

ASTI Senior Receives Recognition for Community Service

ASTI senior Ken Der has been recognized as a Prudential Spirit of Community top student volunteer in California.

Presented annually by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Spirit of Community awards honor young people across the country for their outstanding volunteer service.

Ken received a Certificate of Excellence from the company, which means that he has been ranked among the top 10 percent of all applicants in the state.

ASTI nominated Ken for national honors this fall in recognition of the volunteer work he does for a number of organizations. Currently he serves on the district's Board of Education, as well as on ASTI's School Site Council, School Advisory Committee (which allows students to help develop school policy), and No Place for Hate campaign (which is an anti-bias program coordinated with the Anti-Defamation League).

Over the last several years, he has also served as a math peer tutor and is currently the lead tutor for the after-school math tutoring program at Ruby Bridges Elementary School. "Under Ken's leadership, this program grew fourfold," says Principal Tracy Corbally, "and has engaged upwards of 50 ASTI students in community service. Ken is now in talks to expand the program to Maya Lin." Ken received a state-wide student activist award for this work from the California Teachers Association last June.

Last year Ken also approached the City of Alameda requesting to intern as a volunteer to improve the bus system in Alameda. In the course of his work, he created an inventory of bus stops that could use benches or bike racks. He recorded his results in an easy-to-read spreadsheet for city staff, who were impressed with his initiative and noted: "If Ken does pursue a career in transportation, he will be a step ahead of this cohort, and he will continue to have a positive influence on his community."

Based on the number of volunteer hours Ken puts in, he also now qualifies for a President's Volunteer Service Award.

“Ken possesses great compassion, ingenuity, and determination,” Corbally says. “ We are very proud of his accomplishments and deeply appreciate the legacy he will leave at ASTI as future students pick up the mantle of ASTI Initiative and continue Ken’s vision of high school students serving as mentors to district elementary school students. I look forward to seeing what feats Ken accomplishes in the future.”

Adds Superintendent Sean McPhetridge, “We are grateful to Ken for his service to others, and I know the Board of Education and I all appreciate his active participation as a student Board Member and as a student leader and role model.”