Hugs Project. Kaylee, who has volunteered with this organization since 2010, took on a larger role when she began organizing care drives and fundraising events and spreading the word through the local media.

"Prudential is proud to honor these students for making meaningful contributions to their communities," said Prudential Chairman and CEO John Strangfeld. "We hope that shining a spotlight on their initiative, creativity and compassion inspires others to consider how they, too, can make a difference."

## OKLAHOMA'S TOP TWO YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SELECTED/Page Four

“Through their volunteer service, each of these young people has made his or her mark on at least one person, school or community,” said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. “When you consider the collective impact of each of these individual acts, it’s clear that young people can be a major force for good.”

### **About The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards**

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards represents the United States’ largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteer service. All public and private middle level and high schools in the country, as well as all Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and HandsOn Network affiliates, were eligible to select a student or member for a local Prudential Spirit of Community Award. Nearly 5,000 Local Honorees were then reviewed by an independent judging panel, which selected State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists based on criteria including personal initiative, effort, impact and personal growth.

While in Washington, D.C., the 102 State Honorees – one middle level and one high school student from each state and the District of Columbia – will tour the capital’s landmarks, meet top youth volunteers from other parts of the world, attend a gala awards ceremony at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, and visit their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. On May 6, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America’s top youth volunteers of 2013. These National Honorees will receive additional \$5,000 awards, gold medallions, crystal trophies and \$5,000 grants from The Prudential Foundation for nonprofit charitable organizations of their choice.

Since the program began in 1995, more than 100,000 young volunteers have been honored at the local, state and national level. The program also is conducted by Prudential subsidiaries in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Ireland and India. In addition to granting its own awards, The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program also distributes President’s Volunteer Service Awards to qualifying Local Honorees on behalf of President Barack Obama.

For information on all of this year’s Prudential Spirit of Community State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com> or [www.nassp.org/spirit](http://www.nassp.org/spirit).

**About NASSP**

NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) is the leading organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and all school leaders from across the United States and more than 36 countries around the world. The association provides research-based professional development and resources, networking, and advocacy to build the capacity of middle level and high school leaders to continually improve student performance. Reflecting its longstanding commitment to student leadership development as well, NASSP administers the National Honor Society™, National Junior Honor Society®, National Elementary Honor Society®, and National Association of Student Councils®. For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, VA, visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

**About Prudential Financial**

Prudential Financial, Inc. (NYSE: PRU), a financial services leader, has operations in the United States, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Prudential's diverse and talented employees are committed to helping individual and institutional customers grow and protect their wealth through a variety of products and services, including life insurance, annuities, retirement-related services, mutual funds and investment management. In the U.S., Prudential's iconic Rock symbol has stood for strength, stability, expertise and innovation for more than a century. For more information, please visit <http://www.news.prudential.com/>.

###

**Editors: For full-color pictures of the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallions, visit <http://bit.ly/Xi4oFW>**