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## 19 Lamorinda students named National Merit finalists

By Jennifer Wake

Officials from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) named finalists for the 66th Annual Scholarship Program. Nineteen of the nation's brightest students are right here in Lamorinda, all seniors at Acalanes, Bentley, Campolindo, Miramonte and in home school.

More than 1.5 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test which served as an initial screen of program entrants. Less than 1% of the students performed well enough from this nationwide pool to become the highest-scoring entrants in each state. Contra Costa County in total had 96 Semi-Finalists.

National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of finalists. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. Acalanes lead the area with six students: Kai Feinberg, Jamie Lattin, Morgan Mason, Isaiah Orlando, Madison Payne and Jackson Steele. "We at Acalanes are so proud of these amazing Dons and their noteworthy accomplishment!" said Acalanes Principal Travis Bell.

Bentley boasts two students: Dora Kocs-Meyers and Nathaniel McManus. Campolindo finalists include Zoe Heidersbach, Joshua Liao, Noel Seo and Hari Stoyanov. Principal John Walker noted, "Campolindo High School is so proud of our National Merit Scholars. These students have demonstrated tremendous academic achievement. The entire Campo community celebrates their accomplishment."

Miramonte High School students include Jenna Foster, Joshua Morganstein, Preston Nibley, Sarah Svahn, and Edwin Yu. Two homeschool students include Jack Armstrong and Jerree Scrhoff.

"At Miramonte, celebrating our National Merit Scholars is a tradition that we look forward to each year!" said Miramonte Principal Julie Parks. "We are so proud of these students for their accomplishment during this unusual time."

Three types of National Merit Scholarships will be offered in the spring of 2021. Every finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2,500 Scholarships that will be awarded on a state-representational basis. About 1,000 corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards will be provided by approximately 220 corporations and business organizations for finalists who meet their specified criteria. In addition, about 180 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 4,100 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for finalists who will attend the sponsor institution. In total, more than \$30 million is awarded in scholarship money.

NMSC is a not for profit organization that was established in 1955 to provide scholarships to recognize academic excellences. Prior National Merit Scholar recipients include Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates.

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