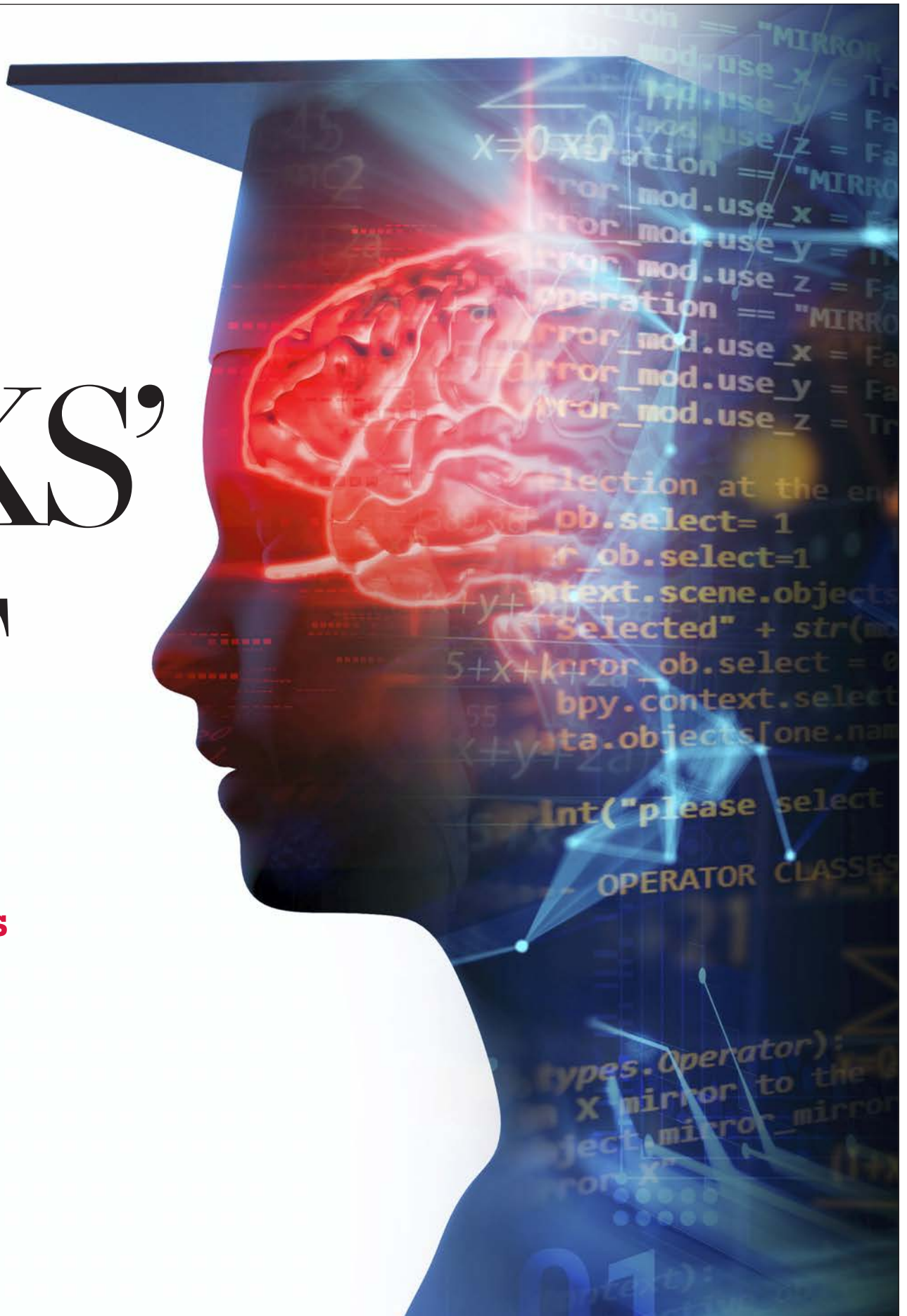


# BERKS' BEST

**Honoring the best  
high school seniors  
in Berks County  
in 11 academic areas**



CLASS OF 2022

# Accomplishments await you



**Kevin Murphy** is president and CEO of Berks County Community Foundation

**By Kevin K Murphy**

The events of your high school years have shown you that we live in a tumultuous world. While it's true that the last few years have been more unpredictable than some other periods, the truth is that the world has always been an ever-changing, uncertain place.

We adapt, life shifts again, and we adjust once more.

That's the nature of existence, and you've

shown the resilience that is necessary for you to flourish.

And just as the world around Berks County continues to evolve, so does Berks County.

We are a more diverse, more sophisticated community than we were at any time in the past.

Berks County will continue to progress, but one thing won't change: This will always be the place where you graduated from high school and where there are people who are proud of you.

As you venture onto your next challenges,

we'll be thinking of you with pride and satisfaction.

We'll be watching you, and we want you to look back at us.

Whatever you do next, remember to share the dreams you pursue and the goals you achieve with everyone who supports you here at your home in Berks County. And we'll continue to encourage you.

Enjoy this moment, and then go accomplish everything that we know you can.

BERKS' BEST 2022

# Students submit 252 applications for 11 awards

**BINGAMAN HESS**

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

## *Congratulations to the 2022 Bingaman Hess Scholarship Winners*

**Stephen Hannon**  
*Daniel Boone Area High School*

**Johany Ramirez-Martinez**  
*Reading High School*

Thank you to all the students who applied and we wish you the best in your future studies.

Suite 100 • 2 Meridian Boulevard  
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[www.BingamanHess.com](http://www.BingamanHess.com)

**By Susan Miers Smith**  
[ssmith@readingeagle.com](mailto:ssmith@readingeagle.com)

Berks County high schools submitted 368 nominations for this year's Berks' Best awards. The schools were invited to nominate up to two seniors in each of 11 categories.

There were 252 applications submitted by the students, who had to complete an online form with essay questions and have someone not related to them submit a letter of recommendation.

A panel of 30 judges divided by their expertise in each of the categories evaluated the applications and letters and gave each applicant a score. The applications receiving the top three highest scores in each category were selected as finalists. There were 38 finalists named due to scoring ties.

The categories were Business, Communications, Computer Science, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Performing Arts, Science/Environment, Social Studies, Taylor Seitzinger Award for Community Service, Visual Arts and Vocational/Technical Skills.

One student won two categories this year.

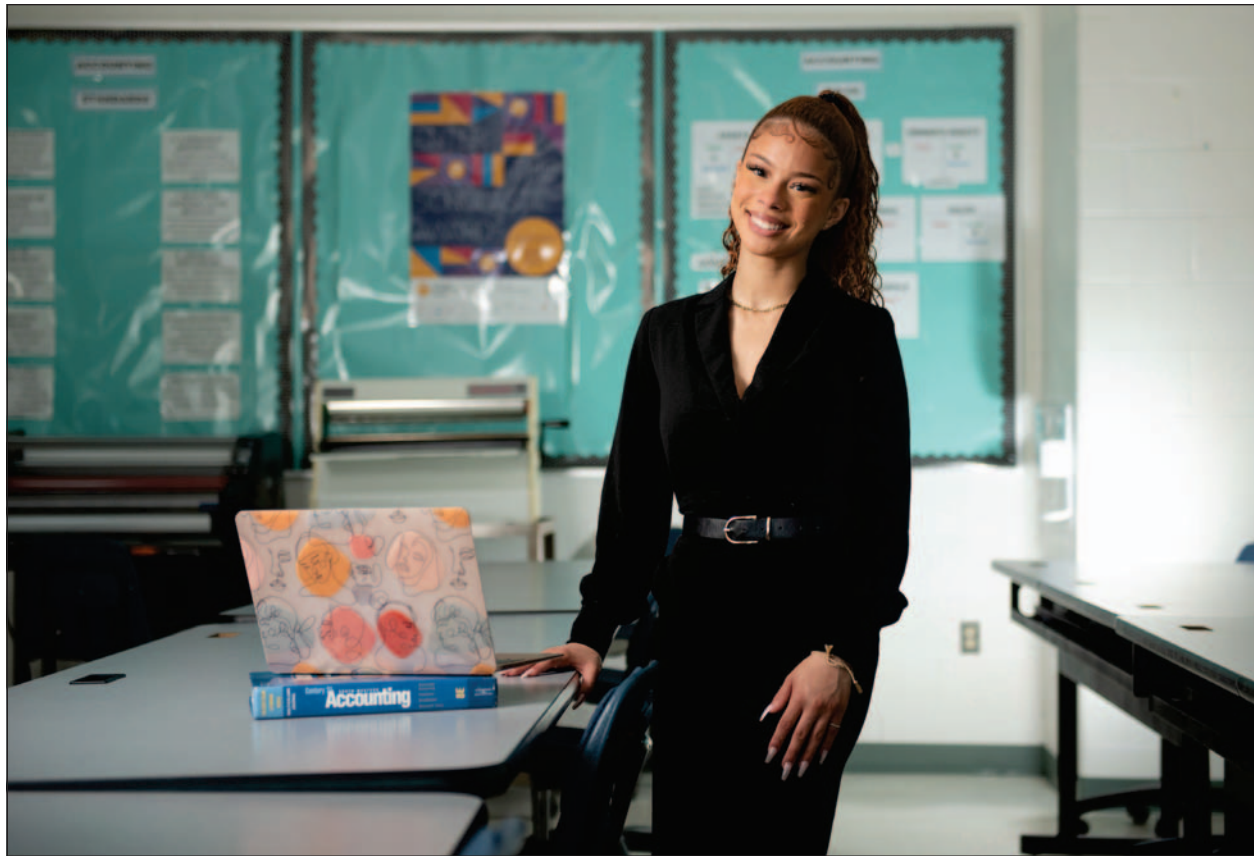
Each category winner will receive

a \$500 check from the Berks County Community Foundation and will be honored at the BCCF's 2022 Scholarship Luncheon on June 6 at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Reading.

*Reading Eagle* reporters interviewed each of the winners, which include someone who already has patents and has started a nonprofit. Some of the winners' goals include tackling racism and racial bias, working on Capitol Hill, performing on Broadway, operating a nonprofit and working for Pixar. Take a minute to meet each one.

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# Business



LAUREN A. LITTLE — SPECIAL TO THE READING EAGLE

Sarah Guevara is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in business.

## Sarah Guevara sees business as launching pad

By David Mekeel  
dmekeel@readingeagle.com

The questions weren't the typical ones a little kid asks their father.

What is an LLC? Can you explain corporate taxes to me? What is it like to start your own business?

It certainly was clear from a young age what direction Sarah Guevara's life would take.

Guevara, a senior at Conrad Weiser High School, can't remember a time when she didn't have

an interest in business. It is something that always has intrigued her.

"I love to see an idea become a business and then impact people's lives," she said. "Business is everywhere. I figured if I can learn business I can go into whatever industry my little heart desires."

Guevara's nose for business led her to the Berks Career and Technology Center, where for the past three years she has been enrolled in the business management and entrepreneurship program. The

program allows students to operate a virtual business.

That is something Guevara has thrived at, as she ended up twice serving as the company's chief executive officer.

Her business acumen also earned Guevara the distinction of being named the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 in business.

"It was very satisfying to win," she said. "I know how hard I worked to get here."

Guevara said she has loved her time at the career and technology cen-

veloped other tools she'll need.

"It helped me prepare for my internships and has been a huge part of me becoming an adequate businesswoman," she said.

Along with her work at the career and technology center, Guevara has taken part in two internships: one at the Olivet Boys & Girls Club and one with Team Lifelong Wellness.

"Sarah has taken an enormous leadership role in our team since day one, and I greatly value her input in all of our internal and external projects," Caitlin Trovato Long, CEO of Team Lifelong Wellness said of Guevara. "She has an uncanny ability to deliver creative and innovative solutions and offers a unique, multi-faceted perspective."

Guevara said she plans to continue her business schooling after high school. She has already accepted a job as community relations coordinator at Olivet Boys & Girls Club that she was offered as a result of her internship with the organization. She plans to finish an associate degree program in business and management and entrepreneurship at Reading Area Community College that she began through a dual enrollment program.

Down the road she hopes to obtain a bachelor's degree, she said.

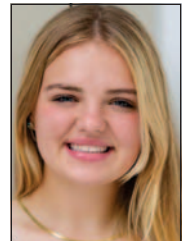
As for her long-term career plans, Guevara said she hopes to use her business skills to guide a non-profit organization that helps kids.

"Our future is in the hands of our youth, so we must invest in them and give each youth all the tools they need to succeed, regardless of psychographics," she said.

### FINALISTS



**Sarah Guevara**  
Conrad Weiser



**Mollie Helstrom**  
Berks Catholic



**Jonathon Werley**  
Schuylkill Valley

# Communications

## FINALISTS



**Nicole Angelisanti**  
Kutztown



**Emma Detwiler**  
Wilson

**Roxsonna Janiszewski**  
Muhlenberg



**Amy Schafer**  
Daniel Boone



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Emma Detwiler is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in communications.

## Emma Detwiler learned tolerance in newspaper role

**By Michelle Lynch**  
[mlynch@readingeagle.com](mailto:mlynch@readingeagle.com)

As a contributor to and editor of Wilson High School's student newspaper, Emma Detwiler learned important career skills.

Teamwork, flexibility, responsibility, objectivity, tolerance and respect are just a few.

Named editor-in-chief of *The Paw Print* midway

through her senior year, Detwiler was charged with maintaining the newspaper's journalistic objectivity.

"It's necessary to respect others' beliefs, even if they are much different from your own," she said.

Detwiler, 18, a Wilson senior, is the winner of the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 award in communications.

She joined *The Paw*

*Print* team as a freshman and climbed through the ranks, learning along the way.

"Editor-in-chief is my title," she said, "but the paper is very team-based."

As editorial editor during her junior year, she found students' opinions vary widely on topics as diverse as top-streaming specials and politics.

"I had to edit their opinions and send them out for

the entire school to read," Detwiler said. "This was especially hard to do when I didn't agree with one of my writers."

The experience taught her to be tolerant of others' opinions, she said.

"After my experience with the newspaper," she said, "I've learned to look at topics from different perspectives."

The lessons she learned in tolerance, respect and team-building will help her keep an open mind and work better with others in the future, she said.

"Emma is extremely passionate about truth-seeking and the importance of accountability,"

said Alexandra Fischenich, an English and writing teacher at the high school.

Fischenich serves as adviser to *The Paw Print* and Wilson's literary magazine, *Ink*, to which Detwiler also contributed.

One of the characteristics that makes Emma stand out is her attitude, Fischenich said.

"Where others see difficulty and give up, she sees a challenge and digs in," the teacher said of her student. "This attitude makes her an invaluable addition to any classroom, team, club or group."

Detwiler credits her maternal stepgrandfather, John Althouse, for helping to instill in her a can-do attitude.

Next to her parents, Jodi and Jeff Detwiler of Spring Township, she said, Althouse, whom she calls Poppo, is her biggest supporter.

"He has always supported me in everything I do, even if other people around me didn't," she said.

Her grandfather lent her a helping hand in nearly all her achievements, she said.

Poppo is her biggest supporter when it comes to education, Detwiler said.

"He buys me books for classes, helps me study for tests and always gives me pep talks when I need them," she said.

She tries to show the same support to her younger sister, Liv, 14, helping with homework and offering advice on handling middle-school drama.

Detwiler plans to attend Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass., to major in economics and political science with a focus on journalism. She envisions working on Capitol Hill, possibly as a public relations specialist or political analyst.

# Computer Science



LAUREN A. LITTLE —SPECIAL TO THE READING EAGLE

Saishree Mupparaju is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in computer science.

## Saishree Mupparaju has problem-solving passion

**By Keith Dmochowski**  
kdmochowski@readingeagle.com

Saishree Mupparaju has always been a problem solver.

As a child, her talent for untangling equations was obvious to her father, Sreeni Vasulu, a software engineer who taught her the basics of coding and nursed her curiosity about technology.

"I fell in love with using my favorite subject (math) to solve logic problems — all while building an even stronger connection with my dad," said Mupparaju, who has been named the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best

2022 winner in computer science.

She said she'd never forget her experience in fourth grade when she and her father worked to decipher a difficult problem for her advanced math class homework.

"We sat at it for multiple hours straight — that's when I realized you have to sit down and grind because the answers just aren't going to come to you," she said. "I realized how much dedication and passion he had for learning, and that really grew on me."

Mupparaju's passion for putting in hard work to

find answers fits naturally in the field of computer science, but it's the sheer possibility of coding that intrigues her.

"All the possibilities the future has with technology, how artificial intelligence will be playing a role, I think it just has so much potential and I want to be involved in that," she said.

Now a senior at Exeter High School, Mupparaju, 17, applies the critical thinking techniques she sharpened in AP math and computer science courses to further her passions through an array of clubs,

academic efforts and community service activities.

She said one of her most impactful extracurricular experiences came last year at the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University, a prestigious summer enrichment program.

There, she took high-level science classes taught by Carnegie Mellon professors and worked with research scientists on a project that tracked artificial intelligence in social media to determine if household devices are spying on users.

She was also a part of In-spirit AI Scholars — an intensive program for high schoolers developed and taught by Stanford and MIT students and alumni — where she worked on a project focused on artificial intelligence's effect on disease trends.

In addition, she is involved in Novus.AI, a student-led artificial intelligence startup that programmed algorithms for a surveillance hazard detection app.

Mupparaju's passion for problem solving also extends to society at large — she founded and leads the DoSomething club at school that organizes local community service campaigns.

Under Mupparaju's leadership, the club has collected over 1,000 books for Opportunity House of Reading, created a welcome pamphlet for new students, organized an International Women's Day event and raised funds for special education projects.

Her involvement in school clubs, activities and social causes is extensive. She has competed in the regional Science Olympiad, served as captain of the Exeter's girls varsity tennis team and president of the Mock Trial club and received various related awards and honors. She chaired Exeter's MiniTHON, served on the Youth Advisory Board of Berks County, and leads the student activist group Stand Together Against Racism.

Mupparaju said her main professional goal is to combine her passions for STEM and social service by taking her programming skills to law and government.

She hopes to start a company that would ensure emergent AI technologies are developed without racial bias and operate fairly during criminal investigations and other societal applications.

"I hope to break barriers for women of color and show young girls that they can do anything they put their minds to," she said.

For now, she's headed to Carnegie Mellon to study computer science.

### FINALISTS



**Matthew Gramley**  
Berks Catholic



**Kiley McEntee**  
Daniel Boone



**Saishree Mupparaju**  
Exeter



**Freya Oesterle**  
Oley

# Foreign Language

## FINALISTS



**Nicole Angelisanti**  
Kutztown



**Sherry Heckman**  
Exeter



**Stella Newmoyer**  
Wyomissing



**Chloe Shendge**  
Twin Valley



**Kaylien Tran**  
Wilson



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Kaylien Tran is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in foreign languages.

## Kaylein Tran finds distinction in each language

**By Michelle Lynch**  
[mlynch@readingeagle.com](mailto:mlynch@readingeagle.com)

As a young girl of Vietnamese descent, Kaylein Tran found it nearly impossible to avoid standing out in her elementary school.

One of the few students with Asian ancestry, she was bullied by some and ignored by others. Afraid of being an outcast, she hid her affinity for her

family's culture and heritage.

"Students used to mock my facial features and the traditional foods I ate growing up," she said, "to the point where I attempted to fit in with others and left my true identity behind."

It wasn't until her older brother and sister introduced her to Wilson High School's World Language program that she began

revealing her intense interest in and passion for Asian languages and culture.

Tran, 18, a Wilson senior, is the winner of the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 award in foreign language.

"I never considered how meaningful my Asian descent would be to me until I took Chinese," she said.

She has been studying the language and culture

since middle school and was an active member of Wilson's East Asian Club through her high school years.

Tran said she expected her background would make it easier to understand aspects of the language, traditional holidays and cultural standards but discovered she was wrong.

"I've come to realize that each language and ethnicity has great distinction," she said.

Studying Chinese and engaging in club activities opened many opportunities, Tran said.

As president of the nearly 50-member club

this year, she organized and prepared several events, said Grace Lee, a Wilson language teacher and adviser to the club.

"She has a natural ability to mobilize people and command their respect by always being present and ready to work," the teacher said of Tran. "People are drawn to her for her empathy and kindness."

Tran of Sinking Spring said her older brother, Chan Le, 24, and sister, Amanda Le, 22, are her inspiration.

"I see my siblings as my role models because they have truly paved the way for me, giving me such heartfelt advice and assisting me on my progression for the future," she said.

She attributes much of her personal growth and academic success to her sister's support and encouragement.

"We grew up in a family where compliments are rarely handed out regardless of the significance of the achievements," Tran said. "Even so, my sister continuously gave me wholehearted praises and words of affirmation."

As a child, Tran learned to use humor as a way of relating to those who mocked her or felt ill-at-ease due to their own discomfort with her differences.

"Making others laugh and distracting or relieving their stress was something I did best," she said.

It is a skill she expects will come in handy in her future career.

Tran, whose parents are Tan Tran and Chau Le, plans to attend Temple University and will major in neuroscience and minor in foreign language.

She has set her sights on becoming a physician or entering the field of medical research.

# Mathematics



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Nikita Patel is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in mathematics.

## Nikita Patel says math is all around us

By Keith Dmochowski  
kdmochowski@readingeagle.com

Inventing a technology that betters the lives of people in poor nations is a rare deed.

Even rarer is inventing such a thing before hitting puberty.

But for *Reading Eagle* Berks' Best 2022 winner in mathematics Nikita Patel, turning PVC pipe into a patented water filtration system is one of many truly outstanding achievements.

At around age 11, Patel got her first patent for an

aquaponics kit, which she said grows plants and purifies water in areas where earthquakes ruin farms and water is scarce.

"One of my lifelong goals is to provide the 884 million people with no source of water a supply of water they can rely on," Patel said.

To further that goal, Patel founded a nonprofit, Endless Food Growth Inc., which mass produces and distributes her kits in Haiti and Jamaica.

Her inventive skill is fueled by a drive to master the formulas that dictate

the universe's laws and use that knowledge to help people.

"Math is really all around us in everything we do. Math is, in a way, the building blocks of our lives, from mobile device software to architecture," Patel said. "What gets me most excited about math is that it's infinite, it will never stop being discovered."

A thirst for discovery enthralled Patel as early as age 5, when she remembers taking apart her family's broken coffee machine to understand the mechanisms behind it.

"I was really just always an inventor," Patel said. "I always liked to learn how things worked, and how I could create a difference in other people's lives by using the innate ability I have

to come up with solutions."

Patel said her inventive process involves taking mental snapshots, then rapidly flipping through images of past observations in her head.

"The flipping of mental pictures becomes faster, the images begin to blend together into new shapes," Patel said. "Sparks in my brain ignite, flow together and eventually contrive a new invention."

In first- and second-grade math classes, she solved every problem assigned quickly — so quickly that she often found her mind wandering while her classmates caught up.

"I'd try to find math problems around me, like the fan in the room: it's revolving at this rate, how fast would it have to go

to cool off a room twice the size of this one?" Patel said. "Math brought out a sense of adventure and curiosity in me."

As an eighth-grader, Patel was already taking Advanced Placement calculus classes with high school juniors and seniors. By her freshman year, she had completed the entire mathematics curriculum.

Patel went on to serve as a teacher's aide in Wilson's AP calculus classes, take a multivariable calculus course at Albright College and research her newest invention, a needle-less drug delivery system that can serve as a painless form of chemotherapy.

She has already patented the system — which she said uses a new type of nanotechnology to deliver drugs through the skin — and is in talks with Johnson & Johnson to have it developed for mass use.

Patel, 16, will graduate high school two years early in June.

Patel hopes to expand her nonprofit and create a company to globalize her needle-less drug delivery system.

She will attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, which has awarded her a \$178,000 merit scholarship in biomedical engineering on the pre-med track.

She hopes to work as a vascular surgeon, applying her passion for mathematical modeling and logical analysis when planning and carrying out procedures.

Patel said she looks forward to developing lasting relationships with patients and their families as she helps them overcome medical issues.

"Math is quite literally unstoppable," she said. "Using math to improve the lives of others is what I've strived to do all my life and I'm not stopping here."

### FINALISTS



**Srigouri Oruganty**  
Muhlenberg



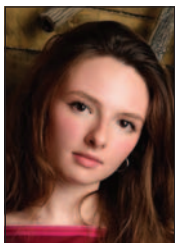
**Nikita Patel**  
Wilson



**Colby Snyder**  
Wilson

# Performing Arts

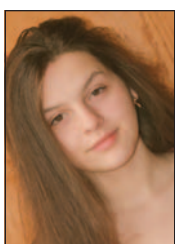
## FINALISTS



**Katherine DeAngelo**  
Kutztown



**Charlotte Fisher**  
Oley



**Jocelyn Hittle**  
Twin Valley



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Jocelyn Hittle is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in performing arts.

## Jocelyn Hittle has dreams of Broadway

**By Don Botch**  
[dbotch@readingeagle.com](mailto:dbotch@readingeagle.com)

Jocelyn Hittle is the first to admit her freshman-year introduction to the Theater Arts Club at Twin Valley High School did not go particularly well.

"I learned that I was pretty awful, honestly, at acting," she said, laughing at her own expense. "And my singing wasn't great, and I couldn't remember choreography, and stage

direction flew right over my head. I was pretty convinced it was only going to be a one-year thing."

But when opening night for "The Addams Family" rolled around and she experienced her very first show, she said she knew one thing for certain: "I've got to do this forever."

And here she is three years later, basking in the spotlight as winner of the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 for performing arts.

Jocelyn says she never saw this coming.

"I was essentially the lowest ensemble member that there was in the entire production," she said of "The Addams Family." "I auditioned that year just as a featured ensemble member, which I didn't get, but they did put me in the chorus. Regardless, I learned the really important lesson that there truly are no small parts in a show, and everybody is

monumental. And everybody gets that experience, which is super-cool."

Jocelyn's subsequent achievements included serving as student stage manager junior year for Twin Valley's new fall one-act play program and being named student director senior year for the one-act program and mentoring the new group of stage managers. In addition, she won the 2022 International Thespian Excellence Award for Monologue and was inducted into the Pennsylvania Thespian Society Hall of Fame for Excellence in Theater.

"So it's super-crazy to think that I started as this little, scared 14-year-old

who had no idea how to handle herself on stage, and I'm going to college for theater," Jocelyn said.

Nicole Weaver, her Theater Arts Club adviser, described Jocelyn as shy when she joined the club.

"I definitely was," Jocelyn said. "I was really afraid of taking up space. I've always been kind of afraid of putting my voice out there. I was taught as a young kid that being a loud woman is not exactly what should be expected of me, but I think it was through theater and through this experience that I learned that my voice is really important for everyone to hear, and that taking up space is the one thing that I should be doing."

Jocelyn credits her great uncle Michael Kenig, an English teacher and play director at Cardinal O'Hara High School who died Dec. 31, with sparking her interest in theater. She also takes inspiration from her grandfather Robert Kenig, a great storyteller and the first writer in her family, who suffers from a form of dementia called aphasia that makes it difficult for him to express himself. She aspires to write and direct a play based on his memoirs.

"I'd like to be able to put that on stage before he passes away," she said. "I think that would be one of my greatest achievements."

Jocelyn plans to attend Marywood University, Scranton, and major in theater education. She dreams of working on Broadway as a director or stage manager, but also has what she calls a "sub-dream" that involves giving back.

"I want to come back to Twin Valley," she said, "and I want to teach in our theater program."



## Science/Environment



LAUREN A. LITTLE — SPECIAL TO THE READING EAGLE

Joshua Leshinskie is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in science/environment.

# Joshua Leshinskie

## seeks renewable energy source

**By Karen Shuey**

[kshuey@readingeagle.com](mailto:kshuey@readingeagle.com)

Joshua Leshinskie has always been filled with questions.

As long as he can remember he's been curious about how things work, about why things are the way they are.

That longing for answers has shaped much of his young life. It's the reason that the 18-year-old has developed a deep love for science and engineering.

And it's helped him excel in those fields. So much so that the Boyertown High School senior has been recognized for his accomplishments in scientific excellence through the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 scholarship program.

"Science is all about learning new things, testing new ideas and solving problems," he said. "Science really reinforces the notion that being curious is a good thing and that asking questions is a

good thing."

And, he said, he loves that you can take broad scientific concepts such as gravity or momentum that you may learn about in a book and see them working in very tangible ways through experiments.

Over those years some of those experiments have involved building infrastructure like a bridge, constructing a hovercraft, creating a system that removes bacteria from water, designing a utility

method that generates energy, fashioning a pulley system to enhance manufacturing capabilities and assembling a birdhouse in a manner that gives people a new perspective.

Most recently, Leshinskie has turned his attention toward environmental science.

He said the time he spent in the great outdoors as a Boy Scout opened his eyes to the very real impact of climate change that will continue to erode the natural resources we so often take for granted.

"It can be really scary to see the harm we've done in so little time," he said.

Leshinskie said he was thrilled to receive the Berks' Best honor for his

scientific contributions.

"I was overjoyed when I found out that I had won because science has been my life," he said.

Leshinskie added that he knows there are many students in Berks County who are deserving of recognition for their scientific prowess and considers himself lucky to have had dedicated teachers who encouraged him to pursue his passion.

One of those teachers is Gayathri Swaminathan.

As a physics teacher at Boyertown, Swaminathan challenged Leshinskie to envision ways in which he can put his extensive classroom instruction to good use in the real world. And, the teacher said, he has been impressed with the way his student has gone above and beyond what is expected to meet those challenges.

"He is always willing to learn," Swaminathan wrote in a glowing letter about how valuable Leshinskie has been to his classroom. "I have no doubt that he will continue to strive for excellence in college and later in life."

As for the future, Leshinskie will be attending the University of Pennsylvania in the fall to study engineering. He said his dream is to create a practical and inexpensive renewable energy source.

"The goal is to use my education to really benefit the world," he said. "People say that you should dream big, so I will start with the biggest dream I can imagine and we'll see where I end up. But I do know that I want to someday work for a company or start my own company that is really passionate about clean energy and shaping the world to be a better place."

### FINALISTS



**Lauren Conrad**  
Brandywine



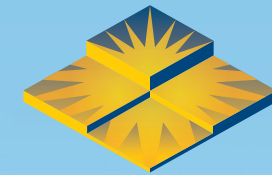
**Joshua Leshinskie**  
Boyertown



**Nikita Patel**  
Wilson

# Congratulations TO THE CLASS OF 2022!

Remember to share the dreams you pursue and the goals you achieve with everyone who supports you here at your home in Berks County.



BERKS COUNTY  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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610-685-2223 • [www.bccf.org](http://www.bccf.org) • [info@bccf.org](mailto:info@bccf.org)



# Social Studies

## FINALISTS



**Rhegan Fagley**  
Muhlenberg



**Elizabeth Harenza**  
Wyomissing



**Isabella Sanders**  
Wilson



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Rhegan Fagley is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in social studies.

## Rhegan Fagley gains insights from current events

**By Mike Urban**  
[murban@readingeagle.com](mailto:murban@readingeagle.com)

When schools went virtual during the pandemic, it was common for students to communicate less during online classes than they had in classrooms, said Muhlenberg High School teacher Ben O'Donnell.

But Rhegan Fagley was an exception, he said.

Fagley never shied away

from engaging in classroom discussions and speaking with a nuanced perspective on topics such as refugees, asylum seekers, human trafficking, population trends and diplomacy, he said.

"Such discussions were way more challenging as everything was done through Google Meet with the majority of students turning their cameras off

and unwilling to communicate using anything but the chat feature," he said. "But Rhegan showed up every day for first period virtual learning at 7:40 a.m., eager to learn and ready to debate her classmates on any subject that I introduced.

"COVID-19 presented myriad challenges for all of our students, but seeing how Rhegan conducted herself through it is a clear

indicator of the caliber of person and student she already is."

As a result, Fagley has earned the honor of being named the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in social studies.

Fagley, 17, is now a senior and in addition to her social studies talents, she won first-place awards the last three years for her projects in the Reading-Berks Science and Engineering Fair.

She has played volleyball, been involved in the Model Senate program and helped lead her school's One by One Service Club, among many

other activities while also being involved in community programs and working several jobs.

She said she was proud to be named a Berks' Best student, particularly because it was for her favorite subject.

Social studies is an art form involving people, thoughts, ideas, conversations and historical events, she explained in her application essay.

"It is a storybook of knowledge," she said.

She loves the insights and critical thinking skills she gains from it and especially enjoys studying current events and politics because those subjects have such real world applications, she said.

"I strive to be an informed citizen because ignorance would only harm myself and those around me," she said. "This is what many struggle with, and it is why our country is so polarized."

She's been interested in politics since sixth grade and is fascinated by how people think and view issues differently depending on their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and life experiences, she said.

"Studying politics and focusing on the psychological part of forming opinions has made me both more accepting and less judgmental of other people's viewpoints," she said. "I cherish this because many people I know lack the open-mindedness that I possess, and it creates a lot of anger in them."

Fagley plans to go to Princeton University this fall for political science and environmental science and eventually pursue a career in law or business.

"Regardless, I don't think my interest in social studies will wane," she said.



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**READING EAGLE**

# Community Service

## FINALISTS



**Lily Ferguson**  
Daniel Boone



**Riley Frymoyer**  
Wyomissing



**Saishree Mupparaju**  
Exeter



**Katherine Schadler**  
Wyomissing



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Katherine Schadler is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in community service.

## Katherine Schadler works to bring awareness to community

**By Karen Shuey**  
[kshuey@readingeagle.com](mailto:kshuey@readingeagle.com)

Katherine Schadler grew up in a family that stressed the importance of having empathy for others, to care for those who may have less than she does and to speak her mind when she encounters injustice.

Those values, coupled with her own desire to engage with her community, compelled the 18-year-old Wyomissing High School senior to get involved with programs that shine a light on causes that are

near and dear to her heart.

She is president of the Wyomissing High School Service Club.

She serves in an advisory role for the Youth Volunteer Corps.

She helped create a local chapter of Stand Together Against Racism.

And now that work has been recognized.

Schadler has been named the recipient of the Taylor Seitzinger Award for Community Service in the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 program.

Schadler said she was

stunned when she learned she had won the prestigious award, noting how competitive the accolade is among her peers.

"Even though I knew I had a lot of accomplishments with service, it was a huge honor to be named for something that I am specifically passionate about," she said.

Schadler said she has been proud to use her platform in various organizations to form human connections, sustain powerful conversations and create tangible solutions to bring

awareness to issues in her community. Issues that might seem controversial such as racism, white privilege or challenging cancel culture.

But she thinks her most important work has been her involvement with the youth-led social justice organization Stand Together Against Racism, which she helped form shortly after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of a white police officer.

Schadler said she has been able to put the education she received in that program to good use by creating her own anti-racism curriculum that she shares with youngsters in the summer playground program offered through the Reading

Parks and Recreation Department.

"I find that planting that seed in the next generation is the most important step toward creating progress," she said.

But she is aware not everyone shares that perspective.

Schadler said she designed a similar anti-racism lesson plan for fifth- and sixth-graders at West Reading Elementary Center that came under fire from some parents. She said she faced a tough decision when she was told to remove some aspects of her teachings to accommodate those concerns.

"I had to make quite a few adjustments to my lesson plans to take out anything that could potentially be misconstrued as controversial, and through those adaptations I had to consider that it was better to teach students something rather than nothing," she said.

Even with those changes, Schadler said the program was struck down in March.

"I think the biggest misconception within our community is that standing up against racism is somehow a political statement," she said. "So, I will continue trying to rewrite the narrative that this is not a political issue — this is a human rights issue."

And she is still moving forward on creating an art installation at the elementary center depicting messages that promote diversity, equity and inclusion that she hopes will last long after she has graduated.

Schadler will be attending Bucknell University in the fall and will study English and philosophy, then attend law school.

Her goal is to be a civil rights attorney.

## Visual Arts



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Danielle Dung My Ha is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in Visual Arts

# Identity influences work of Danielle Dung My Ha

By Bill Uhrich  
*Reading Eagle*

To create her pen and ink drawing of the Golden Bridge at Bà Nà Hills, Đà Nang, Vietnam, Daniel Boone senior Danielle Dung My Ha laboriously drew small individual lines that formed values and contrasts through a process called hatching.

What emerged is a striking rendering of the landmark, a feature of which is the giant sculpted hands

that hold the bridge, and according to Dani, represent godly beings holding up the bridge as a gift of nature.

This drawing is a perfect metaphor for Dani's life, as she has strived to build bridges among cultures, races and generations, taking small steps one at a time, part of what earned her the title of Berks' Best 2022 in visual arts.

"Most of my work has been influenced by my Asian-American identity and drew from my strug-

gles to fit in, and just balancing that," Dani, 17, said. "Finding my own identity was a bit hard. A lot of that is what I use to influence my work and the way I look at things."

Her influences extend back from her Gen Z upbringing as a child born in America to Vietnamese immigrants to a countercultural icon of the late 1960s baby boomer generation: Angela Davis, a Black feminist activist.

"It ties back to social justice and looking at the inequalities that we see nowadays," Dani said. "What I find inspiring about Davis' work is how she looks at it through a feminist framework as well and how she talks about inequalities especially between men and women and also the social inequalities that happen between racially white

and Black people and also Asian-Americans as well. I admire how she writes and frames her thoughts."

As happened with many of her generation, the pandemic forced Dani to examine her life and goals.

"Growing up as a Vietnamese-American was hard for me," she said. "I didn't fit in because of how I looked and the food I ate. I was raised speaking Vietnamese, too, so a lot of my early life I was suppressing a part of my culture and ethnicity to try and fit in."

The last two years of pandemic life changed her, creating new bridges.

"After the pandemic, I realized that I needed to stay more true to myself, and it made me more open to figuring out where my roots were, what my mother's culture was," she said. "It was hard for me to come to terms with that. It in-

spired me and pushed me to reach outward and look at other perspectives like the Black experience in America, looking at the Latina experience, and getting all those perspectives and learning more about their lives and their struggles as well."

Dani emerged from the pandemic experience more determined to take leadership roles in her school activities and in her activism.

"Uplifting their voices was one of the things that I prioritize a lot in my activism," she said. "I wouldn't call myself an activist, though, because I'm still a student and haven't done much, yet, but when I go to college I plan to get more involved with the community."

In her letter of recommendation to the Berks' Best judges, Daniel Boone art teacher Emily Cornish emphasized Dani's leadership roles in the school.

"Dani is a founding co-president in our Art Club," she wrote. "Dani demonstrates leadership through initiative, organization, and hands-on work within our Art Club. Dani is also the vice president of our Social Justice Club/Cultural Awareness for Everyone Club. Dani works each and every day to help create a more inclusive and safe school for students."

Dani's plans to attend the School of Visual Arts in New York, where she will study animation. Her dream job following graduation would be at Pixar.

"Nowadays they've been releasing movies that are more representative like 'Turning Red' (a film about the Asian-American adolescent experience)," she said, "and I definitely want to contribute to that and include narratives of other people."

And continue her work creating bridges.

### FINALISTS



**Danielle  
Dung My Ha**  
Daniel Boone



**Stella  
Newmoyer**  
Wyomissing

**Brynn  
Patchell**  
Exeter

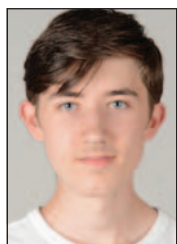
# Vocational-Technical Skills

## FINALISTS



**Sarah Guevara**  
Conrad Weiser

**Bailey Nicholas**  
Wilson



**Jakob Wioskowski**  
Daniel Boone



LAUREN A. LITTLE — SPEICAL TO THE READING EAGLE

Sarah Guevara is the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 winner in vocational-technical skills.

## Doing is best way to learn, says Sarah Guevara

**By David Mekeel**  
[dmekeel@readingeagle.com](mailto:dmekeel@readingeagle.com)

Sarah Guevara wanted more than what you can learn sitting in a classroom, more than what you can glean from reading a textbook.

She wanted to spend her high school career actually doing the things she was learning. And there's no better place for that than the Berks Career and Technology Center.

Guevara, whose home

district is Conrad Weiser, spent three years at BCTC enrolled in the school's business management and entrepreneurship shop.

"I think the best way to learn is to do," she said. "And the program that BCTC has in the business shop allows us to do. It's as close to the real world as we can get in a classroom setting, and if we mess up it's not that big of a deal."

Guevara didn't do much messing up at BCTC. She

has excelled in her program, so much so that she has been named the *Reading Eagle's* Berks' Best 2022 in vocational-technical skills.

"I screamed," she said of finding out she won the award. "It was like 9:40 p.m., so my parents had a little heart attack. I just shouted, 'Oh my God, I won.' It was a pinch me moment."

While at BCTC, Guevara helps run the program's virtual company, ReCase.

The fictitious company makes phone cases out of recycled materials.

Guevara held several positions with the company, with her skills and work ethic quickly catapulting her into leadership. By the end of her first year she had been named chief marketing officer, and in her junior year she served as chief executive officer.

She started her senior year as an executive adviser, but eventually resumed her role as CEO.

Guevara called BCTC a pillar of her education, saying that her time there has helped mold her into a businesswoman ready to move into the real world.

She said she has learned

the importance of charisma and respect in business.

"When you walk into a room and start a conversation, you need to be able to gain their respect as soon as possible," she said. "It's super important because once someone respects you they'll start listening to you."

"And you also have to treat everyone with respect. You need to think that everyone is always watching how you treat other people."

Guevara has done two internships, one with Team Lifelong Wellness and one with Olivet Boys & Girls Club.

"Sarah Guevara is a special, unique young lady who came to us as a volunteer during our efforts to vaccinate our community," said Christopher Winters, Olivet CEO. "Her compassion for helping others became so evident as she rose to every challenge, from easing concerns of Latino community members; taking time to explain the importance of being vaccinated against COVID. Her positive and charming attitude was contagious, and our team took to this incredible volunteer who would always call to help and help whenever she was needed."

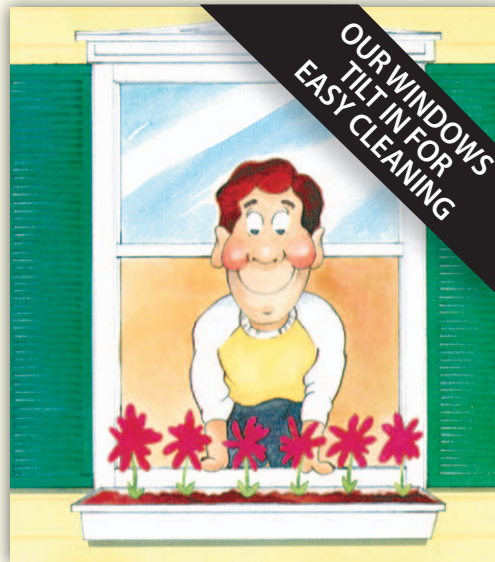
Guevara's internship with Olivet has led to a job opportunity. After she graduates she will take on the role of community relations coordinator for the organization.

Guevara has already begun pursuing an associate's degree in business management and entrepreneurship at Reading Area Community College. She said that once that degree is complete she may pursue a bachelor's degree.

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## BERKS' BEST

## Judges

By Susan Miers Smith  
ssmith@readingeagle.com

Berks' Best judges come from the business world, government, nonprofits and academia. We've asked these working professionals and experts in their fields to represent our community in selecting the finalists and winners of this academic award project. The 30 judges spent many hours reviewing 252 applications in 2022 and interviewing the finalists. Berks' Best could not be held without them.

## BUSINESS

**MARK D. DOLINSKI** is vice president of training and professional development for the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance. Dolinski holds a Master of Business Administration degree in quality leadership from St. Joseph's College of Maine, Standish, Maine; a bachelor's degree in marketing from West Chester University; and an associate degree in business administration from Reading Area Community College and three associate degrees in insurance from Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters.



**KEVIN K. MURPHY** is president of the Berks County Community Foundation. He joined BCCF as its first employee in 1994. He supervises the business and operations of the foundation and serves on its board of directors. A State College native, Murphy graduated from Penn State University with a bachelor's degree in speech communication and business. He holds a Master of Science degree in community leadership from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh.



**ROBERT WERT** holds an MBA in finance from the University of Chicago and a bachelor's degree in business from Pennsylvania State University. In addition, he completed the Securities Industry Institute program sponsored by the Securities Industry Institute at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Wert has been with Wells Fargo Advisors and



predecessor companies for more than 25 years. Wert founded the Wert Investment Consulting Group of Wells Fargo Advisors.

## COMMUNICATIONS

**DR. KRISTINA FENNELLY** has taught composition, professional writing and gender studies courses at Kutztown University since the fall of 2012. As an assistant professor, her research and teaching interests include the study of non-adversarial approaches to argument, deliberative discourse and listening rhetoric. Guided by a strong commitment to first-year writers, Fennelly currently serves as co-chair for the KU English Department's honors and awards committee, as well as vice president of the Pennsylvania College English Association.



**DAVID KLINE** is an award-winning Berks County businessman, radio and television personality, writer, photographer, composer and entertainer who has worked in the entertainment industry most of his life. He is a voting member of the National Association of Recording Arts & Sciences as well as a member of the Americana Music Association and the International Bluegrass Music Association.



**KARIN MALLETT** has been with WFMZ-TV 69 News since 2003 as the co-anchor of the "Saturday Sunrise: 69 News at Sunrise Weekend Edition" and as a feature and special assignment reporter. While with WFMZ, Mallett developed her popular travel series, "One Tank Trip," which can be seen on the Berks Edition every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. Mallett began her television news career as a writer and producer for CNBC's nightly consumer program "Steals & Deals." Mallett serves on the board of directors of the American Red Cross Tri-County Chapter. She was born and raised in New Jersey and is a graduate of New York University.



## COMPUTER SCIENCE

**JOY MCFERREN** is a strategic HR business leader with experience in HCIT, medical devices, manufacturing, distribution, pharmaceutical and hospitality industries. She is the director of human re-



sources for Weidenhammer. Additionally, she teaches the SPHR-CP and SPHR-SCP review course for Lancaster SHRM and Penn State Berks, where she is an adjunct professor. McFerren is a consultant for the Samaritan Business Center and has more than 30 years of experience as a leader in human resources. She has a bachelor of science degree from Elizabethtown College and her master's degree from Millersville University. She resides in Lancaster, where her son and daughter have homes nearby.

**JOHN P. WEIDENHAMMER** is president of Weidenhammer a global information technology company headquartered in Wyomissing. John graduated from Reading High School in 1967 and received a degree in industrial engineering from Lehigh University in 1971. Before founding Weidenhammer in 1978, John worked for Carpenter Technology as a software developer and Ernst and Young as a management consultant. He is married and lives in Wyomissing with his wife of 39 years. He is a volunteer for numerous nonprofit organizations.



**CHARLES G. ZWICKER** serves as chief operating officer for Weidenhammer, a global digital transformation and consulting firm headquartered in Wyomissing. Zwicker received a degree in business administration and marketing from Bloomsburg University. He has spent his entire career in the technology industry, serving in multiple roles. He has been married for 29 years and is a father to three children. He lives in Fort Washington, Montgomery County, and serves in multiple volunteer roles in the community including the Boy Scouts of America, the Montgomery County Election Board and as a steering committee member at LaSalle College High School. He is active in the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, chairing the Chamber's Middle Market Action Team.



## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**DR. M. KAREN JOGAN**, professor of Spanish at Albright College, holds a master's degree and Ph.D. in Spanish from Temple University as well as master's degrees in English education and instructional technology. She has received two Fulbright awards as senior lecturer in theoretical and applied linguistics in Peru and Chile.



**DR. CHRISTINE COLEMAN NÚÑEZ**, is an associate professor of Spanish and chair of the Department of Modern Language Studies at Kutztown University. She earned her undergraduate degree from Albright College and a master's degree and Ph.D. in Spanish from Temple University. In addition to teaching a wide range of courses in Spanish, she also teaches language acquisition in the English as a Second Language certificate program at Kutztown University. She is active in university service, grant writing and research dealing with program assessment and measuring student learning outcomes.



## MATHEMATICS

**DR. BRIAN BUERKE** is associate professor of physics and chairperson of the physics department at Albright College. Buerke earned his Ph.D. from the University of Rochester, where he specialized in high-intensity laser physics and worked on a Nobel Prize-winning laser system. Since joining the Albright faculty, he has worked extensively in local education, serving as president of the Reading School District board of directors, president of the Reading Public Museum and as a founding board member of the Reading Science Center.



**SELVI JAGADESAN** is a lecturer in mathematics at Penn State Berks. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Bharathiyar University, Tamilnadu, India. She manages and advises the International Club at Penn State Berks. She is also an active committee member in Careers with Math Options, a career exploration conference for seventh-grade girls interested in careers involving math, science, engineering and related fields.



## PERFORMING ARTS

**SHARI GLEASON-MAYRHOFER** earned degrees in horn performance and music theory from Oberlin College Conservatory, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Georgia State University in Atlanta. Gleason-Mayrhofer performs with the Mainstreet Brass, Fyve Woodwind Quintet and the Pennsylvania Sinfonia,



# Judges

FROM PAGE 18

and she is the executive director of the Friends of Chamber Music of Reading. Gleason-Mayrhofer is the horn instructor at Kutztown University and a staff accompanist.

**BEVERLY HOUCK** is the artistic director of the Yocum Institute for Arts Education where she produces, directs, teaches and leads Yocum's community outreach through school residencies and workshops in all art forms. Houck studied at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in musical theater from The University of the Arts. She was a resident actor and assistant to the artistic director at Hedgerow Theatre from 1994 to 1997, she then pursued her theater career regionally and in New York City. Houck has performed onstage, in film and television.

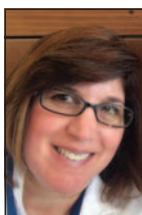


**DR. JULIA MATTHEWS** is associate professor of theatre and associate dean for academic success at Albright College and regularly directs for the Domino Players. She earned her bachelor's degree in acting from the North Carolina School of the Arts, and her master's degree and Ph.D. in dramatic literature from the University of St. Andrews and the University of Warwick, U.K. Matthews has taught at Wesleyan College and Kennesaw State University, and worked as a dramaturg, director and teacher with Atlanta theater companies. She lives in Wyomissing with her husband, James N. Brown, and their two sons.



## SCIENCE/ENVIRONMENT

**DR. TAMI MYSLIWIEC** is an associate professor of biology at Penn State Berks. She holds a doctorate in microbiology and immunology from Drexel University. Her post-doctoral work was at Fox Chase Cancer Center. Her current research focuses on understanding how viruses alter host cell patterns of gene expression. She teaches classes ranging from introductory biology to biochemistry and cancer biology. She also is first-year seminar coordinator at the college.



**DR. JUSTIN L. SMOYER** is an assistant professor of experimental physics and engi-

neering at Kutztown University. He earned a doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree in physics from Kutztown University. He is the founder and director of the department's technology and prototyping laboratory and of the nanoscale thermal sciences laboratory.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

**JOHN KRAMER** is director emeritus of the Albright College Center for Excellence in Local Government. He founded the center in September 1994 and served as its director until his retirement in August 2012. Kramer's community involvement has included serving as a school board member for the Reading School District and on the board of directors of Northeast Alumni Association; New Journey Community Outreach Inc.; the City of Reading Main Street Program; Leadership Berks; the Berks County Conservancy (Berks Nature); and the City of Reading Police Diversity Board in addition to being a member of United Way Allocation Task Forces.

**DR. JOHN R. PANKRATZ** is chairman of the history department at Albright College, as well as an avid actor, photographer and cellist. In 2005, he created "Faces of Reading: 1000 Portraits of a City," a project he revisited in 2015. He served as a Fulbright lecturer in Besancon, France and Dakar, Senegal, and teaches courses in both American and African history at Albright.



**DR. VICTORIA WILLIAMS** is a professor of political science at Alvernia University. She is a graduate of Twin Valley High School and has a bachelor's degree from Lynchburg College, a master's from Baylor University, and a master's and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky. Her research interests include post-conflict reconciliation, foreign policy and political communication. Williams serves as the director of Alvernia's Honors Program.



## TAYLOR SEITZINGER AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

**FRANCES A. AITKEN** is chief operating officer for Berks County Community Foundation. Aitken was a senior audit manager specializing in non-profit audits for KPMG in Philadelphia. After



KPMG, Aitken worked as a contracted fiscal officer to various companies, including the Community Foundation, which she joined full time in 1998. Aitken received her Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Widener University, Chester, and is a certified public accountant. She is the president of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA) and a board member for the Pennsylvania CPA Foundation. She is a former board member of Alvernia University, Centro Hispano and Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania.

**MICHAEL RIVERA** is a Berks County commissioner and a real estate professional at Keller Williams Platinum Realty in Spring Township. He resides in Bern Township with his wife, Zylkia, and his children, Andre and Adriana. Growing up in Puerto Rico, Rivera graduated from the University of Puerto Rico, Bayamon Campus, with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He later earned his Master of Business Administration degree from Kutztown University. He was a small business owner and spent more than seven years in the banking industry. He also worked as assistant vice president of business services at the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry.



**TAMMY L. SEITZINGER LORUSSO** is the mother of Taylor Seitzinger, in whose memory the Taylor Seitzinger Award for Community Service is named. She resides in Shoemakersville with her husband, Frank LoRusso, and their three children. Taylor Nicole Seitzinger died following a car accident in March 2009. Taylor was a senior at Hamburg High School and was a high honors student and a three-sport athlete who was planning to pursue her dream at DeSales University to become a physician assistant and to play soccer. Seitzinger LoRusso has been employed by Tom Schaeffer's RV Super Store as the office manager for 39 years. She is a volunteer with Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

## VISUAL ARTS

**MARK BALDRIDGE** is world-traveler, artist and educator who is an assistant professor of art and computer science at Albright College. He believes that education should address the whole person.



**FRAN PARZANESE** is a retired elementary teacher who has been painting primarily in watercolors for the past 40 years. She teaches watercolor at Goggleworks Center for the Arts, where she maintains a studio. She also is a member of Art Plus Gallery and is a past president of the Berks Art Alliance.



**PETER RAMPSON** is an associate professor of graphic arts and curator of the Miller Art Gallery at Alvernia University. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Rhode Island School of Design and a Master of Industrial Design degree from North Carolina State University. He works in traditional and digital media and designs furniture.

## Vocational/Technical Skills

**PATRICIA NIES** has a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary/special education K-12 from West Chester University and was a special education teacher at Reading High School from 1980 to 1995. She then served as a special needs facilitator at Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center from 1996 to 2017 before retiring.

**GLENN RIEGEL** is a retired Berks Career & Technology Center vocational teacher serving 32 years as the commercial photography instructor at the BCTC West Campus. Two highlights of his time at BCTC were serving eight years as chairperson for the State SkillsUSA Photo Competition and overseeing the photo students involved in the BCIU Secondary Art Competition hosted at the Goggleworks. Riegel worked in the commercial photo industry prior to his employment as a teacher and continues to do freelance portrait, sports, airshow and general national and international photojournalism assignments. Wildlife photography and documenting points of historical value also has been a passion. His work has been published in books, magazines and featured in juried photo art exhibits.



**LAUREL SCHAEFFER** was an educator for more than 30 years teaching special education at Kids Peace and in the Reading School District. She also was an administrator at Reading-Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center for 17 years, retiring in 2018. She holds a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry from Delaware Valley University; teacher certification from Kutztown University; and a master's degree in educational leadership and principal certification from Wilkes University. She also has a director's certification from Penn State Uni-



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