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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Eastside High students earn national student advocacy awards

Led by International Baccalaureate Spanish teacher Maria Zelaya, thirteen students from Eastside High School have been awarded cash prizes for their efforts in tackling critical social issues and now plan to donate their awards to those in need.

The students are winners of the national 2021 Milton Wolf Prize in Student Advocacy. To qualify for the prize, they had to identify an important community problem, research the issue, learn how the problem is currently being addressed, create a visual presentation on their research and educate others while soliciting help to address the issue.

The award offers cash prizes for five winning projects and five runner-up projects and small grants to three schools with strong submissions, to be donated to community organizations.

Zelaya had her students create and present the projects in Spanish, while also creating an English version to be presented to their family, friends and the Gainesville community.

Eastside's program collected two of the five winning awards, 4 of the 5 runner-up awards and received a small grant for their submissions.

With \$900 in earnings, the award-winning students have pledged \$450 to Louisiana residents affected by Hurricane Ida while the other \$450 will be used to provide essentials for underprivileged students at Eastside.

The plan is to create small care packages for students who do not have access to certain necessities and make those packages available at the front office at Eastside.

Award Winners

- **Winner:** Rani Batist, Isabella Vallente-Lauzan: *Homelessness in Gainesville, FL*
- **Winner:** Sawyer Cohen, Heet Patel, Andres Padron: *Homelessness in Gainesville, FL*
- **Runner-up:** Douglas Monroe: *Cyberbullying*
- **Runner-up:** Leann Omalay: *Substance Abuse in Alachua County/Gainesville*
- **Runner-up:** Rani Batist, Ahmik Paul, Daniel Park: *Housing Inequality*
- **Runner-up:** Sabrina Sehlin, Payal Thakor, Saanwi Lalwani: *Sexual Violence*

(more)

“I am very proud of all the students who created projects for The Milton Wolf Prize in Student Advocacy,” Zelaya said. “They chose their topics, did the research and presented in Spanish for my class and in English to members of the community. This is what global education is all about: students recognizing the problems in their community, understanding the different perspectives, communicating their ideas (in two languages) and taking action by making a difference in their community.”

A Jewish community leader, Milton Wolf served as America’s ambassador to Austria during the height of the Cold War and was a decorated humanitarian.

The award is presented by Centropa, a non-profit, Jewish historical institute dedicated to preserving 20th century Jewish family stories and photos from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and disseminating these stories and photos through films, books and exhibitions.

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