

THE JON CHERNEY HUMANITARIAN AWARD

NEWSLETTER



Beverly Vista 1981



Beverly Hills High 1985



*Mentor, Friend and Teacher
Beverly Hills High School*

Dear Friends,

We will never be able to thank you all for your past support. Words cannot express the incredible gratitude that we feel and the enormous pride we have on Jon's behalf. Because of you, Jon continues to play an ongoing and important role in helping the students who were so important to him. This scholarship is tangible affirmation of his continuing presence. Significantly, by honoring Jon with this living memorial, we speak not only of the lasting effect that he had on so many lives and his passion for making a positive difference, but even more importantly, we have established this scholarship so that his name and the proclamation of our love for him will long endure and serve as a catalyst for the many scholarship beneficiaries to follow.

We are proud to report to all of you that we awarded one \$2,500.00 scholarship last year. Our committee, consisting of Madison Ho, Dave Stiles, Vinkul Bali, two students selected by the Activities Director, and members of the Cherney Family, were amazed and in awe of the many wonderful applications that were submitted.

To enter, each applicant described ways in which their actions demonstrated a sincere devotion to humanity and a passion for making a positive difference through an essay, video, picture collage, audio recording or any combination listed. Requirements also included two letters of recommendation from two adults who could best attest to their humane qualities. Applicants were also requested to be interviewed before the committee. Our committee discussed at length each application and considered many factors. It was a very difficult decision, but there was one student who epitomized Jon's unique combination of academic achievement, creative talent and spirituality. Our result was kept secret, known only to the committee and two or three members of the faculty, up to the moment it was announced by the Cherney Family. We were amazed by the genuine joy and excitement that marked the response to the revelation of who the winner was. Nur Yilmaz, who lives by the values that Jon stood for, was the 37th recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. He was chosen for his outstanding achievements and unselfish devotion to others.

Again, dear friends, many thanks for helping these exceptional individuals. We know you will agree that they stand in marked contrast to the frequently troubled, confused and occasionally destructive youth of our community that far too often occupy the center stage of our newspaper and television headlines. We personally can think of no better subsidy to our society's future than to continue to support exemplary young adults whose hearts and souls are filled with a burning passion to make a positive contribution to the world.

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award will be presented again this year during Senior Awards Night. As Jon's family, we thank you in advance for your help in keeping alive Jon's memory and helping the students who were so important to him.

Gratefully with love,

The Cherney Family

JON CHERNEY



“Perhaps what we had
came from a star and was
a kind of magic only ours
to borrow.”

“Throughout my years at school, Jon had been a source of strength and support. I was not the first nor the last person he had patted on the back, right when we needed it the most. In the middle of my junior year at Beverly, he told me he had written a letter to the student body and proceeded to read it to me. The letter discussed the difficulty of being young, the responsibility, the reward. It underscored the importance of committing ourselves to what we each believe in through our words, through our deeds. It challenged us to define our values and then defend them. It beckoned us to find the meaning in our own existence as we give meaning to others. It embodied Jon Cherney’s soul, his essence. When the committee first met, we were nervous and excited, hopeful and uncertain. It was not easy to iron out the details. Jon’s family manifested that same strength that Jon had displayed through their ability to face memories that were still tender, to create a process and a reward that would become a tangible memory of Jon and all that he had stood for.

I do not think that any of us realized, at the beginning, the experience that we would

share in establishing a foundation for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. The diverse poems, essays, picture collages — amazed me! Learning about all the different activities that my peers had engaged in was inspiring, amazing and reassuring.

With every entry I read and reread, with every picture I turned, I thought of how incredibly happy Jon would have been to hear about these experiences. Then I realized that he had already known. Jon’s letter and his encouragement to students throughout his time at Beverly was so meaningful because it was given with so much trust in who we are and what we will choose to do with who we are. Each person that entered was a winner. They had each touched a life and in sharing that experience with us through whatever medium they chose, they enriched Jon Cherney’s memory. The two winners deserved the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award as much as Jon deserved to be remembered through them. To me, the process was a reward in itself.”

*Daphna Renan
Award Committee Member
Yale University Graduate*

“Jon was a role model person, that kind you could only hope everyone would become. He was always helping someone through a crisis or a turning point or an important paper or college application. The students were his number 1 priority.”

*Dave Stiles
Media Director
Award Committee Member*

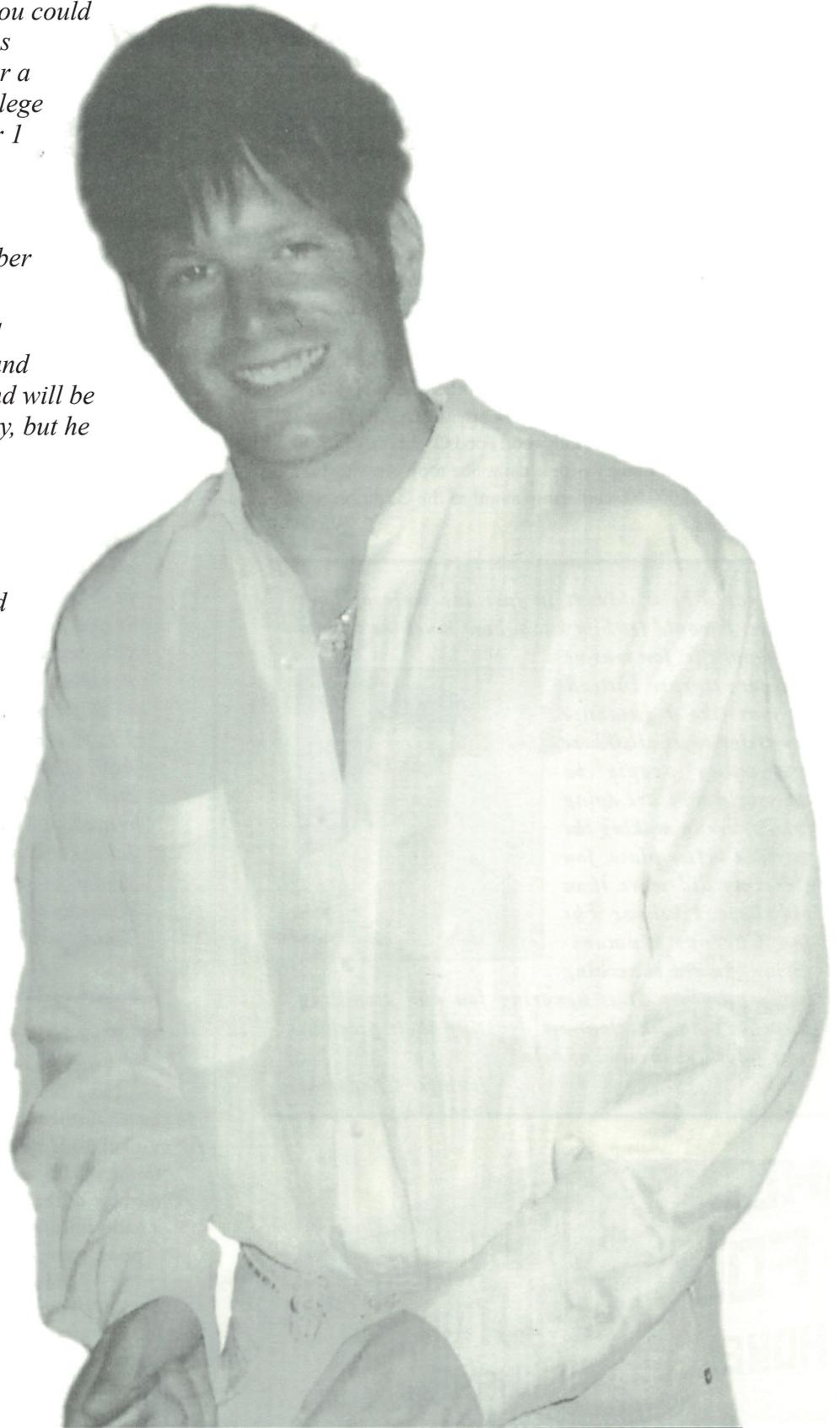
“I will always remember Jon’s energy and enthusiasm for life. He was a true friend and important colleague. He was full of life and will be missed by everyone associated with Beverly, but he will be mostly missed by the students.”

*John Borsum
Math Teacher*

On January 26, 1996, a tribute was placed in the newspaper in memory of Jon by his students.

“The students whose lives you touched the most would like to thank you for your dedication, enthusiasm and for being our friend when we needed you. We will always remember your dedication, integrity, and love of life. We will carry a part of you with each of us forever.”

*Jon Cherney’s students of
the classes of 1992,
1993, 1994, and 1995*



Dearest Jon,

**You left your footprints on
our hearts and we will never,
ever be the same.**

We love you and miss you!

**All our love,
Mom and Dad**

“ORIGINAL”
is best described as someone who is one-of-a-kind.
July 11, 1967 ~ November 26, 1995

Our 2024 Award Recipient

NUR YILMAZ

The Cherney Family is honored to grant this year's award to an exceptional student, who, like Jon, always strives to do what is right, even when it comes at a personal expense.

A student who gladly bears discomfort if it means improving others' lives.

A student who is unshakably focused on supporting those around him, who is less concerned about fitting in than leaving none behind.

A student who has encountered, and surmounted, a great deal of hardship; hardships that might have left others jaded, or disillusioned, or bitter. But, instead, instilled in him a conviction to leverage that gained perspective in guiding family, friends, and peers on their own paths.

Through acts big and small – fundraising for earthquake victims, supporting Russian and Ukrainian middle schoolers at Beverly Vista who had fled the war, defending his Mom against a predatory immigration attorney, establishing tutoring relationships and study spaces, helping friends through the emotional rollercoaster of college applications - our recipient's unwavering commitment to make things around him right, or to at least improve what can't be fixed, inspired every member of the committee.

A theme across this student's letters of recommendation for the award was that they wouldn't have believed the conviction and actions of this student if they hadn't seen it for themselves.

The Jon Cherney Award Committee felt the same way.

We are happy to present the 2024 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award to Nur Yilmaz.

"Receiving this award in Jon Cherney's name is a profound honor. Being selected by the committee and supported by my teachers and counselor has been both humbling and inspiring throughout this journey.

Although I never had the privilege of meeting Jon, I am deeply grateful to be considered worthy of carrying forward his legacy of humanitarianism. This recognition has only strengthened my resolve to continue the work he valued so much, striving to make a positive impact wherever I can. I am extremely grateful to be continuing this mission at Claremont McKenna College, and later on at law school.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Cherney family, the committee members, and Mrs. Ho for the immense support they have given me. Your belief in me has made all the difference, and I am humbled to be part of Jon's lasting legacy.

I also want to thank my mom, Zahide Gulay Kelleci, for being both a role model and a source of my humanitarian efforts, and for guiding me through life.

I know with all my heart that Jon's legacy will live on not only through this award but in all of us who are inspired by his example, and in the generations to come."

- Nur Yilmaz



Our 2023 Award Recipient

NATASHA JADIDOLAH

Jon possessed an unwavering commitment to ensuring that his students, and everyone in his life, felt important, seen, and valued. He exemplified the true essence of a humanitarian, and this year we are honoring a student who embodies Jon's spirit of compassion, self-expression, connection, and community.

Her various endeavors have displayed a clear level of dedication and empathy, much like Jon. And, like Jon, our recipient discovered a passion for media—using KBEV as a platform to use her own voice as well as amplify the voices of her peers and community members to ensure that all individuals are heard and acknowledged. Her work with KBEV has touched the lives of many, bringing news, stories, and perspectives to the community. When we asked her what the term "humanitarian" meant to her, she responded with the perfect answer: "Humanitarian means that no one is left behind." These words resonate deeply with Jon's values, as he believed in the power of inclusivity, compassion, and equity. Her commitment to ensuring that no one is forgotten echoes the spirit of this award and serves as an inspiration to us all.

Our recipient understands how small acts of kindness and a genuine concern for others can create a ripple effect of change. Whether at home, in school, or out in the community, she acts as a grounding force helping to raise others up and spread warmth and positivity wherever she goes.

We know she will continue to bring this energy and spirit with her into the future, and we are so excited to present this year's Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award to Natasha Jadidolahi.

"I am deeply honored to have been chosen for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It is a validation that my efforts have had a positive impact on the Beverly community. Much like Jon, I dedicated my four years at Beverly to working in KBEV. Now, as I stand here receiving an award bearing his name, it feels like a true full-circle moment.

I want to thank the Cherney family, Vinkul Bali and Mr. Dave Stiles for their warm welcome and unwavering support throughout this entire process, and Mrs. Barneson for being a constant presence and pillar of support during my senior year.

Lastly, I want to thank my KBEV family. They have been my source of knowledge, growth, and my endless inspiration. Without them, I would not have been able to learn and develop as much as I have. KBEV will forever hold a special place in my heart, just as it did for Jon Cherney.

Thank you all for believing in my potential."

- Natasha Jadidolahi



Our 2022 Award Recipients

AGHIGH BANITABA

From an early age, Aghigh Banitaba knew she wanted to make a positive difference in her community. She overcame challenges finding her own voice, only then to use it to elevate others. She joined Academic Decathlon where she found grounding and strived to motivate her team to feel a sense of belonging and a place where they could develop their voices and express their ideas. Later, Aghigh founded Generation Up where students could use their voices to improve their education. Aghigh led the creation of a Student Bill of Rights to promote equity and inclusion, and to empower others to advocate for themselves. We know she will continue to use her voice to make space for those who need it most. Aghigh's sincere devotion to community, and the positive differences she's made and will continue to make in the world, make her an ideal recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.

"I am deeply grateful that the award committee selected me as a recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. I sincerely thank the Cherney family for their contagious positivity, kindness, and generosity, and for recognizing my efforts in the past four years to find my voice and give a voice to others. I also thank my family, friends, and school community for their support and guidance in my journey.

I strive to live a life that inspires. A life devoted to the betterment of myself and the world. A life that positively impacts others and leaves a mark beyond myself. I have come to realize that Jon lived such a life. To be trusted to represent Jon's incredible qualities is a true honor. This award gave me the opportunity to define humanitarian values and to meet true humanitarians. To be recognized as one means continuing to devote my time to the betterment of myself and my community. Thank you for believing in my potential!"

- Aghigh Banitaba

KAITLYN LEWIS

"I am incredibly grateful for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It has helped release pressure on me financially in regard to attending my dream university, NYU. NYU is notoriously very expensive, but because of this scholarship, I am able to go to the school that is the best fit for me. I will never forget being chosen for this award, the entire interview process was incredibly welcoming and it was clear how profound Jon was in everyone's life. I am honored and humbled to be selected to continue on Jon's legacy, particularly at NYU. I am currently President of the Student Council in DC, and I am also interning at a small fulfilling non-profit that works to make local communities better. I have loved my freshman year thus far, and cannot wait for my journey ahead on focusing on humanitarian work."

- Kaitlyn Lewis

Kaitlyn Lewis utilizes a dynamic set of skills and interests to build bridges across her community. At Beverly, she was active in the Norman Aid program, committed to normalizing and improving access to mental health support. Kaitlyn ran a weekly podcast interviewing multiple people in and out of the mental health field to discuss the struggles of everyday life and how to overcome them. Her peers and recommenders describe Kaitlyn as being unafraid and uncompromising in standing up for her peers and for what is right. Her heart is full of compassion and she always tries to help others in need. We know that Kaitlyn's contributions, especially shifting perception around Norman Aid and mental health, will be everlasting. For her sincere devotion to humanity and her passion for making a positive difference in the lives of others, Kaitlyn is honored with the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.



Our 2019 Award Recipient

ODELIA LALEHZARIAN

Odelia Lalehzarian is a student with a passion for creating greater good in the world around her. During her time at Beverly she hosted events, founded a club, volunteered at the local hospital, was a peer counselor and more. Everything she did centered around a want to build a better environment for others to live healthier, more connected lives. Her work in the NormanAid Wellness Center as a peer counselor and advocate for mental health, led to school-wide events in mental health awareness and promoting well-being. She left a legacy of helping others with her work in educating future generations on how to take care of their mental and physical health.

Odelia's passion for creating a more positive environment, continued when she founded the Hebrew Club at Beverly Hills High School, providing seminars and events building a sense of community throughout campus. Odelia was also the high school ambassador at the Kol Torah Center, planning charity banquets and raising thousands of dollars for non-profit organizations. Her work continued throughout the Medical Science Academy, as she volunteered at Cedars Sinai Hospital working with nurses and building trust and relationships with patients. Odelia also worked locally and was able to balance volunteer efforts, charitable fundraising, a challenging and successful academic course load while taking jobs part-time.

Odelia is a student who took active steps in fostering a more positive environment for her school and local community of Beverly Hills. She is a student with a strong work ethic and strong impact for the things she values. We look forward to seeing the next steps in Odelia's path as she continues at Syracuse University studying pre-law. Undoubtedly, her passion for law, justice and equality as well as her overall tenacity will lead her to many great future accomplishments.

"I am very blessed and honored to have been rewarded with the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award and to be added to the family of students who have also received this award. I knew I was lucky to have even met the Cherney family the day of my interview, when I saw the time and process they created to pick the right candidate to honor Jon Cherney. Winning the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award reminded me that the help I have given back to my community, such as volunteering at Kol Torah Center and working at my school's mental health center, Norman Aid, has been recognized and has had a lasting effect on the peers around me. I will forever be indebted to the Cherney family and award committee for choosing me as the award recipient and trusting my capabilities to represent Jon's beautiful qualities. If it weren't for my loving friends, family, and teachers, who always believed in my potential to give back and fight my battles, I wouldn't have had the confidence or the experience to apply for the scholarship. I would like to dedicate this award to the people in my life who stuck by my side during my bumpy journey these past four years, and to those who devote their time to helping the helpless. Thank you for your kindness and passion, Cherney Family."

- Odelia Lalehzarian



Our 2018 Award Recipients

JONATHAN ARTAL

It is highly rare to find a high school student who embodies such empathy for the special needs community. Jonathan Artal is that student who passionately works to expand others' vision and compassion. Inspired by his brother, Ethan, Jonathan started the By Your Side Club at Beverly which joins special- and general-ed students to have lunch together and build friendships. The same spirit of inclusivity drove Jonathan to design "Diverse Minds", a K-12 academic curriculum teaching tolerance and diversity that is being piloted in two schools with hopes of expansion. As the student board member on the Board of Education, Jonathan has spearheaded district-wide discussions on topics such as sexual assault, bullying, and campus safety, and advocating to advance the power of student voices in enacting these changes. Jonathan embodies Jon Cherney's dedication and enthusiasm for inclusivity and bringing people together. There is no doubt that just as Jonathan has made an impact at Beverly and in his local community, he will continue impacting those around him positively.

"I'm humbled and deeply grateful that the Cherney family chose me as a recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It's hard to express why the award is so meaningful to me; though the award represents a set of values to which we can all aspire, those who live by true humanitarianism—true compassion—are rare. I found one such person in my younger brother Ethan, who has Down syndrome. In Ethan's heart, love, and simple worldview I've seen an ideal for how we can embrace and support those around us. In meeting and speaking with those whom Jon touched throughout his life, I've realized that Jon was also one of those rare people. After winning the award, I've been approached by so many who've told me of Jon's kindness, his selflessness, his constant quest to better himself so as to better serve others. People like Ethan and Jon show us what it means to love. To me, the award embodies the pursuit of their ideal—the commitment to accept others, treat them with kindness, and reflect on one's actions on the road to compassion. I'm honored. Thank you to the Cherney family for all they have done, and for sharing that altruism is as much our responsibility as it is our most meaningful blessing."

- Jonathan Artal



NOAH DANESH

"It is an honor to have been recognized with the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award and to join the long list of accomplished Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipients from the past 22 years. Throughout this process, I have come to learn what a kind, caring family the Cherney Family is. I want to show my true appreciation to the Cherney Family for the time and effort they put into honoring the qualities of positivity, empathy, and kindness in our community. I also sincerely thank and will be forever grateful to the Cherney Award Committee for believing in me and in my potential. I am fortunate to have had amazing opportunities in my community that have given me the chance to help give back to the world. These opportunities opened up the possibility for me to even be considered for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. I am also grateful for all the support I have received from my family, friends, teachers and mentors. True to the words of Jon, I will strive to continue being original in any mission I undertake, while making a true difference in the world by taking concepts in a new direction. This award has given me the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a "humanitarian," and The Cherney Family's efforts and generosity have shown me that every person possesses the qualities needed to be a humanitarian. It is our responsibility to utilize those skills and attributes to improve the world. The humanitarian qualities that Jon Cherney exemplified are needed now more than ever, and I hope to live up to these qualities while inspiring people to do the same."

- Noah Danesh

Jon Cherney found his true calling by returning to Beverly and running the Media Department which had originally inspired him as a student. Our recipient, Noah Danesh, has also found his passion by working at KBEV. Not only has Noah worked hard as a Senior Producer, he sees his role as a vehicle to create meaningful change. Noah helped spearhead the Norman Update, a weekly news broadcast to share important announcements which has enhanced student awareness on schoolwide issues. Noah created his own interview show, The Danesh Show, and through his interviews with important guests, he has been able to share the knowledge and passion of these guests with the greater community. Noah has served as a Senior Producer of Every 15 Minutes, an educational documentary raising students' awareness of drinking and driving. Noah's passion for helping others extends to the medical field as a volunteer at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Noah hopes to follow in Jon's footsteps in being an original and making a difference in this world. We have no doubt he has the ability to do all that and more.

Our 2017 Award Recipient

ELIANA MARTIN

Senior Awards Night is always a special time to remember Jon Cherney through honoring an inspiring and influential member of the senior class. This year is no exception.

Jon had a tremendous impact on the students of Beverly during his tenure. Shortly, before his death, he left Beverly with the following message:

“What, then, really is important? Even when you are young and feeling invincible, you really do not have any control over anything EXCEPT what you say and what you do. Your word: What you say, what you commit to, and if you follow-through on that commitment...Do something that will make a difference.”

Our 2017 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient, Eliana Martin, has taken the exact actions that Jon described. She continually is placed in situations that allow her to make a difference without needing any gratification for any of the work she does. To put it simply, Eliana is a true humanitarian. Her pathway to true humanitarianism started when she joined Link Crew to help underclassmen transition to high school. This was the first experience where her actions changed the lives of others around her. Eliana’s commitment to bettering Beverly is evident. Not only has she planned spirited events for the school through her position in ASB, but she has pushed her fellow student leaders to think differently and more positively. It is important to her that everyone at this school feels that they are important and worthy to come to events.

Eliana has been a fearless leader in developing the first Wish Week in Los Angeles through Make-A-Wish Foundation. She helped coordinate a series of events at Beverly that raised thousands of dollars to help grant the wishes of children with life-threatening illnesses. Without Eliana’s devotion to this cause, this could not have been possible.

Her impact doesn’t stop there. The most rewarding experiences that Eliana has had is through her work with Teen Line. Teen Line is a confidential teen crisis hotline where teens can call in with issues ranging from abuse to depression to bullying to self-harm to suicide. After a rigorous training process that included weekly educational training sessions along with observations of current callers, she was selected to be on the other end of these phone calls. Her hope is that at the end of each call, she has positively changed the life of the teen on the other end of the call.

As Jon said, Your word: What you say, what you commit to, and if you follow-through on that commitment...Do something that will make a difference. Her word. What she says, what she commits to, and her follow-through on that commitment is blinding. Just as Jon lived by these words, Eliana lives by them, too. She will continue to affect the people around her on a daily basis.

“I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the Jon Cherney Family. I feel so honored and proud to be the recipient of this year’s Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award and to be called a true humanitarian. It is still so surreal to me. I remember hearing the words “Teen Line” and having my jaw drop. It was hard to realize that I was being called up to accept this award. That moment is something I will never forget. This award has inspired me to further dedicate my time to community service. I look forward to succeeding at Indiana University where I hope to start a program that carries the spirit of Teen Line, helping teens address problems before they become insurmountable crises. I want to thank all the incredible people I met throughout my journey and would like to extend a big thank you to my family, without their love and support none of this would have been possible. I am deeply honored and touched that I was chosen for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. I hope to further my involvement and dedication to my community in years to come.”

- Eliana Martin



Our 2016 Award Recipient

JUDY KIM

This year marks the 21st year of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It is an honor to recognize the tremendous impact that this year's recipient has created and cultivated. This award is given annually to a member of the senior class who, like Jon, creates a positive impact on those around them, without the intention that they are doing so yet creating such a strong effect on others around them; they genuinely want to make the world a better place each day. We are proud to introduce you to our 2016 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award recipient, Ji Yu "Judy" Kim. In 2013, after learning that the Center for the Disabled, where Judy was volunteering had to close due to funding issues, she started the HeartShare Club. This club continues to provide a weekly opportunity for those with disabilities and those living in senior homes, the ability to participate in a hands-on arts and craft project. During Judy's interview with our committee, she shared that one of the motivating factors of starting this organization and continuing the weekly work is the ability to see others enjoy what she's teaching; to be able to see them smile, to see them have fun; to see them interact with each other - that's the best part to her. To date, this organization has raised over \$10,000 and has run more than 200 art projects for those with disabilities and for senior citizens.

In addition to the great work Judy manages and maintains with the HeartShare Club, she started Koreatown's chapter of the Rotary Interact Club. As President of the organization, she is able to engage and empower those in the Koreatown community to help the larger Los Angeles community. They have spent time volunteering at the Los Angeles Midnight Mission, serving food, having meaningful conversation and creating friendships with the homeless population. They served as translators last summer for Korean athletes participating in the 2015 Special Olympics. They helped fundraise over \$65,000 at their annual Gala to spread awareness and support Baby Box - a Korean pastor's project as he raises disabled newborns after they are abandoned by their biological parents.

Judy shared in her essay, "I know that I cannot alone change the fact the society treats those without a voice as if they are worthless, but I intend to keep devoting my time and energy to organize and inspire people to contribute to those in need." She not only makes a difference herself, but she empowers others to do just that alongside her. Judy has committed to having a positive impact in the world around her, and she has and will continue to no matter where life takes her.

"I am so honored and grateful to have been chosen as this year's recipient for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. This award reflects my past four years of experience of simply doing what I love. I am grateful that my service with both art and science has made a long-lasting impact in my community. I will continue pursuing my work with helping others and making a positive difference to those around me. I would like to dedicate this award to my family, but most importantly, my fellow peers of HeartShare Club, the Rotary Interact Club of Koreatown, and the people that I have had the chance to meet through my service. This journey would have never began without them and I feel very fortunate knowing that these organizations I have started will still continue to expand and flourish as I leave for college. I will be attending USC this fall, studying biochemistry and neuroscience while still pursuing my passions in ceramics. Thank you so much again for your hard work and dedication for this award."

- Judy Kim



Our 2015 Award Recipient

MICHELLE ADAMS

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award is presented annually as a way of commemorating the memory of a man who touched many lives. On November 26, 1995, Jon passed away, but left an everlasting impact on the people in his life; students, faculty, friends, and family alike. On January 26, 1996, a tribute was placed in the newspaper in memory of Jon written by his students from the classes of 1992, '93, '94, and '95. They wrote: "The students whose lives you touched the most would like to thank you for your dedication, enthusiasm and for being our friend when we needed you. We will always remember your dedication, integrity, and love of life. We will carry a part of you with each of us forever." The recurring themes always heard about Jon was that he lit up any room he entered, that he loved life, and when you saw him there was an automatic feeling of happiness for just being there, for just being alive. Whatever Jon did, he did with 150% passion and drive, but along the way he never failed to include and empower others.

One attribute that coalesce our recipient with Jon is their mutual innate desire to empower people, to act as a vehicle of support, to inspire others to reach their full potential. A few of the wonderful acts our recipient has done include bringing sandwiches to the homeless on Thanksgiving, attending the Special Olympics each year, and going out of her way to a military base in 100 degree weather to instill in kids the importance of respecting the men and women who risk their lives everyday to keep all of us safe. This person embodies not only what this award is about at its fundamental core, but also what made Jon so special. This is the 20th year that this award has been presented since Jon passed away, and a chance to celebrate and remind us all of the goodness that people can be endowed with, and the difference one can make with their actions. While overcoming her own academic and personal obstacles, our recipient is truly influential and perpetuates the importance of simply caring for others. This is something that we can all learn and take away from. This year's recipient, herself, said it best: "You don't have to be magnificent to lend a hand to someone. You don't need to be the top kid in your class. You don't need to be the best athlete. You just need to be someone who cares". We are extremely proud to announce that the recipient for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award for 2015 is Michelle Adams.

"Thank you, for what the Cherney Family have given me is the greatest gift of all, believing in a dream. It seems like this all was a dream, an unexpected plot twist or fairy tale ending. In the face of adversity, I have learned the real impact of altruism, most importantly, how it can be done every day by anyone. That is why I am truly honored and humbled to be a recipient of this award that recognizes these values and to honor a man's legacy who accomplished just that. None of this would have been possible without the support of my family, school and community who continue to encourage and inspire me. With this, I am reminded of the words of John F. Kennedy, 'As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not utter words, but to live by them.' And, as I venture to Washington DC, I intend to do just that, honor Jon's legacy by creating my own. Thank you, Cherney Family."

- Michelle Adams



Our 2014 Award Recipient

YANIV SADKA

“What, then, really is important? Even when you are young and feeling invincible, you really do not have any control over anything EXCEPT what you say and what you do. Your word: what you say, what you commit to, and if you follow through on that commitment... Do something that will make a difference. Instead of blending in, be an original.” These are a few of the inspiring and unforgettable words that Jon Cherney left behind before he sadly left us 19 years ago. One quality that Jon possessed among others, but that was truly extraordinary, was his ability to extract the true unique individual out of a person. Jon was the epitome of a selfless person and had an immense impact on the people who came in contact with him. Even if Jon wasn’t aware of the impact he had on people, he didn’t need confirmation or recognition for it. He didn’t need to receive any “thank you’s”, because for him this selfless quality that he had, that another person would call “humanitarian qualities”, was just who he was as a person. The recipient for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award this year exemplifies the many qualities that Jon possessed that made him a humanitarian and this student will continue to exemplify these qualities because that is simply just the kind of person he is. One of the few inspiring acts that our recipient has done has been being a volunteer camp counselor at Camp Harmony for the past two years. This camp is a free summer and winter camp that gives homeless and impoverished children a chance to live their lives for a few weeks without having to worry about not having food to eat or a bed to sleep in. Not only is he a camp counselor to these kids, but he is a mentor to them and gives them hope and encouragement about their future. Along with being a counselor on a completely volunteer basis, he coaches youth Lacrosse in the summers and while coaching he met a young boy who as he put it “was sent from God to change his life”. Unfortunately, due to a surprising and shocking diagnosis, this 13 year old boy passed away from cancer, but in turn, our recipient started his own nonprofit organization in his honor, to help kids who have been diagnosed with cancer. A humanitarian is a person who works to make other people’s lives better—Jon lived this every single day and so does our recipient, and that is why the 2014 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award is being presented to Yaniv Sadka.

“From the bottom of my heart, I would simply like to say thank you to the Cherney Family. Being selected as the recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award is an honor that is difficult to describe in words. To have been categorized with past awardees like Liz Brajevich and Elbert Kim is surreal; I never expected to be put in the same class as my role models. By recognizing individuals who have a genuine commitment to helping others, the Cherney Family reinforces the importance of altruism and reminds students that there is much more to life than a GPA. I am humbled to be called a humanitarian, a great compliment of character, and share this award with my family who has always supported my philanthropic endeavors. To me, there is no greater feeling than putting a smile on a child’s face and I am beyond grateful to have been fortunate enough to do so. The truth is that all of us have been blessed with the opportunity to help others and it is our responsibility to act on that opportunity. The Cherney Family’s generosity has given me even more motivation to continue to help those in need and to also inspire my peers to do the same. I look forward to making the Cherney Family proud as I pursue a career in biomedical engineering, a field that works to overcome local and global health problems. Thank you for believing in me.”

- Yaniv Sadka



Our 2013 Award Recipient

ELBERT KIM

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award is presented annually in Jon's honor in order to recognize individuals who in some way share his passion for life and his genuine commitment to others.

This award is unique in that it recognizes qualities of, in short, a humanitarian--qualities of selflessness and generosity, of charity and a drive to inspire hope and happiness in others.

One of Jon's most unique qualities was the wisdom he possessed about the world. His perspective and vision were inspiring to others, opening their eyes to a different way of thinking and of acting, a way that, if adopted by everyone else, would surely create the best kind of world.

The Jon Cherney Award Recipient for this year possesses such an inspiring worldly wisdom. He told the Cherney Award Committee during his interview that whenever you meet someone, no matter how brief or seemingly fleeting the interaction might be, you have a choice--either you can DO something with that relationship, embrace that connection, or you cannot, you can simply write them off and move on.

When the Cherney Award Committee asked him why he applied, he said that one of his teachers told him that he would be an exceptional candidate, but that he didn't really understand why. But the reason why became immediately apparent to the award committee, as we realized that his wisdom, bright personality, and genuine investment in others was simply who he is without thinking, which is why he couldn't see it as being a big deal.

The Cherney Family and the Cherney Award Committee want to acknowledge Elbert Kim as the 2013 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient for his effortless compassion and inspiring heart, for, like Jon, he is making this world a more loving place, one fleeting interaction at a time.



"Winning the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award was a journey of self-discovery. Through the submission and interview process, I learned more about myself as a humanitarian- a way I had never viewed myself before. This award is unlike any other in that it is based on your character and your heart; not your academic merit or special talents. I encourage everyone to apply because through this process you can learn more about yourself. Winning this award was the highest honor, and biggest encouragement to continue being the person I am. It motivates me and reminds me every day that there is more to life than what can be quantified by grades on a paper, and that acts of kindness come around in a full circle. I am thankful to the Cherney Family for really going out of their way to offer this scholarship to students. Moreover, as the recipient of this award, my heart is filled with gratitude and inspired by the love and generosity that the Cherney Family has shown. Thank you so much."

- Elbert Kim

"Being on the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee was truly the most humbling opportunity I have been able to experience. I had always heard about what an extraordinary person Jon was since my brother had the honor of being on the Committee, and I looked extremely forward to applying to be on the Committee. I found myself thinking about what it means to be a humanitarian with the insights that all of the applicants introduced. My peers come from such diverse, interesting backgrounds and have such inspiring philosophies, and learning things about them that I would have never guessed altered my own philosophy about life. When it came down to making the decision, it was one of the hardest decisions I had ever made. I can only wish that I had the honor of meeting Jon, but through spending time with his loving family and through each applicant's entry, I felt as if his spirit was among us all. I am extremely thankful to have been given the opportunity to be a part of such a unique award."

Alexandra Aftalion
2013 Award Committee Member

Our 2012 Award Recipient

ELIZABETH BRAJEVICH

Jon Cherney is known by many who never had the chance to meet him by words he left for his students shortly before his passing—"What, then, really is important? Even when you are young and feeling invincible, you really do not have any control over anything EXCEPT what you say and what you do. Your word: what you say, what you commit to, and if you follow through on that commitment...Do something that will make a difference. Instead of blending in, be an original."

These simple, yet universal and enlightened words are unique as they feel intuitive when you hear them as if the idea of being defined by your actions is so obvious. But at the same time the words are somehow shocking in their obviousness. It's almost as if the idea is assumed somewhere deep in your subconscious and hearing it so bluntly put is jarring. There are people in this world, like Jon, who do not leave ideas such as these to reside in their subconscious. Instead, they live their lives by these principals. Every decision, every expression, is shaped by them. The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient this year is undoubtedly one of those very rare and unique individuals. In particular, our award recipient lives by a code and understanding of the world that very much resembles Jon's—one that truly prioritizes the effect of actions on others. Among many other humanitarian activities, our award recipient has volunteered for years at a camp for underprivileged children. And, as if dedicating her time and energy during weeks of camp is not enough, our recipient remains in contact with her campers all year long; taking them out herself to do fun activities and being available to talk them through life whenever necessary—being a true role model and friend. Her investment and pride in these kids is so obvious when she talks about them and her genuine commitment to them is truly telling of her character and her heart. The Cherney Family and the Cherney Award Committee would like to honor Elizabeth Brajevich with the 2012 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award for all the lives she has and will continue to change.

"What an honor. The second you mentioned my campers, I started to tear up which is my usual reaction. Every time I think of them and all that they have overcome I feel touched and inspired. These emotions soon shifted to sheer bliss and amazement. I had trouble realizing that it was actually me, that I had somehow amounted to someone worthy enough to receive such an award. I hope this will be my legacy too, at Beverly, because there is nothing else I would rather be remembered by. This award means so much to me and to my family, whom I have to thank for their support all these years which has enabled me to follow my own passions. I share this award with my campers and everyone who has reminded me what makes giving back so special. The look you see on someones face when you realize you truly have made a difference is priceless, there is nothing more gratifying in the world. My hands shook as the award was announced because I hoped that I would be able to call myself a Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient. The values of this award match my own and I will always live by the principles that Jon Cherney did. I hope to make the Cherney Family incredibly proud as I continue on to Michigan State. The time I spent with Camp Harmony, Shriners, Concern, and other programs is the time I have truly enjoyed the most. Thank you for your kindness, your generosity, and your commitment to supporting and encouraging the most important values in our student body."

- Elizabeth Brajevich



Our 2011 Award Recipient

NATASHA GERENTE

It is rare to find someone with a truly empathetic heart—someone who deeply loves and understands people, and just by virtue of possessing this quality helps those they meet in some way. Even if it isn't a kind of help that can be consciously recognized, it is meaningful. It is the feeling that someone is listening without judgment and is genuinely invested in problems or achievements that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Jon Cherney had this quality and was able to touch the lives of the people around him in such an honest way that he helped students and friends change their lives by helping them find the right path and pushing them to pursue their passion and never stop trying until they were living it. He was the very definition of a friend to all he came in contact with. This very rare quality, the empathetic heart, is the quality the Jon Cherney Committee is recognizing in this year's recipient.

Our recipient was nominated by her friends and in fact appeared to not even understand why she was deserving of this award. This is how natural her character really is. Love and support that affected those around her deeply wasn't even a thought to her, it's just who she is. The award committee and the Cherney Family want to remind Natasha Gerente just how important her character is to the world—it really needs more people like her.

"As Daphne Rose Kingma said, "Saying 'thank you' creates love." I am truly thankful to Jon Cherney himself for showing people and giving the example of how humanity should be. I would also like to thank the Cherney Family and their compassion year after year to continue and give to students. They have moved me and made me want to be a better person. I would like to thank my father for setting the right path for me and my friends, Erica Hendry and Rebecca Yukelson, for nominating me for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.

I think what Daphne meant is that giving thanks and being thankful to people builds love and compassion. It's not only "thank you," it's just a kind phrase or a smile that makes other people happy. If there is one thing I learned through life is that even though sometimes it gets tough or we experience bad days, nothing should stop us from making a better day for someone else. At the end of it, if you made someone else's day you will notice your day only gets better.

The truth is, it is hard to express with words the honor and happiness I felt on June 22, 2011. I hope that this award did not only honor me, but also the Cherney Family, and my friends, Erica and Rebecca, for being such great people. It takes a lot of goodness in someone to do what they did. I hope one day I can give the feeling of joy and honor that the Cherney Family gave to me."

- Natasha Gerente



Our 2010 Award Recipient

SARABINAH ARIS

Sensitivity, compassion and selfless actions that demonstrate her commitment to the guiding principle voiced by her mother, “think of others before yourself” are the distinguishing qualities that make Sarabinah Aris the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award winner for 2010. In spite of extreme physical, emotional and financial challenges that her own family faces, Sarabinah has dedicated the past four years to helping other families in the Critical Care Tower at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. With dignity, compassion and respect, Sarabinah comforts and supports critically ill patients and their families in an intense, emotionally-charged atmosphere. Whether working directly with patients, organizing a toy drive, designing a mural for the Pediatric Unit, or hand delivering hundreds of holiday cards, her unwavering selflessness touches the lives of many. Our recipient goes above and beyond in all endeavors, reported to always be the first to arrive and last to leave. She participated in CSF tutoring for three semesters, accumulating more hours than any other volunteer. She gave hours before school, after school, and through her lunch break to any student who needed her. Like Jon, an astounding adoration for humanity and true devotion to consistent, universal respect for others has been our recipient’s drive to reach out to those around her. In carrying on her mother’s legacy, Sarabinah has devoted herself, heart and soul to helping those in need. Her loving spirit and her actions are hallmarks of a true humanitarian.



“Though education is one of the top priorities in my life, I believe that if there isn’t a sincere desire to improve the welfare of others, then all the education in the world would be meaningless and go to waste. As the wise Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” For me, it was never the numbers you earned, but the hearts that you touch, that truly defines who you are in this life.

To understand the person I am, one must know my mother. Not only do we look alike to the point where people would say I am a photocopy of her, but we also share the same values. She is my mother, after all. Although she was never the typical soccer mom, stage mom, or someone who could answer most of my questions when I came home from school, she taught me at a young age to open my heart up to people and think for others before myself. Besides merely reminding me through words, she proactively demonstrated this ideal through her own actions. Her golden heart has always been my biggest inspiration in life, guiding me through life’s hurdles. However, when I was twelve, my mother suffered a stroke and became paralyzed and bed-ridden in a nursing home.

As second semester of my senior year was winding down, I came to the saddening realization that my mother would not see me walking down to receive my high school diploma that she has been waiting so long for me to get. There was no doubt I needed to do something before I left Beverly, a rite-of-passage that at the same time would make my mother proud for years to come. And that was when I discovered the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. Never would I have thought that there would be something in high school that I would be so willing to put all my heart and soul into, which has all the more made this the greatest experience of my high school career.

Being the 2010 recipient of the award has been the ultimate honor that I have been presented thus far in my life and I know it will ultimately pave the way for my future success. By giving me this award, I have gained so much conviction in myself which in itself is priceless. Thank you with all my heart to the Cherney Family for their gracious generosity. I know that their profound kindness will enable me to positively affect people’s lives in the world and be able to further demonstrate that the capacity to be a humanitarian is within all of us.”

- Sarabinah Aris

Our 2009 Award Recipient

CHRISTOPHER KIM

While many individuals devote hundreds of hours to the service of others, it is extremely rare to meet someone who is defined by a commitment to helping. Christopher Kim is just such an individual. Born weighing two pounds with a cleft palate and other health complications, Chris and his family were dependent on the good will of dozens of doctors and nurses who performed numerous surgeries and provided hundreds of hours of care. While hurtful teasing over looking different can break the spirits of many children, Chris was strengthened by his belief in himself and love for humanity. He has chosen to focus on the kindness of others, and is committed to a life of “pay it forward.”

Chris earned his Eagle Scout award in his senior year. His life’s guiding principles and his actions personify the qualities of the Boy Scouts - trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. Whether standing patiently by a difficult, reluctant and rude young boy to help him succeed in school, grabbing an elderly woman out of the way of a speeding bus, or just smiling and exuding a positive spirit in the halls and classrooms of Beverly, Chris’s humanitarian spirit supports and uplifts anyone he comes into contact with. His intense desire to help others in need and contribute to the community has molded his passion to become a doctor. “My desire is to help people not based on their ability to pay, but rather on their need for help.”

Chris attended Wake Forest University.



“June 17, 2009 is a day that I will remember for the rest of my life. I have always dreamed of receiving a collegiate education, and because of the Cherney Family and their continued generosity and compassion for others, my dream is becoming a reality. When I was accepted to Wake Forest University, my first choice for college, I was overjoyed that my hard work had paid off but on the other hand, I was skeptical as to how I would be able to afford a private school education.

Throughout my senior year, I applied to dozens of scholarships on various websites and through the school. To my dismay, none were meant for me. Just as I was about to give up my long search for scholarships, my guidance counselor suggested I apply for the Cherney Scholarship. After learning about the scholarship and how recipients were chosen based on humanitarian qualities that exemplify Jon, I knew my background was a perfect fit and began to write my application.

Reflecting back on my four years at Beverly Hills High School, I realize that I strived to always put others before myself. Through Boy Scouts of America and the Cancer Outreach Club, I was exposed to people of different social and economic backgrounds and witnessed first-hand the adversity they struggle with every day. As Jon Cherney did, I also tried to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

When I first met with the Cherney Family, all of my petty worries seemed to dissipate. As I spoke candidly about myself, which can be a little awkward, I stood in awe at the love and sincere warmth the family has toward humanity, and this gave me the calmness and strength I needed to continue. It was such a privilege and honor to meet with the family and I am so proud to be named in Jon’s honor. For someone who I have never met, he has touched me in ways I have never thought possible.

Jon’s compassion and love for helping others has influenced and reaffirmed my aspiration to one day change lives through medicine. As I continue my education, I will never forget the impact Jon Cherney has had on my life and the gratitude I have for him and his family. I am forever indebted to the Cherney Family and words cannot express how much I appreciate their generous support for my education.”

- Christopher Kim

Our 2008 Award Recipient

TARYN BLACK

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient for this year is Taryn Black. The lives of hundreds of students across the nation as well as here at Beverly have been touched by Taryn's deep compassion and commitment to helping others. As a three-year member of Teen Line, she has been that friend who listens thoughtfully, cares deeply, and gently supports and guides teens in times of personal crisis. As a lead Teen Line recruiter, mentor, and trainer she has inspired and prepared others to follow in her footsteps. Taryn has used her exceptional organizational and leadership skills to plan and facilitate numerous Service Learning projects for our students. Most recently, she took charge of our Respect and Tolerance campaigns, and coordinated our deeply moving "Blood Brothers Tolerance Assembly." For her dedication to making a difference in the lives of others, Taryn is honored with the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Scholarship Award.

"I am truly touched to be awarded the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. This award is not given to a student with the highest GPA, rather it's given to a student that exemplifies unselfish devotion to others. I am extremely honored to be recognized in this category because I feel that throughout my high school career I have truly devoted myself to helping others through my endeavors with Teen Line and Service Learning. The experiences I've had with these activities were life changing and receiving such a great honor makes my high school years resonate in my heart and soul. I will cherish this award forever. It is my goal that no matter what I do in my future years, I will always follow the guidelines of Jon Cherney and his humanitarian ways. This award has given me the encouragement to share my humanitarianism with the rest of the world. Thank you, Jon Cherney, and the Cherney Family for providing me a profound first encouragement that will guide me out of my high school mode and unleash my future potential. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

- Taryn Black



Our 2007 Award Recipient

BARBRA KIM

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Recipient for this year is Barbra Kim. Barbra's exceptional compassion for the disadvantaged children of the world has led her to spend her summers traveling to remote areas to nurture and care for children living in orphanages and in poverty. She spent two summers in rural villages in South Korea, where she slept with, cleaned, fed, educated and worked to bring joy to young orphans. She also traveled to Guatemala where she taught impoverished children and assisted a medical team in a remote mountain village. The depth of Barbra's caring for others has led her to establish a chapter of the World Vision Club at Beverly Hills High School. The club has adopted two children—a fourteen-year old girl living in an HIV/AIDS community in Kenya, and a seven-year old boy in Sri Lanka. Barbra's commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others makes her a model recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.

Barbra attended the University of Chicago.



"I am honored beyond belief to have been the recipient of the 2007 Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It has truly been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I know I will cherish for all of my life. After being accepted into the college of my dreams, the University of Chicago, I faced a difficult obstacle: the tuition cost. The Cherney Family's generous contribution helped fund my future education—a blessing that has significantly eased the burden from both my and my parents' shoulders. Better yet, the Cherney Family's contribution helped restore a lot of faith in my work, in the world, and in...humanity. And although that statement seems overly melodramatic, it really comes from my heart. Throughout my entire senior year, I searched and applied for several scholarships. It always seemed to me that even if I had dreams of saving impoverished kids all over the world and I had all these personal life-changing experiences from my orphanage work, I didn't have the grades or the high enough GPA to compete with the other almost super-human applicants. But after first hearing about the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award, and then later applying, and then even later on meeting with the Cherney Family, it seemed as though all those other frustrating lost scholarships were worth the wait. The Cherney Family were unbelievably kind and caring. These were people who truly cared about the individual student who would receive their gift, which was after all dedicated to their unbelievably kind and caring son. I felt as though their interest in my life, in my work, and in my future helped stir my passion again. I recommend applying for this scholarship to anyone who has ever dreamed of making a difference. The Cherneys are one of the rare people who will help you go from dreaming to making. And believe me, I know. I, for one, will forever be in their debt."

- Barbra Kim

“Participating in the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Selection Committee was one of the most fulfilling aspects of my senior year. It was finally my turn to give back to the school and the one student who truly deserved humanitarian recognition. I was extremely pleased with the strength of the applicant pool and congratulations to Chris Kim, you deserve all the best! Overall, this was a rewarding experience and it was nice to be on the decision-making side and be able to give someone this wonderful opportunity. Best of luck to future applicants!”

*Liora Simozar
2009 Award Committee Member*

“Although I was never able to meet Jon, the legacy he has succeeded through his family and friends is rather inspiring. The Cherney family was gracious enough to welcome all the nominees as well as my fellow committee members and it was easy to see what a warm and loving atmosphere Jon was a part of. Jon’s inspirational, charismatic and humane persona lives on through both the winners of the award and the nominees. They all share the qualities of people we wish we could forever be surrounded by. Sitting on the committee was an honor. I was given the opportunity to see my fellow classmates in a light that they normally were not illuminated on. I can only hope that future winners can carry on his name with grace and geniality.”

*Guiliana Dakdouk
2009 Award Committee Member*

“Being on the Jon Cherney committee was an awesome experience. I never had the honor of meeting Jon, but working on the team to choose who would win this award made me feel like I knew him very well. You can tell just from meeting his family what an amazing person he must have been. Joining the committee is easily something I’d recommend. You get to meet people in your grade that you always sort of knew, but never talked to, then you learn these amazing things about them. It’s amazing to find out that you really do not know much about people until you have sat down and heard their story.”

*Jonathan Guez
2008 Award Committee Member*

“To be able to deliver an award intended to applauding the content of one’s character rather than praising the customary academic success is what founds my pride in being a student member of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee. Although praising one’s academic achievements is without certainty admirable, this award enables peers to recognize that being a humanitarian at nature, just as Jon Cherney was, is also overpoweringly endorse. I believe that by acknowledging one’s valuable character, we fertilize the desire in others to do the same. The Cherney family has done and continues to commit a profound job in this significant movement on our school campus. Although there was only one winner, all the applicants were amazing! Such cool kids surround me and I can hope that I will be able to have learned and pass on their qualities in college next year!”

*Layla Mahdavi
2008 Award Committee Member*

“I feel extremely privileged to have been part of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee. Through the selection process, I was able to learn about the profound effect Jon Cherney had on the lives of all those around him. Individuals who are chosen for this award demonstrate the remarkable and positive qualities that Jon embodied. Being able to read and hear about the true altruism of my peers and even more so being able to help acknowledge their significant contributions made this a very rewarding experience.”

*Carly Allen
2007 Award Committee Member*

“I can honestly say that being a part of the selection committee for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award was one of the most inspiring and eye-opening experiences that I had throughout high school. While attending Beverly Hills High School, I got to witness all walks of life—the intelligent, the outspoken, the class clowns, the quieter kids—and every single student made a difference. Although I noticed that unique atmosphere that is the Beverly Hills High School community, I never really got to see the truly amazing achievements that these individuals have made. There are students that traveled the world, helped the underprivileged, and truly changed the lives of others. These motivating and inspirational stories reflected the determination, creativity, and innovation that are found in people, like Jon Cherney, who will change the world around them, for the better. I was honored to be able to hear these students’ stories and continue the Cherney tradition of helping others and making a difference.”

*Danielle Tucker
2007 Award Committee Member*

Our 2006 Award Recipients

ROXANNA PIRNIA

Roxy Pirnia is a dynamic young woman who is passionate about making the world a better place for all. Roxy worked tirelessly and joyously as the Student Board Representative to provide positive change not only at Beverly Hills High School, but in the community as well. She has dedicated endless hours to helping students and community bridge cultural gaps — through her work with the Iranian American Parents Association and the “Mix it Up” Club at Beverly. Her positive energy, desire to dedicate her life to enriching the lives of others and her exceptional leadership skills will surely improve the lives of many.

In her application essay, Roxy’s words echo the philosophy of Jon Cherney:

“I want to change the world; I want to make it a better place for mankind...I plan to become a teacher and inspire students to take a stand and make things happen.”

Roxanna attended UC San Diego.

“Thank you so much for your support in this very generous award. I am so honored to have been given this award in the name of Jon Cherney, and it is something I will cherish forever. It is because of kind people like yourselves that traditions like this stay alive, and students each year feel honored. It isn’t an award for SATs or GPA — this is about who you are as a person, and that is why this will stay with me forever. Thank you so much.”

- Roxanna Pirnia



MASHA SCHEGLOV

“I would like to express to you my sincere thank you. It is such a privilege and honor to be distinguished with such an award in Jon’s name. His spirit, vitality and character will forever be embedded in my heart. I shall carry on the purpose of this distinction with much dignity and a sense of pride. It was a great pleasure getting to know the Cherney Family throughout the nominating process. I truly cherish your generous contribution. You have forever touched my heart, much like Jon has touched my soul. May this wonderful tradition continue for the years to come.”

- Masha Scheglov

Masha Scheglov is described by her English teacher, Ms. Miller, as “a wonderful young woman with strong moral and ethical values, a perceptive and compassionate nature...and a remarkable enthusiasm for life which she joyously shares with everyone around her.” Two dozen of Masha’s many friends submitted essays describing her exceptionally kind and compassionate heart and the loving support and encouragement she has provided for them over the years. She cares not only about her friends, but about all of her peers. She established the “Best Buddies” Club at Beverly Hills High School to provide friendship and support for students who are new or are isolated. She attended a National Best Buddies Convention in Chicago to learn best ways to promote and maintain the “Best Buddies” program. Masha’s classmates describe her best:

“I admire her for her character and spirit, her poise and quiet strength.”

“She has inspired me to become a more open and caring person.”

“She makes everyone around her a better person by simply being herself.”

Masha attended the United States Air Force Academy.

Our 2005 Award Recipients

GIOVANNA FISCHER

Giovanna is a bright, motivated, self-confident, friendly young woman. She is well respected by both her peers and Beverly staff, is a pleasure to have in class, and a true treasure at Beverly Hills High School. Her smile brightens up any room she enters. Giovanna is the perfect student to honor with the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award because, like Jon, she savors each and every moment. Marla Weiss commented in her recommendation for the award, "Giovanna has the four D's: desire, determination, dedication, and discipline. I usually only use those adjectives for describing volleyball athletes that I coach, but Giovanna deserves the compliment not only for her prowess on the track and volleyball court, but also in the classroom and in her school and community extracurricular involvement. What separates Giovanna from other students I have taught and coached is her passion for human and civil rights issues. Giovanna's volunteer work, her active participation in a variety of clubs, and her involvement in the school's student government is where she is most comfortable." Gio brings her energy, kindness, passion for life and for others, her curiosity, maturity, and independence to each classroom, to each endeavor, to each individual she comes in touch with.

Giovanna attended the University of Michigan.

"What is being a humanitarian all about? This is a question I had to ask myself before applying for the scholarship. Like many other scholarships, it was not about having stellar grades or endless hours of community service. After reading the Cherney newsletter and reading about past Cherney Award winners and learning about Jon Cherney himself, it was apparent that a humanitarian was a lot more than that. I have learned that a humanitarian fights for change not only for themselves, but for others. I volunteered with the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network. I helped start the Day of Silence at Beverly because too few recognized the reality of hate crimes and what people have to face every day for being different. I plan to continue working with GLSEN and coordinating the Day of Silence in the next 4 years at the University of Michigan. If I was remembered for anything at Beverly, I want it to be a Cherney Award winner. That in itself means so much. This scholarship is more meaningful to me than anything I have accomplished in my life thus far, and I say that with the utmost sincerity. Thank you again."

- Giovanna Fischer

LIAN KIMIA

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the award you have honored me with. Although I did not have the pleasure of meeting Jon, I can see through his family that he was an amazing person. I will forever try my best to live up to and honor his memory. You have all inspired me to be the best person I can be. Jon and I share a love of helping others and making a difference in others' lives, and I will continue committing my life to this passion and will do my best to make you proud. Thank you for believing I deserve this award and recognition. I know the decision must not have been easy with all the other wonderful candidates. With this recognition, you have given me a great sense of pride and I cannot thank you enough."

- Lian Kimia

English teacher, Alice Kuo, describes Lian as "the most conscientious, thoughtful, caring, mature, and truly altruistic student I have had the pleasure to know. In my ten years of teaching, Lian is without question the most deserving student I have known to apply for this award." Lian is not only deeply compassionate, but is also an activist and a leader in making a difference in the world. Her numerous efforts spanning many years include coordinating the Beverly tsunami relief fundraiser, taking action to bring public awareness to genocide and slavery in the Sudan, and organizing support for the firestorm victims in San Bernardino. Lian is active in Earth Day Beverly Hills, the AIDS Walk, peer mediation and the Maple Center Counseling program. In addition, she helped create a humanitarian organization called "the Gift of Life." One of Lian's peers wrote, "Lian doesn't have any community service hours recorded on her high school transcript, even though she has completed hundreds of hours. Obviously she doesn't help others in order to earn a gold seal on her diploma. She does it because it keeps her happy. And that's what differentiates the average person from a humanitarian."

Lian attended UCLA.



“Working with the Jon Cherney Committee has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my high school years. To be able to see so many prospective applicants — all offering something new, all helping out our school, community, and world in their own ways — is truly amazing. It has been a true honor to be able to be a part of something so significant. Not only that, the Cherney Family was so warm and opened up to us immediately. I will miss them dearly. I want to come back next year and do it again!”

*Brenna Lin
2006 Award Committee Member*

“Being on the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee was a truly special experience. I never realized how many caring and selfless students there are at Beverly and I feel so privileged to be able to learn about all of the wonderful applicants. Jon Cherney was a true humanitarian and I am glad to be able to help recognize the students who shared his kind spirit.”

*Connie Lam
2006 Award Committee Member*

“Being on the Jon Cherney Committee has been an amazing experience. Being an active part of ASB I had always heard of this great award honoring a wonderful man who had unfortunately passed away, but whose memory and effect had not. For the past three years I have looked forward to being offered the chance to be a member of this committee and my experience was far better than what I expected. Working with the Cherneys, Mr. Stiles, Ms. Chamberlain, Ms. Newman, Danielle, and Nina has been one great experience all together. Hearing the stories and wonderful accomplishments of the applicants was moving and inspirational. The selection process was difficult, but we all worked so well together that the end result was well worth our time. I am very appreciative that I was given the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful award representing a man of great honor.”

*Simon Aftalion
2005 Award Committee Member*

“The day that I was asked to be a part of the Jon Cherney Committee, I was ecstatic. It was an honor to be a member that would choose the recipient of such a prestigious scholarship. Attending meetings was always the highlight of my day. I was prepared to work consistently and effectively in making the decision of the recipient of the award a wise decision. Working with the Cherney Family was another big honor. We all made a wonderful team from day 1. My favorite experience during this process was the interview sessions that we held. I learned a lot from my peers and how humanitarianism has affected each individual differently. Being a part of this committee has allowed me to grow as an individual and recognize the many interpretations of humanitarian qualities within numerous individuals.”

*Nina Bolour
2005 Award Committee Member*

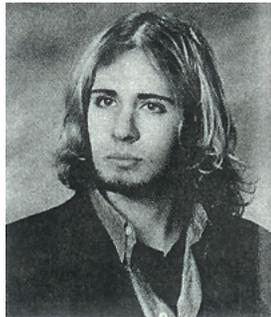
Our 2004 Award Recipients

ROBBY NADLER

Sensitivity, compassion and positive action characterize our award recipient, Robby Nadler. Robby's deep sense of caring is demonstrated in his quiet efforts to help others to shine and to know and accept themselves as valued human beings. His sensitivity, compassion and advocacy brought life-changing intervention to a young boy he assisted through the Maple Center Tutoring Program. Robby's creativity, character and spirit are expressed in his performances and choreography for the Dance Company, as well as in his writing which earned him the Charlie Award this year. He is considering a career teaching English so that he can combine his passion for helping with his love of literature and writing. Robby is graduating with a 4.36 GPA.

Robby attended UCLA.

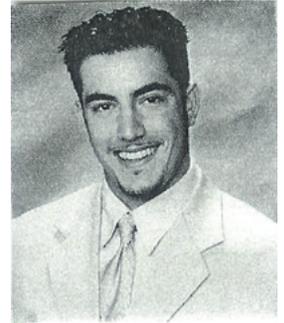
"From my four years at Beverly, I have seen the way certain students become immortalized by their accomplishments. I must confess that I have always cared very little for being known by most of the awards I have come across; at the end of the day, having a science trophy does nothing. Most of my awards are stationed in the back of my closet where they will remain until I am old enough to forget that they had ever existed such that I may stumble upon them while cleaning not even being able to recall from whence they come. But the Cherney Award is something I display proudly at the foot of my bed never too tired to explain it and the man after whom it is named. That is because this is an award of value. With this award, I will finance my college education so that I may one day be a teacher and emulate the brilliant example set before me. With this award, you help me realize my goal so that maybe I could have half the experiences Jon had. I am not proud that I won the award, but proud to carry on what it embodies and the man it represents. To be associated with this award means to be thought of as a humanitarian, a giver and a bringer of light into the darkness of other lives. Of all that I have done at Beverly, I would be forever greater than content to just be known for this one award being thought of with esteem, empathy, and all the other unmentionable traits one man personified and passed on to all award winners."



- Robby Nadler

ASA YASHAR

"Words cannot describe how thankful I am and how lucky to even have the opportunity to be recognized in front of my graduating class. Thanks to the Cherney Family, Senior Awards Night will be one of the most memorable nights in my life. Words cannot describe my gratitude. It's funny how what goes around comes around, especially when one puts forth the well-being of others ahead of his own. All of the deeds that I would do day-to-day were self-rewarding. They made me feel like a better person. The Cherney Award exemplified to me that "you get out of life what you put into it." Thank you again for all that you have given me. The scholarship has relieved my family of a few burdens that I would have placed upon them. Your generosity has taught me that people must stay true to themselves and keep being the person that they are, and at the end, everything will play itself the right way...I guess that's hope."



- Asa Yashar

Asa Yashar is a young man who has touched all of us with his kindness and generosity. Asa is a consummate gentleman-polite, considerate, gracious, caring, and humble. In fact, his application for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award was submitted by a friend and supported by 64 signatures of his peers. When asked by the award committee why he had not applied for the award himself, he responded, "I did consider applying, but then realized there are others who are so much more deserving." His AP statistics teacher, Mr. Zadeh, wrote: "Asa is a young man who only wants good for those around him. The extent to which he gives of himself unconditionally is something I have never seen before." Asa is a four-year varsity football player and track participant.

Asa attended UC Santa Barbara.

Our 2003 Award Recipients

MASON NG

Mason Ng is an enthusiastic and energetic young man. He is constantly on the lookout for ways to help individuals and his community. In his own words, "small things do make a difference in life." In addition to the countless ways in which Mason assists and helps others on a daily basis, he has spent his summers volunteering at the public library, at Century City Hospital and at Boy Scout summer camps. Mason is a natural leader and is committed to projects for the greater good which will have a positive effect on the community. One such project in which he was deeply involved was the repair, painting and replanting of the Beverly Hills Garden Park on Santa Monica Boulevard. The consensus among the Beverly Hills High School staff is that Mason is a superior person and a credit to the school. There is no doubt that Mason will devote himself to making a difference in college and beyond.

"I was overwhelmed with joy and honor as I heard my name called to receive the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. It was an unforgettable night when people greeted and congratulated me for the award, along with my accomplishments of being a person that had made a difference in people's lives. It is one of my proudest memories and an inspiration for the years to come. I regret to not have had the opportunity to meet Jon Cherney, but I know that his spirit has touched and encouraged the lives of many students and will be remembered as a great role model for all ages. I cannot express enough gratitude for receiving this award. Thank you for selecting me to be a recipient of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award and for further motivating, encouraging and inspiring me to always help others."

- Mason Ng



STEVEN EIDELMAN

"I want to thank you for your kindness and devotion to recognizing students like me who believe that giving is the greatest gift of all. It was such a pleasure to meet with you during our interview and such an enormous honor to receive the award in memory of Jon. Having been given the chance to meet the Cherney Family and speak with you after the awards ceremony meant so much to me. Your warmth and generosity made the night an unforgettable experience for me and my family.

I will soon embark on my journey to pursue my dreams at the University of Pennsylvania. I cannot thank you enough for your contribution to my education, as it will assist me greatly. I want to assure you that I will do everything I can to live up to the expectations that come along with receiving such a highly esteemed award. Thank you for making me a part of something so special."

- Steven Eidelman

Steven Eidelman's determination, compassion and teaching has inspired and given hope to dozens of children with diabetes. In his own words, "I came to realize that the most pressing issue for most kids with diabetes is their lack of motivation and confidence necessary to take charge of controlling their health. With that in mind, I set out on a mission to serve as living proof to every child who at one point told me that he or she would never be able to live a normal life." Steven has worked countless hours teaching Kids "N" Fitness at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. He was the youngest competitor at a Diabetes Marathon Run in Rome, Italy and traveled to Ecuador to educate and assist poverty stricken children who suffer from diabetes and who have a very limited supply of insulin. Steven has been that one, all-significant model that has helped so many children gain confidence in managing their disease.

Steven attended the University of Pennsylvania.

Our 2002 Award Recipients

DIANA ARNOLD

Diana Arnold is a superbly talented writer and actress who is deeply compassionate and caring. Over the past few years, she has overcome tremendous personal difficulties, including the loss of her father. With determination and the strength of her spirit, she has evolved from an unfocused teenager into a vibrant, magnetic young woman who encourages and inspires her peers to follow their dreams, believe in themselves, and keep working towards their goals. In the Performing Arts Department she has worked with other students to help them achieve their goals. Her touching poetry that reflects a deep understanding of and compassion for humanity earned Diana the English Department's Charlie Award. Her very presence has a positive effect on those around her.

Diana continued exploring and developing her artistic talents at the NYU's Tisch School of Arts.

"It seems as though the gift of receiving the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award has transcended the tangible. I, after becoming a recipient, have become a part of a legacy: I am now honored to be another creative human being able to recognize Jon and allow him to live on. I am forever indebted to the Cherney Family, for they have been the first to see me the way I see myself. The fact that there exists an award at Beverly Hills High School that encourages positivity, honesty, creativity, and individuality while there is truly no judging, only applauding, is a rare benefit that has silently encouraged me to share my story. I have learned more about myself because of the opportunity that the Cherneys gave me. I have learned to execute vision and that self-progression and development is priceless. I have been touched, and touched others through the experiences I've had, and because of this award I have learned more about what it means to be human. I have drawn strength from Jon and his brilliant life and it seems as if I'm following the paths that his footsteps once made. Jon and I will have attended the same middle school, high school, and college and although I never knew Jon personally, I have a piece of him within me always – and that piece will forever be surrounded by the deepest appreciation and gratitude for him and his family."

- Diana Arnold

KEVIN HAYES

"I would like to thank you so much for your generous contribution towards my education. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be viewed as an equal up on stage with other individuals with academic statuses I could only dream of. This experience above all has been like none other in my life. Thank you again."

- Kevin Hayes

Those who know Kevin Hayes recognize that he is a one-of-a-kind original, as well as a compassionate and creative human being. One of his teachers expressed it best when she wrote that "he is a rarity among society, and I am regularly touched by his profound words, actions and beliefs." Kevin is deeply grateful for the roles his photography teacher, Karen Lerman, and his English teacher, Wendy Sullivan, played in helping him to discover himself and feel truly valued as a human being. Using the warmth of his personality and his creative talents, Kevin has made a concerted effort to reach out to other students whose faces are not seen, whose voices are not heard. One way in which he did so was to create a yearbook primarily for special education students. Kevin wears dozens of bracelets, each with a special story about someone. When asked about one particular bracelet, he explained how it was given to him by someone he didn't even know and that it now reminds him of all the wonderful people he's never met.

Kevin further explored his creativity at the Academy of Arts in San Francisco.



“Being on the Cherney Award Committee was a wonderful and enlightening experience. Meeting other people my age and learning of their amazing accomplishments has inspired me to be more of a humanitarian. These kids were truly unique. I also feel honored for meeting and working with the Cherney Family. Thank you for everything.”

*Amber Stevens
2003 Award Committee Member*

“This was the second year that I have served on the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee. Looking back on the experience as a whole, I can say it was one of the most meaningful events in my high school career. The honor of serving on this committee surpasses the satisfaction of seeing talented and outstanding classmates; it allowed me to help the memory of Jon Cherney live on. Jon Cherney will always be remembered by the winners, the participators, and the members of the committee. This past year’s award winners were two excellent students and human beings whose vast accomplishments help an uncountable number of individuals. It may seem odd, but the job of being on the committee can be challenging, and at times frustrating. The many applicants we received this year were all outstanding individuals, and it took much contemplation to decide any clear winner. Even though I did not know him, Jon Cherney will have a lasting impact on me through my participation in the process.”

*Michael Lockman
2003 Award Committee Member*

“For the past four years I have heard of Jon and who he was. Even though he passed away at such a young age it seems as though he has lived the life of a person who was 100 years old. I find it amazing to hear about how many lives Jon touched. People always told me that Jon didn’t need to know your name for him to have touched your heart. I never had the opportunity to meet Jon, but by being on this committee and talking to people that knew him I have probably been more inspired by Jon than anyone I have ever met. He taught me that to succeed in life, like Jon did, it is about ‘making a difference.’

The application process was very difficult. It is not easy to judge a person’s humanity. Even though we could not choose all the applicants I learned something special from each individual. People are amazing and I wish life was long enough so we could learn about every person that we meet.

I want to thank Jon’s family for the opportunity to learn about what an incredible person he was. Jon Cherney is and always will be an inspiration.”

*Michelle Halimi
2002 Award Committee Member*

“Never before have I had as great of an honor and privilege as being part of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee. Simply working with the Cherney Family and the other members was a great experience. The Cherneys are very remarkable people, and after meeting them, I was able to truly understand how Jon became the humanitarian that he was. Jon’s sense of humor and his simple brightness has been reflected in all of those who were close with him. For that reason, Jon’s spirit lives on in the hearts of his family, co-workers, students, and friends. All of the students who applied this year were great people, and they all affirmed in me a sense of optimism. This experience has been priceless, and I truly hope to be part of the committee next year.”

*Michael Lockman
2002 Award Committee Member*

Our 2001 Award Recipient

CHRISTINA WRIGHT

The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award recipient for this year is Christina Wright. She is truly a remarkable young woman. Christina has suffered the tragic loss of her immediate family. Yet in spite of her losses, she has managed to maintain a sense of optimism and a positive outlook on life. The Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee was inspired and deeply touched by Christina's spirit, enthusiasm, and her belief in the goodness of life. Christina is committed to helping others to cope with losses by sharing her own story. She is also committed to increasing AIDS awareness and to assisting others in dealing with personal misfortunes. As a tribute to her family and again to raise AIDS awareness, Christina determinedly spent eight months training for the recent 575 mile AIDS Ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. She was one of the youngest of the 3,000 participants in the ride and was selected to walk the riderless bike representing those who have died of AIDS across the finish line. At Beverly Hills High School, Christina has done well in her classes and has participated on the volleyball, soccer and cross-country teams. She most definitely plans on pursuing a career that involves helping others.

"Receiving the Jon Cherney Award has meant a lot to me. Besides easing the stress of financial worries, applying for the award gave me the chance to reflect on how I turned my life around. I took some very negative situations that occurred in my life and tried to make them positive. This award gave me even more incentive to share my story with others. I now plan to go out into our community and try to make a difference."



- Christina Wright

"Being on the Jon Cherney Award Committee was a truly moving experience. Although we never knew Jon Cherney, we do know that he was an extremely special person well-loved by all those who knew him. Jon Cherney was an amazing individual and it was touching to see that some of his most outstanding characteristics are still alive in Beverly students today. This experience gave us the opportunity to learn about the exceptional actions of the people around us. We were in awe of their humanitarian spirit. We were honored to join Jon Cherney's family in this process and we walk away inspired by our peers and their actions. Thank you for letting us share this experience."

Sari Eitches and Noga Firstenberg
2001 Award Committee Members

Our 2000 Award Recipients

ALEXANDRA SALOMAN

Alexandra is an outstanding achiever both academically and personally. She has taken a rigorous academic program with many honors and AP classes and has a 4.07 GPA. In the 10th grade, she was captain of the soccer team and in the 11th grade, captain of the track team. Outside of school, she volunteers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where she reads to terminally ill children. During the summer months, she is a counselor at Camp Harmony, a camp for children with disabilities.

Alexandra attended UC Berkeley.

"One of the most important quotes I have ever come across was by Margaret Mead. She said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." It has always been my inspiration when it seems as though nothing I do will ever make a real difference; after all, working hard to help others is often overlooked at all levels. But then again, sometimes we are acknowledged for the heart and the tears which we contribute to the lives of others, and our path is reaffirmed. That is what winning the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award has meant to me. If even just one person has looked upon what I have done and even more importantly, what I plan to do, and have felt that it is worthy of merit, then I know that the path I have selected for myself is the right one."

- Alexandra Salomon



ANNA ROMANSKAYA

"I cannot express in words how much the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award means to me. It represents all that is good and true in humanity. The bright statuette encourages me not to give up in my belief that there is good in every person if they are shown that they are not alone. Helping others and showing them that there are people who care is a satisfaction that no amount of money can ever give. It is a great honor to be recognized for what comes most natural and gives the greatest pleasure to me. The most important knowledge to a person is that they are not alone and I have made a promise to myself, and now to you as well, that I will always reach out to people and if not put a smile on their face, then to give them the freedom to express how they feel. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet you, and though your values will always remain in my heart, my only regret is that I did not have a chance to meet the amazing person known as Jon Cherney."

- Anna Romanskaya

Anna Romanskaya is a very strong and determined young woman. She has been an active participant in the Teen Line program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Anna has devoted her time and energy to becoming a highly skilled, empathetic and compassionate listener. She takes initiative and always has a positive attitude. Anna is polite and extremely professional. She plays an important role in the outreach program and she instructed 25 educators at a Planned Parenthood Workshop, giving the educators a teenager's perspective on various problems. Anna was selected to represent Teen Line at a Suicide Prevention Workshop and to do a voiceover spot for a public service announcement.

Anna attended UC Santa Barbara.

Our 1999 Award Recipients

ADAM LURIE

Adam is an excellent student who has earned a 4.21 GPA in a varied and challenging academic program. His interest is genuine, focused and mature. His willingness to undertake difficult challenges is outstanding. Adam has a superior approach to solving problems and obtains advice and counsel in a most positive manner. A fine athlete, also, Adam is a constant source of support, inspiration and leadership to his fellow students.

Adam attended Northwestern University.

"Winning the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award has set the bar so to speak. I was given the award based on my work with athletes studying for the SATs and for the creation of a web site that would provide a free SAT tutorial for underprivileged athletes. However, I feel although the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award highlighted my helping others, more importantly, it set a standard that I feel I have to live up to, if not surpass in the future. My mother once told me, 'Doing good things isn't like one big bang and you save the world; it's an accumulation of things, big and small, that you do for the sake of helping others.'"

- Adam Zvi Lurie



SIMON BABABEGY

"As I am starting to write this letter, I cannot thank you enough for allotting me the opportunity to receive the most prestigious award in Beverly Hills High School, the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award. I wish I would have known Jon, but I have read and saw clips of the hard work he put into whatever he touched. He brought happiness, hope and a closer meaning to the true meaning of life. I hope I have presented Jon's honor to its fullest to all I have touched. I will be attending UCLA in the fall and I promise to hold Jon's honor in whatever I do. I am glad to say that his dedication and humanitarian values are the pupils of my eyes which will guide the way I will walk and portray the values I hold toward others. I will leave you with a pondering note: 'To the world you may be just one person, but for one person, you may be the world.'"

- Simon Bababegy

Simon Bababegy is truly a young man with amazing energy. He has excelled in school taking the most rigorous course of study possible and held leadership roles in ASB and the Jewish Culture Club. He has gone to the CIF preliminaries in track and cross-country for three years. He has worked at various jobs and volunteered at UCLA and pet shelters, and numerous other voluntary agencies. What distinguishes him most however, is this young man came to the United States after experiencing the Gulf War and losing his best friend, and was resolved to dedicate his life to helping others in whatever way he could. He truly cares about his fellow human beings and will pursue a career in medicine. Because he inspires hope in others and generates compassion and caring, it is most appropriate that Simon Bababegy receive the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.

“Serving on the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee was an enlightening experience for me. It, in a way, restored my faith in humanity, as I was able to see first hand the genuineness and caring of some of the students from the high school. Reading and re-reading the essays, collages, and emotional accounts of my peers dealing with their community service and humanitarian endeavors was mind boggling. To learn about the actions and commitments of my fellow students made me feel warm inside as I knew that people like these actually existed in this world to better the lives of others for the good of humanity. Serving as a member of the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee was an experience I will not soon forget.”

*Erica Sorosky
2000 Award Committee Member*

“It was a pleasure serving on the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award Committee. Learning about other students’ humanitarian efforts and having the opportunity to hear of their goals has helped enrich my understanding of the world around me and strengthen my own desire to help others.”

*Maziar Yafeh
2000 Award Committee Member*

“The tears. The moment of truth. Nothing was left unrevealed. I had known most of the applicants for quite some time. Yet, I have come to ironic discovery that I really didn’t KNOW them. There is so much more to a person than that meets the eye. Human beings are so deep and distinguished. But, it isn’t until a person’s humanity is called into question in which this abyss of emotions is manifested. While sitting on the Cherney Committee was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, passing judgment on a person’s humanity was the hardest decision I ever had to make.”

*the thoughts of Jarod Krissman
1999 Award Committee Member*

“When I was asked to be on the Jon Cherney Committee, I had no idea as to what I would really be doing. Unfortunately, I didn’t get to meet Jon Cherney when he was with us, but I have heard and read about his love for people and what this great humanitarian has contributed to this school. I can honestly say that being on this committee was an amazing experience. After I had read all the papers sent in by the applicants, I had chosen a couple of people who really opened my eyes. However, I don’t think that you can really know a person, unless you talk with them face to face. I am really happy that I could be on this committee and how I was able to share this experience with the Cherneys. I think that we can learn a lot from Jon Cherney, a great humanitarian.”

*Tracy Taub
1999 Award Committee Member*

“Thank you for allowing us to participate on the Jon Cherney Committee. It was a real honor and learning experience for both of us. We want to express our appreciation for many things. We want to thank you for allowing us to partake in such an amazing and inspirational experience. It was definitely the highlight of our senior year. You taught us how important it is to be kind and humanitarian to other people. We will have the constant reminder of both Jon Cherney’s humanitarianism as well as the lessons we learned from sitting on the committee. Thank you all for everything.”

*Your friends,
Jarod Krissman and Tracy Taub*

Our 1998 Award Recipient

JESSICA SHPALL

Jessica Shpall is an outstanding academic student who is a valuable member of her school community. She is a “doer” and is one who cares and has concern for others. She is sensitive, full of energy and most enthusiastic. In the thoughts of one of her teachers, “the words fine character, humane, patient, understanding and compassionate all spring to mind immediately.” Jessica originated an idea to publish a Foreign Language Literary Magazine at Beverly Hills High School in which students could contribute selections written in their native language. This project gave a voice to many students who often receive little personal recognition. The literary magazine was a wonderful way to enhance the self-esteem of the students that contributed essays, stories and poems. The magazine gave students a sense of pride in their culture and language. Jessica would spend Sunday mornings preparing meals for delivery to people living with AIDS. She gave the physical nourishment, emotional support and made a difference in their lives.

“I would like to express my gratitude for your generous award in memory of Jon Cherney. Thank you for creating this award and taking the care to ensure that it is perpetuated by playing an active roll in choosing the recipient. I understand Jon was a very special person and I feel truly grateful to receive such a prestigious award in his honor.”



- Jessica Shpall

Our 1997 Award Recipient

CHIDIMMA OBIOHA

“In June of 1997, I, Chidimma Obioha, was honored to receive an award named in memory of the remarkable Jon Cherney praising my humanitarian achievements. I knew some of my other competitors who had applied and interviewed for the award and I knew we were all extremely qualified to win it. Because the Cherney Family kept who won a secret until Beverly Hills High School’s Senior Awards Night, I was totally surprised when Principal Ben Bushman announced that I won the award. I think all of my past and current (and future) experiences working to maintain the general well-being of those I come into contact with have allowed me to realize that I am a true humanitarian. Looking at the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award statuette every day serves as my motivation to continue doing what I love ... helping others.”



- Chidimma Obioha

Chidimma Obioha epitomizes Jon Cherney’s unique combination of academic achievement, creative talent and spirituality. Her dedication to helping others does not go unnoticed. She was rewarded with acceptance into the Macy Minorities in Medicine Program and recognized with a “Living Legend” Award for outstanding community service and exceptional academic achievement. Chidimma became a Teen Line listener at Cedars–Sinai Medical Center where she helped counsel teen callers on many important issues. She served as a writer, and then later as the editor of L.A. Youth, a countywide newspaper written by and about teens throughout the city of Los Angeles. As a peer educator, she informed others about the matters concerning today’s teenagers. Chidimma believes in the principles of caring, tolerance, unity and patience and has the ability to listen and effectively intervene in crisis situations which makes her an outstanding recipient for the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award.

Our 1996 Award Recipients

JENNIFER CHADORCHI

Jennifer Chadorchi graduated with more credits than any student in the senior class with a 4.0 GPA. She has been described as an original and one of the most enthusiastic students at Beverly Hills High School. She devoted many hours every week to the Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition. She handed out flyers and called restaurants asking for donations of clothing, toiletries and other necessities for the needy. She also organized a school drive motivating other students to become involved with the coalition. She is still involved with the Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition, which feeds two to three hundred hungry people daily. She took one step further by donating her \$1,000 scholarship award to the coalition to help feed the homeless.

Jennifer attended UCLA.

"If I could be a student in just one more of Jon's classes, I would let him know how much he taught me about life. Jon was no ordinary teacher. Instead, he was like a guidance counselor to us all. There are many people in the world who are doing their share in making the world a better place. Jon certainly did more than his share. I believe the Jon Cherney Humanitarian Award is serving many purposes. It is honoring Jon and awarding students who, like Jon, are devoting their precious time to others in need of help."



- Jennifer Chadorchi

VINKUL BALI

"When I look back at the past couple of years of my life, there is one person who undoubtedly stands out. He was not a part of my family, yet seemed so special. He was not a childhood friend, yet I felt like I had known him all my life. That person was no other than Jon Cherney and he will always remain a part of me. He was one of a kind who



touched many people's lives. Not only was he a great teacher; but also a special friend to many. It was perhaps Jon's heart that made him so special. I still cannot believe that Jon has moved on and will never come back. I know that Jon left me with the power to go for what I want and believe in myself. I have many dreams for the future, many goals and aspirations. Sometimes I wonder if they are even realistic. But then I think about the things Jon said to me, about believing in myself and not letting fear of failure stop my actions, and I get the assurance I need. And I know that for as long as I live, I will try to serve my life for the betterment of humanity.

Thank you Jon for giving me all you gave."

- Vinkul Bali

Vinkul Bali, an outstanding student who is highly regarded by her peers and the faculty at Beverly, was born and raised in India. She quotes, "a country that might be poor in terms of materialistic things, but is abundant with love in people's hearts." Vinkul made a successful transition from her native land of India to the equally complex land of Beverly Hills. She was a founding member of the W.I.S.H. project (A World In Search Of Harmony), a multicultural education program. She often gave speeches to her peers, younger students and senior adults on behalf of tolerance and acceptance of others (this from a shy girl with a soft voice who knew only ridicule and teasing when she first arrived in America). Vinkul devotes many hours to the Indian community assisting the elderly citizens wherever help is needed. She also writes for a local Indian paper about humanistic issues. She hopes to fulfill her dreams of becoming a doctor. Her long term goal is to establish a hospital in a less fortunate country where the needy and poor can obtain medical assistance.

Vinkul attended USC.