

Finalists selected for Greater Lowell Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year



From left, Milad Amiri, Yvonne Welsh and Cameron Senechiamé are the finalists for this year's Greater Lowell Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year. AARON CURTIS/LOWELL SUN

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LOWELL — The number of finalists for the 2020 Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell Youth of the Year award has been narrowed down to three.

Selected last month from a group of 11 club youth, Yvonne Welsh, of Chelmsford High School; Milad Amiri, of Greater Lowell Technical High School; and Cameron Senechiamé, of Lowell High School, are finalists for the award to be presented in Dracut on Wednesday.

“The Youth of the Year is the most prestigious award given to a club member, and our club’s Youth of the Year will go on to compete for the state title, and eventually the Boys & Girls Club of America will name a National Youth of the Year,” said Angel Brunelle, the local club’s director of development.

Several community representatives met with the finalists and interviewed the candidates to decide who will receive the award. The winner will be given a \$1,000

scholarship to be used toward continuing their education, according to Brunelle. The other two finalists will receive scholarships of \$550.

“Being Youth of the Year is more than just a scholarship or a title, it’s important to me because it tells me that I left a mark on my community,” said 17-year-old Welsh.

Welsh is a peer ambassador of the Lowell Community Health Center’s Teen Block program, a member of the Youth Commissioner Council and Project LEARN facilitator.

Welsh, who started attending the Boys & Girls Club at the age of 12, has plans to pursue a political science major in college. Her long-term goal is to work in city or state government, pursuing improvements to the youth and education system.

Amiri, 17, came to the U.S. from his home in Kabul, Afghanistan, when he was 11. Shortly after coming to the U.S., he joined the Boys & Girls Club.

“When I came to the United States, I couldn’t speak English at all,” Amiri said. “It was really hard for me to communicate with students at my school.”

Amiri learned and improved his English through hard work and studying, as well as by communicating with club staff and peer members. He has goals of pursuing higher education and his interest in soccer.

“The Youth of the Year award gives me an opportunity to represent my community,” Amiri said.

Senechiame is also 17 and has been attending the Boys & Girls Club for about a decade. He serves as the president of the Keystone Club, a leadership organization within the Boys & Girls Club.

Senechiame plans to go to college for youth services, sociology, and criminal justice and law. He hopes to work as a community resource officer.

“If this place (the club) wasn’t available to me growing up, I wouldn’t be the same person I am today,” Senechiame said. “That’s why I’m so thankful there was an opportunity to come here since I was 7 and meet all the inspirational people and experience the programs, activities and pathways the club offers.”

A photograph of Anthony Villa, last year’s Youth of the Year, hangs on the wall near the main entrance of the local Boys & Girls Club. He will be on hand for Wednesday’s Youth of the Year celebration event to pass the torch on to this year’s winner.

Villa, who will be turning 18 later this month, has a goal to become a software engineer. He was accepted to UMass Lowell, but is still waiting for the results of other college applications.

“I’m proud to have represented the Boys & Girls Club, and I know, no matter who gets picked, they will represent the club as well as I have if not better,” Villa said.

The Youth of the Year event takes place Wednesday at the Four Oaks Country Club, at 1 Clubhouse Lane in Dracut. There, the three finalists will speak about what the club means to them before the winner is announced.

The event begins at 6:30 p.m. with a buffet dinner. Tickets are \$40 each and can be purchased at lbgc.org or by calling the club’s office at 978-458-4526, ext. 13.