

# AMAZING

These days, it takes so much more than straight A's to be considered a top teen in Katy ISD. Meet the high-achieving young people who are making huge strides in life through academic achievement, community involvement, and extracurricular activities.

*Written by Ashley Lancaster | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace*

## Dreaming Big at Stanford

Nicolas Machado plays varsity basketball for Cinco Ranch High School, leads the Cougar Challenge anti-bullying program, and is a tutor for the Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society. He has served as class president since his sophomore year, is a member of the Katy ISD Student Round Table, and was chosen by the former superintendent Alton Frailey to speak at the State of the District Address in 2016. Outside of school, Machado tutors children at Neighborhood Kidz Club.

He received acceptance letters into the chemical engineering programs at Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Berkeley, MIT, USC, UCLA, UT, Texas A&M, and Georgia Tech, and has decided to attend Stanford University in the fall.

“My passion resides in improving the lives of people, and I aspire to have a larger-scale impact on society by working to innovate alternative energy solutions at Stanford University.”

CRHS Leadership Award, National Hispanic Merit Scholar, and elected Attorney General at 2016 Texas Boys State

## Nicolas Machado

Senior  
GPA: 4.65



Kim Schaffer Photography

AWARDS

## Dominique Dore'

Junior  
GPA: 4.02



## A Bright Future

Dominique Dore' is the co-founder and co-president of The Bowl of Life student organization at Cinco Ranch High School, a National Honor Society (NHS) member, a National Chinese Honor Society member, and a tutor for the Mu Alpha Theta program. She is an active volleyball player, volunteers for multiple clubs, and works at ESN Health in Villagio Town Center. She also ran her first half-marathon in April.

Opportunity has not come easily for Dore'. As an infant in Nanchang, China, she was left on the street by her birth family to be found, and was later adopted and brought to the U.S. In her teens, she is committed to creating a bright future for herself and plans to attend Baylor University.

“I am always striving to find ways to challenge and push myself to the next level. I set personal goals that I am determined to achieve and set high standards for myself in everything I do.”

AWARDS

Chinese II Award, Sophomore Class Leadership Award, Best Defensive Player Award, and the Outstanding Volunteer Award from Eternal Food Ministry for The Bowl of Life organization

# KATY TEENS

## A Natural Leader

Connor Cerda is the founder and president of the Seven Lakes High School Military Club and is involved in Spartans for Christ, Ultimate Frisbee Club, NHS, and is on the varsity track and field team as a pole vaulter. He was also selected to be on Congressman Olson's Youth Advisory Council, and attended Boys State and West Point Academy's Summer Leadership Experience. In the summer, Cerda works as a lifeguard and babysits, and each week he leads a Bible study for junior high boys at Grace Fellowship UMC.

He has accepted an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, class of 2021. Cerda was also offered a full, four-year Army ROTC scholarship. In summer 2017, he will embark on his adventure into the military, college, and a new career.

"My dream to attend West Point and a career in the military has driven all my decisions throughout high school. I've had to constantly strive for the best in all I do, whether it's athletics, academics, or leadership. I've had to step out of my comfort zone and accomplish tasks that challenge me and lead others to do the same. Every decision I make could potentially have kept me from achieving my goal. I take duty, honor, and country seriously."

Citizenship Award for honor, dependability, values, and trust,  
Nomination to U.S. Military Academy - Congressman Pete Olson,  
Texas Boys State

AWARDS

**Connor  
Cerda**

**Senior  
GPA: 4.30**



**Linda  
Duraj**

**Senior  
GPA: 4.46**



## Love for Her Peers

Linda Duraj is the president of the Taylor High School student council, and is vice president of the senior class. She also serves as the student council vice president in the Greater Houston area. She is active in Special PALS, Best Buddies, NHS, and Spanish National Honor Society, as well as the YoungLife Bible study group. Through NHS, Duraj has contributed approximately 150 hours of community service to various groups in the Katy Area. She was also named homecoming queen in 2016. Outside of school, she works as a nanny to three Katy children whom she adores.

Duraj will attend the University of Texas in the fall, where she plans to pursue a degree in finance or accounting, and hopes to enter law school.

"My ambition and love for my peers sets me apart from other students. I am constantly determined to build new relationships and use what I learn from others to make a difference in my school and community."

AWARDS

Student Leadership Award from Alton Frailey, Recognition of Achievement, THS Good Sportsmanship League, Recognition of Straight A's, Spirit Award, and Junior Counselor of Achievement

## Guided by Faith

Payton Miller is on the varsity cross country team at Taylor High School, a member of the Chorale and Expressions Chambers Choir, NHS, and Mustangs Volunteer Proudly, and is a THS Impact Bible study leader. Outside of school, he serves on the Alpha Charity League - Katy Chapter and has been vice president and photographer. He has also served as a Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership ambassador since 2015 and enjoys participating in the adult choir at Second Baptist Church.

Miller delights in volunteering with Eternal Food Ministries in Katy and is always grateful for opportunities to give to those in need.

“My morning begins with scripture, which is the tool that guides my day in a positive direction. The consistent messages I take away from my devotional time are to serve others and remember, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’”

Hugh O'Brian Sophomore Leadership Award, 1st Division Solo and 1st Division Large Ensemble, THS Academic All-District - Cross Country, Katy ISD Student Excellence Award - English, Senior Student of the Week, Presidential Volunteer Service Award

AWARDS

## Payton Miller

Senior  
GPA: 4.17



## Amy Yang

Junior  
GPA: 4.71



## Talent and Dedication

Amy Yang is most active in her Seven Lakes High School's FBLA organization, where she serves as president. She is also an active member of NHS, Spartans Out Serving, National Art Honor Society, National Chinese Honor Society, and the Houston branch of the Alliance of Youth Leaders in the United States, where she serves as secretary. Every summer, she teaches elementary age students about art and English at a local camp and is passionate about her students. Yang also enjoys kickboxing, sketching, and baking. She is a talented artist whose pieces have sold for up to \$25,000 at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo School Art Auction.

Yang hopes to attend a school with a strong business program and plans to pursue a degree in the business field.

“Katy is full of accomplished students, but something that sets me apart is my ability to combine talent with dedication.”

AWARDS

1st place for American Enterprise Project and 3rd place for Personal Finance at state level (junior), Gold Key Award for Regional Scholastics, display at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts

## Passion for the Environment

Maddie McKowen is the co-editor-in-chief for the Cinco Ranch High School Yearbook and involved in the *County Line* school newspaper, the co-president of the environmental club, and the vice president of programs for the National Charity League Azalea Chapter. She is also an active volunteer and intern for the Citizen's Climate Lobby and Rawfully Organic co-op. She serves as a member of the NHS, La Societe Honoraire de Francais, Science NHS, Quill & Scroll Honor Society, and National Society of High School Scholars.

McKowen enjoys playing varsity lacrosse for the Katy Lady Cavaliers, and her team placed second in Texas in 2016. She will pursue a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering before earning her graduate degree in sustainable engineering at Colorado School of Mines.

"My passion for sustainability, plant-based nutrition, health, portrait photography, and good design runs deep within everything that I do, and I've found that others take notice."

Texas A&M Communications Workshop Outstanding Design Award,  
Silver Key in Scholastic Art & Writing Award for Photography

**Maddie  
McKowen**

**Senior  
GPA: 4.00**



**AWARDS**

**Lauren  
Robinson**

**Senior  
GPA: 4.63**



**AWARDS**

## Sterling Success in Athletics

Lauren Robinson is very involved in campus athletics at Tompkins High School, playing on varsity for volleyball, track and field, and swimming, where she serves as team co-captain. She is also a district and regional medalist in swimming, and a district and area medalist in track and field. She is a member of NHS, Science NHS, is the secretary for HOSA, and Campus Crusaders. She has served as treasurer for the OTHS student council for the last two years.

She is also very active in her church's youth group and leads a junior high small group on Sunday mornings. Recently, she won a silver medal for the shot put and discus event at the Area 19-20 6A track and field events. In the fall, Robinson will attend Baylor University and will major in biology before continuing as a pre-med student.

"I am very excited to see what God has planned for my future at Baylor and beyond."

Falcon Award for Exemplary Character and Academic Achievement,  
Tompkins High School All A's Award (4 years), varsity field crew  
MVP

## Inspired by Personal Loss

Raheem Memon holds the title of secretary for the Harmony School of Katy's NHS chapter, and is a member of HOSA and Baywatchers, an environmental protection and habitat mitigation club. He is also the editor of the school newspaper and participates in soccer and cross country.

In his free time, Memon is a certified referee for the South Youth Texas Soccer Association, and has volunteered at the Heritage Park of Katy home every week since the seventh grade, in addition to his service at the Harris Health System each summer.

Memon plans to attend University of Texas at Austin and will major in biology in medical research. After the loss of a close family member, Memon was inspired to follow a career path in medical research. He feels that his ability to handle his responsibilities with grace prepare him for the adult world.

"I am gaining an understanding for the hard work of all the successful adults out there in the world."

Emperor Science Award, Carson Scholar and recipient of the Dr. Ben Carson Scholarship, 2017 Congressional Award Medalist

## Raheem Memon

Junior  
GPA: 4.69



AWARDS

## Fesolami Akinwande

Senior  
GPA: 4.27



AWARDS

## Love for Helping Others

Fesolami Akinwande is involved in NHS and HOSA at the Harmony School of Katy, where she is vice president, and plays on her high school basketball and soccer teams where she serves as captain. She also volunteers on Sundays in her church's nursery, and at Houston Methodist West Hospital. She has worked as a math tutor in her free time, as well as a team member at a local restaurant. She plans to attend Houston Baptist University in the fall.

One of her most cherished memories is a trip to Turkey with other HSI-Katy students that taught her about other cultures. She is also a regular blood and bone marrow donor and truly loves helping others.

"I have grown to love volunteering and making others happy." **KM**

All A's Honor Roll (4 years), 2016 Principal's Award, 2016 Chapter Officer Award

*\*Students' GPAs may have changed since the time of print.*

## MORE AWESOME KATY TEENS

Thank you to the Katy community  
and our schools for your nominations!

**Sophie Anderson (BISH)** Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award, editor of school newsletter

**Fatehmeh Ebrahimi (THS)** Katy ISD Livestock Show and Rodeo sculpture sold for record \$102K

**Bailey Egan (CRHS)** co-founder/co-president of Bowl of Life

**Kenneth Fernandes (CRHS)** Spanish NHS, choir council president, Texas All-State choir

**Wahibah Hannan (MCHS)** 2017 National Merit Scholar

**Ben Heintz (SLHS)** Tommy Tune Award nomination for best actor in *Big Fish*

**Gianna Hogan (OTHS)** HOSA, NHS, president for Crimson Cavalettes social committee

**Kendall Hollo (CRHS)** varsity soccer team captain, NHS, Ginger Club, first team all-district soccer

**Hayden Howerton (KHS)** Katy football team captain, first team all-district offensive line, SMU commit

**Rene Juarez (MRHS)** Houston Youth Symphony, Katy Youth Symphony, TMEA Outstanding Musicianship Award

**Deyzan Knox (HSI)** founder of Helping Hands, NHS

**Chase Koch (BISH)** Head Boy, UN High Level Political Forum participant in New York

**Zion Mpeye (SLHS)** four-year class president, student round table, interact club, district champion 110 hurdles, 4x400 relay

**Sara Rosado (MRHS)** Katy ISD Student Excellence Award, NHS, English NHS, Spanish NHS

**Allyson Sadler (KHS)** Katy FFA president, four year state-level Texas A&M Veterinary Medicine contest participant

**Teagan Schmidt (CRHS)** Cougar Stars colonel, TDEA All-State dance team, volunteer with Animal Rehab Center

**Grayson Snyder (CRHS)** Class Leadership Award, varsity mascot, NHS, American Sign Language NHS, Science NHS, CATS

**Elena Welsh (SJPXXII)** varsity volleyball, Spanish NHS, NHS, Girl Scouts national delegate

**Brielle Wood (OTHS)** Super Bowl of Caring local youth ambassador

**Thomas Xiong (SLHS)** National Science Olympiad, officer for Song of Hope, accepted to MIT, Stanford, Harvard, Yale

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