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Stanley Student Wins Community Service Project Contest

By Cathy Tyson



The Walner family, from left: Theresa, Matt, Kate and Dan Photo Cathy Tyson

Kate Walner of Lafayette had a great idea. She wanted to work on a community service project that she could enter into the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy's "Choose to Matter" contest, but she didn't want to ask people for money. With soccer teammate Hannah Wells, the pair of dedicated readers came up with the "Boxes, bags and bins of books" project that benefited three elementary schools in the Oakland Unified School District with loads of books for their libraries. The girls figured it was a win-win; parents of fellow soccer players got to clean shelves at home of gently used books that they had already enjoyed and then pass the books along to underserved kids who could enjoy them too, recycling and sharing community resources.

Walner received a special proclamation from the mayor at a recent city council meeting; she hobbled up to the podium to accept the award with a cast on one leg from, oddly enough, a soccer injury. She and Wells did it all on their own, explained proud dad Dan Walner, motivating their team and the entire soccer club to donate children's books. All told, the girls collected 1,149 kids' books. "The Oakland librarians were thrilled," said 14-year-old Walner. The books were divided between Oakland's Allendale, Brookfield and

Lafayette elementary schools. The Stanley Middle School eighth grader is a member of the Montclair Soccer Club; Wells, a resident of Berkeley, is on her team.

The girls are among a total of five Grand Prize winners from across the country, beating out 65 other service project submissions. The young winners and a parent or guardian-Kate is going with her mom-will receive an all-expense-paid trip in May to Walt Disney World in Florida and a role as a youth leader at Special Olympics Florida Summer Games.

Foudy is a pioneer in the world of women's soccer: she is the former captain of the USA Women's Soccer team, two-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time World Cup Champion. The philosophy of the leadership academy is simple - sports and leadership. In her many public speaking events, Foudy credits Title IX, the landmark civil rights ruling that required gender equality for education and athletic programs that receive federal funding, hence the Stanford soccer scholarship that put her on a path to soccer greatness.

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