

Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Award Winners Biographies

Ages 13 - 19



1st Place Winner: Natalie Chambers, Age 18, Albuquerque

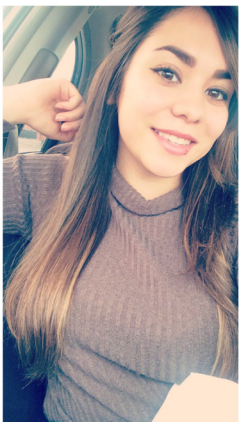
Natalie's extensive background in community engagement is demonstrative of her passion for helping others. Her involvement at school and with the community where she grew up has helped Natalie realize that she wants to dedicate her life to supporting people by becoming a psychologist, while continuing to be an active community member. Natalie won an Albuquerque Selfless Senior Award acknowledging her engagement with foodbanks, homeless centers, her school's student government association, and campaigns against underage cigarette usage.

2nd Place Winner: Isabella Baker, Age 17, Albuquerque

Isabella plans to advocate for social justice issues such as education, women's rights, immigrant rights, and LGBTQ rights for the rest of her life. By age nine, she was already lobbying and marching in rallies about issues she cares about in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and other states with her stepmom, and has since been involved with multiple organizations including Organizers in the Land of Enchantment (OLÉ) and the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP).



Ages 20 - 26



1st Place Winner: Janelle Astorga, Age 20, Albuquerque

Janelle is sophomore at the University of New Mexico studying political science and Chicano/a studies. She has advocated for educational equity for years and is especially focused on over-testing. Janelle has organized walk outs that received national attention as well as campaigns and trainings in collaboration with Albuquerque Public Schools and Youth Voices in Action. Janelle has been working with the SouthWest Organizing Project for years and is continuing her social justice passion by serving as an AmeriCorps intern through Public Allies and is on the board for the Latino Educational Task Force.

2nd Place Winner: Avery Aguilar, Age 24, Santo Domingo Pueblo

Avery's degree in Native American studies from the University of New Mexico has inspired him to work to mitigate language loss in his pueblo. Avery has partnered with agencies including the Laguna Pueblo Keres Language Team and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on projects such as the creation of a film with the goal of supplementing Native language instruction in the pueblo. Avery is currently working with Johns Hopkins University Center for American Indian Health on healthy food initiatives called Edible School Garden and NativeVision.





Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Award Nominees Biographies

Ages 13 - 19

Kendra Becenti: Age 18, Albuquerque

Kendra has made it her goal to unite and empower Native youth to be proud of their culture. After her own Navajo Coming of Age Ceremony, she wanted to help other people celebrate who they are, so she started the first Native American Club at her high school. Since then, Kendra has been elected as the APS Indian Education High School Representative and is working on developing an Albuquerque Native Youth Council. Kendra will attend Stanford University in the fall to pursue a degree in Native American Studies.

Carlyjo Chavarria: Age 18, Española

As Miss Indian New Mexico Teen II, CarlyJo recognizes the importance of maintaining knowledge of her cultural traditions as well as the need to help other youth connect with their cultures. Because of this need, she has developed intergenerational programs in local communities where youth spend time with elders to learn about traditional languages and stories. CarlyJo is a United Nations Youth Ambassador, and this position has allowed her to present on her work throughout the United States.

Darryus Chavez: Age 18, Albuquerque

For Darryus' senior project, he chose to examine factors that contribute to urban teens' involvement in gangs. As he researched, he realized that urban spaces often lack programs for teenagers to be involved in, so he decided to start a program himself. Darryus did not have access to funds or a location, so he used his own money to provide food for participants and held meetings at local parks. His support group, called "Fresh Start," has become increasingly successful, and now about ten former gang members and current members wanting to leave their gangs attend regularly.

Laura Martinez: Age 18, Rio Rancho

Through her involvement in the National Honor Society, Laura has raised over \$800 for Red Mountain Family Services, a nonprofit foster care organization. Additionally, she has volunteered for the Albuquerque BioPark for years because of her passion for animals and sustainability. Laura balances her commitment to the community with her participation in her high school's track and cross country teams.

Jacqueline Murphy: Age 18, Albuquerque

The leadership roles Jacqueline held at her high school helped her to raise awareness about an organization that was in need of support. New Day Shelter, which aids women and children, was lacking supplies for individuals coming into the shelter, so Jacqueline led two successful clothing and toiletry drives at her high school while simultaneously increasing knowledge about domestic violence. After high school Jacqueline will remain an active community member because of her desire to always learn from those around her.

KeriRyan Muñiz: Age 19, Albuquerque

KeriRyan has spent her years at Santa Fe Indian School engaging with the various communities she is a part of, including her tribal community, her home city, and her school community. She is an advocate for environmental rights because she has seen first-hand how uranium contamination has affected people living on the Navajo reservation. Last summer, KeriRyan applied and was accepted to attend the Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress.



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Jimmy Snyder: Age 18, Albuquerque

Jimmy recently graduated from Manzano High School among the top twenty students of his class and will be attending the University of New Mexico in the fall to study video game design. Throughout high school, Jimmy has enjoyed helping elderly neighbors with tasks, and is inspired to help people and his community by his mom.

Heaven Talachy: Age 18, Santa Fe

Heaven commits much of her time to the Nambe Tribe community, working towards creating change. She teaches children in the community the Tewa language so they remain connected to cultural traditions and designed an impressive study for her senior project at the Santa Fe Indian School to push for water rights. She took the initiative to learn the complicated processes of taking samples and measuring water flow. Because men are traditionally water protectors, Heaven's dedication to this issue of water rights is actively shifting gender paradigms.

Yolanda Vigil: Age 17, Bernalillo

Yolanda's involvement with the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps (MCJROTC) at her high school has influenced her to join the United States Marine Corps. As a member of MCJROTC, Yolanda put together events to honor veterans, made care packages for those who are deployed, and partnered with the Ride Fighters organization. She looks forward to continuing to make an impact while serving in the Marines.

Shayla Watkins: Age 15, Albuquerque

Cheer and dance are central to Shayla's identity, and she loves sharing her skills with children around her because of her belief that these activities are powerful outlets for stress relief. Shayla volunteers her time to teach and choreograph dance for children at Westgate Community Center and teaches cheer at Truman Middle School. She attributes her desire to engage with communities to her mom, who is also active in the Albuquerque community.

Ages 20 - 26

Lisete Lozano Arzate: Age 21, Albuquerque

Lisete aspires to become a Diagnostic Medical Sonographer and is currently finishing school at Health Leadership High School. She will continue on to college as a first generation student, and is excited to continue her education because of her love for learning new things and meeting new people.

Dominic Peacock: Age 24, Albuquerque

Dominic has the goal of graduating in 2018 with a dual degree—one degree with a major in political science and a minor in management, and the other degree with a major in psychology and a minor in Native American studies. As a member of Acoma Pueblo, he ultimately hopes to study law so he can advocate for Native American rights. Dominic has interned in Washington, D.C. doing projects with New Mexico congressmen and plans to enlist in the Navy after graduating.