

2017

VISMAYA KHARKAR

Youth of the Year

The 2017 National Youth of the Year Award goes to Vismaya Kharkar, who is sponsored by the Exchange Club of Salt Lake City, UT, of the Rocky Mountain District.

This young achiever graduated high school in 2017 with a 4.62 GPA and a detailed resume of personal achievements.

Vismaya spent three years working at the Center for Investigational Therapeutics, studying compounds that work to counteract the carcinogenic functions of homologous proteins. She discovered a tumor-suppressive function of one particular protein and, in 2016, set out to further research and understand that protein. Through reading more than 50 scientific papers, sorting through hundreds more, and writing her own review, Vismaya learned a great deal about the scientific community, as well as the protein's role in cancer. Her findings contradicted what had been originally believed to be true, leading to her review's acceptance and publication in the *Journal of Cancer Studies and Therapeutics*, October 2016 (200 words).

In addition to giving back through her scientific endeavors, Vismaya served others through services in rural schools in Wai, India. First venturing to the country during her freshman year of high school, Vismaya taught students science and opened herself to a new world of personal growth and global understanding.

"...I realized that I had a responsibility to them to turn my gaze outwards." Vismaya recalls. "...I gained a better appreciation for my own good fortune, and developed a deeper understanding of the importance of service, no matter how daunting."

Vismaya returned to Wai two years later to teach English as a second language. Her gratitude for the students of the rural village

grew even deeper; so, last spring, Vismaya conducted a book drive at her school. In

August, she was able to deliver more than 400 children's books to the Wai School Library.

Vismaya is also proud to have helped raise money and awareness through the HOSA Games, in cooperation with 85 schools and more than 1,000 officers across Utah, for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

She has successfully participated in HOSA: Future Health Professionals and as State Service Vice President; served as a Youthlinc Peer Refugee Tutoring Mentor and an AP Peer Tutor; and belonged to National Honors Society, IB CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) Council, Student Advisory Board for Salt Lake Valley Science and Engineering Fair, Freshman Mentor Society, and Future Business Leaders of America.

Vismaya's personal achievements and awards include winning a National Merit Scholarship; receiving 1st place in the Business Communications Event at the Future Business Leaders of America 2014 National Conference; receiving 2nd place in the Medical Spelling Event at the HOSA: Future Health Professionals 2016 International Leadership Conference; selection as HOSA: Future Health Professionals State Service Vice President, with successful initiation of the HOSA Games, in service of the National Alliance on Mental Illness; and being named a recipient of the 15-year Grand Cup for Piano from the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Vismaya will attend Harvard University in the fall.



2017 Youth of the Year Nominees

NAME	SPONSOR CLUB	DISTRICT
Alyson Nguyen	Montgomery, AL	Alabama
Anmol Raien	Clovis, CA	California/Nevada
Sabrina Torres	South Orange County, CA	California/Nevada
Brett Hodges	Poquoson, VA	Colonial
Ashley Yung	Bristol, CT	Connecticut
Francine Dong	Grand Forks, ND	Dakota Territory
Ethan Lipnicky	Emerald Coast, FL	Florida
Ashley Taylor	Northeast St. Petersburg, FL	Florida
Mary Kathryn Howard	Tifton, GA	Georgia
Alyssa Condie	Duneland, IN	Indiana
Madison Dulas	Waseca, MN	Lakes and Prairies
Rachel DeHart	Pennfield, MI	Michigan
Andrew Assaleh	Oklahoma City, OK	Mid-America
Juan Ramon Riojas	Gulfport, MS	Mississippi
John Grove	N. Worcester County/Leominster, MA	New England
Pedro Gomez	Mt. Olive, NC	North Carolina
Jacob Dunn	Walla Walla, WA	Northwest
Leah Casey	Lima, OH	Ohio/West Virginia
Ariana Davila-Mojica	Cabo Rojo, PR	Puerto Rico
Vismaya Kharkar	Salt Lake City, UT	Rocky Mountain
Matthew R. Pimley	Marysville, CA	Sierra Pacific
Lia Hsu-Rodriguez	Isle of Palms, SC	South Carolina
Garrett Morgan	Beaufort, SC	South Carolina
Lawrence James Peterson	El Paso, TX	Southwest
Ellison Murphree	Waverly, TN	Tennessee
Cambriege Wesley	Killeen, TX	Texas
Jefferson Ren	Sugar Land, TX	Texas/Louisiana Gulf Coast
Conner Ford	Butte, MT	Yellowstone

CONGRATULATIONS!