

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY NEWS

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FSU students recognized virtually through President's Undergraduate Humanitarian of the Year program

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The 2021 Humanitarian of the Year Award nominees. Top row, left to right: Taylor Biro, Jordan Fleurigene, Jordan Chung and Audrey Guoan. Middle row, left to right: Sofia Higgins, Jaya Smith, Marjorie "Maggie" Fitzsimmons and Kayla Pfeffer. Bottom row, left to right: Charles Brenner, Elizabeth "Beth" Slade, Micah Castillo and Alana Rigby. (The Center for Leadership & Social Change)

For more than 20 years, Florida State University has recognized undergraduate students who exhibit a tremendous commitment to service through its annual President's Undergraduate Humanitarian of the Year Program.

This year's 12 nominees have done everything from fostering children to volunteering at COVID-19 testing sites and advocating for speech and hearing-based services.

Each school or college nominates one student to be the Humanitarian of the Year. Typically, students are recognized at an awards luncheon hosted by FSU President John Thrasher, and the student who best exemplifies commitment to service is named the President's Undergraduate Humanitarian of the Year during the annual Student Leadership Awards.

This year, under current social distancing guidelines, students were recognized by President Thrasher and their respective deans during a virtual ceremony Tuesday, April 6.

"The past year was a challenging one for everyone, but in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, these students chose to rise to the aid of others," Thrasher said. "I want to express my sincere gratitude to our community leaders who welcome our students as partners in their service agencies, and to the entire Division of Student Affairs for supporting our students in their efforts serve others."

The winner was announced by Dinh Nguyen, Ph.D., director of Title I schools for the State of Florida's Department of Education. Nguyen was the first person to receive the Humanitarian of the Year Award in 1988.

"When I became a student at Florida State, I knew that my passion for community engagement and my desire to pursue academic study were two pieces of the same thing," Nguyen said. "As a student at FSU, I did many of the same things that this year's nominees continue to do. I'm so proud to see that the value of community and an FSU education are no less separated than when I experienced them."

Marjorie "Maggie" Fitzsimmons, the nominee from the College of Medicine, received the 2021 President's Undergraduate Humanitarian of the Year Award. As a person living with epilepsy, Fitzsimmons has devoted hundreds of hours of service to the Epilepsy Foundation of North Florida, the Epilepsy Services Foundation and the Ronald McDonald House. She's also personally assisted in the Seizure First Aid certification of more than 100 individuals.

The nominees are:



Alana Rigby, College of Education

Rigby has connected her service to her education through multiple volunteer opportunities working with children, including through the Faith and Life Ministry, where she has served her community for more than seven years. This past fall Rigby created a tutoring program that partnered FSU students with K-12 students at local Title I schools who did not speak English as a primary language. Through this program, the K-12 students were able to advance their unsatisfactory standardized test scores to satisfactory, average and above average. This work continues to show the capacity Rigby has for service, and how her impact effects Florida State and the broader community she is a part of.

Audrey Guoan, College of Applied Studies

Guoan is a senior studying crime scene investigation in the College of Applied Studies at the FSU Panama City campus. As a foster parent, Guoan has provided a temporary home for 18 children from three days old to 14 years old. She knows her experiences nurturing children through their most difficult days with the child welfare system will help her relate to victims of crime after her graduation.



Charles Brenner, FAMU-FSU College of Engineering

Brenner is a senior in the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering studying biomaterials and polymers. He intertwined his academic skills to service in his role within Engineers Without Borders, where he was a treasurer for a community-led water and sustainable food project in Kenya. Brenner has also served with Dance Marathon and Camp Boggy Creek and hopes to continue his involvement in Engineers Without Borders following graduation.

Elizabeth "Beth" Slade, College of Fine Arts

A senior theater major, Slade is a frequent performer within FSU's School of Theatre in the College of Fine Arts. She has completed more than 330 hours of community service and raised money to support Relay for Life at FSU. Slade has focused heavily on her research interests the last two years, advocating for change in the cultural practices of the theater industry to make theater a more inclusive space. She's worked as a liaison on the college's student advisory council and on the School of Theatre's production handbook committee.



Jaya Smith, College of Communication & Information

Smith is president of Operation Smile, a global organization that provides life-saving surgeries to children with cleft lip and palate. Under her leadership, FSU's chapter of Operation Smile has raised enough money to support three of these surgeries for children in underserved countries. In February, Smith donated a kidney to her father. She is preparing to attend graduate school and plans to continue advocating for speech and hearing-based services.

Jordan Chung, College of Human Sciences

Chung is a senior studying family and child sciences with a minor in chemistry on a pre-medical track. He's connected his studies to his service in a variety of settings, such as the FSU chapter of the NAACP, the Black Student Union, the Renegade Leadership Honor Society and the Mu Epsilon Chapter of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity. Through his many affiliations, he has been involved in service projects that range from feeding the homeless to testing more than 150 people for HIV/AIDS for free. Chung obtained his clinical medical assistant certification at the age of 19 and continues to volunteer at COVID-19 testing sites three times a week.



Jordan Fleurigene, College of Business

Fleurigene is a senior in the College of Business double-majoring in management and professional sales and has been admitted into FSU's MBA program for the fall. She volunteers through FSU's Garnet and Gold Goes Green campaign and has served as an aide to a first responder family since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a member of the professional fraternity Delta Sigma Pi, she has helped prepare and deliver food to a Tallahassee homeless shelter and participated in other initiatives to help the homeless. Fleurigene is also a student advocate at FSU Academic Honor Policy hearings, which



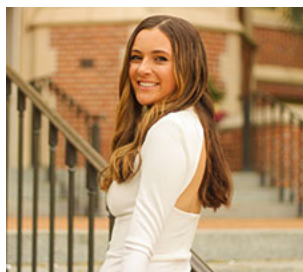
provides a service to fellow students.

Kayla Pfeffer, College of Arts & Sciences

Pfeffer is senior studying actuarial science within the College of Arts and Sciences. She has spent the last few years growing her service experiences within PeaceJam, an international organization that connects youth with Nobel Peace Laureates. This past year Pfeffer served in a leadership capacity and helped PeaceJam fulfill their mission, despite the difficulties of programming in a virtual environment. Pfeffer will be completing an internship and will remain engaged with service following



graduation.



Marjorie "Maggie" Fitzsimmons, College of Medicine

Fitzsimmons is a senior in the interdisciplinary medical sciences program majoring in clinical professions. As a person living with epilepsy, Fitzsimmons has devoted hundreds of hours of service to the Epilepsy Foundation of North Florida, the Epilepsy Services Foundation and the Ronald McDonald House. Fitzsimmons has also personally assisted in the Seizure First Aid certification of more than 100 individuals She has also made time to volunteer with FSU's Medical Response Unit, the Nole-to-Nole program and the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program. To date, Fitzsimmons has completed more than 900 hours of service, all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

Micah Castillo, College of Music

Castillo is a rising senior studying music therapy. She has served the Tallahassee community by collaborating with Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare's Arts and Medicine services and by fundraising for the music therapy program at Big Bend Hospice. Castillo is also president of Alpha Mu Alpha, FSU's student music therapy organization, and has served on the College of Music's peer mentoring group.



Sofia Higgins, College of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Higgins is double majoring in criminology and psychology. She's served as a peer mentor to freshman students in the Honors program and has worked with the Academic Recruitment Organization to provide campus tours to prospective FSU students. Higgins has also had an impact on families in Ensenada, Mexico, where she volunteered to build homes for families suffering from economic hardships.

Taylor Biro, College of Social Work

Biro is a senior pursuing a degree in social work. She connects social work education to service within the Tallahassee community by working with Capitol T and the newly developed Tallahassee Citizens Police Review Board. She was also appointed to serve on the College of Social Work's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee.



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