

2023



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL

YOUNG WOMEN IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AWARDEES

Recognizing young women for their commitment to volunteerism, volunteer leadership achievements and dedication to empowering women worldwide



Because Zonta International believes that young women are the key to women's advancement in the field of public service, it offers the Young Women in Public Affairs (YWPA) Award to young women, ages 16-19.

Established in 1990 by Past International President Leneen Forde, Zonta has given 1,054 awards, totaling US\$1,303,750, to 882 young women from 60 countries.

Read on to learn about Zonta International's 2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardees.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Morgan Casey



District 1

Citizenship: United States

Morgan Casey has been elected class president by her peers for four years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she organized numerous fundraising events, generating more than US\$14,000. Additionally, Morgan acted as a liaison between students and the school administration and served as class representative for the student leadership team.

Beyond her academics, Morgan has collaborated with the Sycamore Garden Club to cultivate more than 1,000 plants. This initiative aimed to provide affordable organic produce to low-income individuals and refugees in the greater Concord area. Furthermore, she volunteered more than 150 hours at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, engaging with school groups, directing planetarium shows and highlighting exhibits to foster a passion for science and math among young aspiring scientists.

Morgan served as the sole student representative on the New Hampshire Department of Education's 2023 Teacher of the Year Selection Committee, where she provided the board with a young perspective on behalf of approximately 160,000 New Hampshire students. Additionally, Morgan represented New Hampshire as one of two delegates at the United States Senate Youth Program and competed as one of the top 10 finalists nationally in the Coolidge Cup Speech competition. Through her public speaking, Morgan aims to empower young women and effect positive change. When she was nominated as Governor of the Day, she submitted a legislation proposal to alleviate student loan debt and attended the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Program.

Looking ahead, Morgan plans to apply to college, majoring in a STEM field and public policy studies. She envisions a future centered around continued volunteerism and involvement in the legislative process. Morgan hopes to build her own company, ultimately aspiring to become a U.S. senator.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Allison Davis



District 2

Citizenship: United States

Allison Davis is a Westmoreland Central High School graduate who was highly involved with drama club. She performed in more than 20 stage productions, including her most recent role as Christine Daae in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* at the Stanley Theater. Other roles include Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz*, The Wardrobe in *Beauty and the Beast*, Hannah in *Newsies*, and Prentiss in *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

On numerous occasions, Allison has participated in the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Solo Festival. She was honored to represent her school as a Soprano 1 in the 2022 NYSSMA All-State Mixed Chorus. She has also performed in various roles for the Mohawk Valley Performing Arts' productions of *The Nutcracker* and *Cinderella*. Along with performing on stage, Allison was the assistant director for *Honk! Jr.* and stage manager for *High School Musical Jr.*

Allison is a member of Tri-M Music Honor Society and performs in numerous vocal and instrumental ensembles at her high school. Later this year, she will attend Liberty University in Lynchburg, majoring in music education with a minor in theater arts.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Aparna Parthasarathy



District 3

Citizenship: United States

Aparna Parthasarathy is a high school senior passionate about remedying structural inequalities, closing educational gaps and representing Generation Z's values to shape legislation with elected officials. Aparna is a literary advocate and author of *Tales of the Invisible*, a book that addresses the intersectionality of feminism and the importance of representation. These stories were inspired through experiences at Warmipura, an organization dedicated to advancing the economic position of female weavers in Peru.

A highly involved individual, Aparna served as a board member of She's the First and was nominated as a liaison to the local women's commission. She is a youth advisor for the town's center for domestic violence and educates peers on dating violence and women's empowerment. She has been invited to be a youth speaker at conferences, an invited author at the Write Women Book Fest, and a guest on podcasts to highlight gender-based oppression and Gen Z's opportunities to address them.

Aparna is on the executive board of Model UN, educating younger students on foreign affairs and international relations. She is a state advocacy lead for Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND) and contributes to increasing awareness on human rights crises and ending genocide. She is the founder of PoliText, an organization that focuses on civil education among young adults and the importance of political knowledge. She has been awarded the Presidential Volunteer Service Gold Award.

Looking to the future, Aparna is interested in pursuing a career in law, political science and public service to continue advocacy efforts, seeking justice and representation.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Trisha Kotakonda



District 4

Citizenship: United States

For two consecutive years, Trisha Kotakonda was elected as an executive member on her high school's student government, where she handled administrative responsibilities, council correspondence, and outreach. Through this role, she advocated for social equity and ensured that their administration met students' needs. Using her platform to build school spirit, student engagement and community bonds has been one of her most rewarding experiences.

Trisha strives to promote diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in her community. By founding and leading her school's UNICEF chapter, she worked to bring diverse individuals together to address humanitarian issues and build a shared connection to their community. Her chapter has hosted numerous successful food and toy drives, bake sales and awareness campaigns. By spearheading this initiative, she built a strong foundation for students to work towards bringing positive change to the lives of others.

As a volunteer at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, Trisha helps organize events, potlucks and get-togethers for members of her community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she collaborated with other youth to create care packages containing hygiene products and PPE for senior members in her neighborhood.

Trisha is entering her first year in the health sciences honor bachelor program at Queens University. Fostering a passion for medicine and a desire to make a meaningful impact on patients' lives, she aims to pursue a medical degree. She is eager to embrace the challenges that lie ahead and contribute to advancing the field of healthcare.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Emi Kawamura



District 5

Citizenship: United States

As one of the four students selected nationwide to act as a “youth ambassador” for the United States in Bulgaria, Emi Kawamura was chosen for a full government scholarship from the U.S. State Department through the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange Program. Working to establish lasting relationships, redefine stereotypes and act as a citizen diplomat, Emi lived in Sofia, Bulgaria, for the past 10 months on a study abroad gap year.

Based on her struggles with identity growing up as a Japanese American, Emi founded the Borderless Relations Committee (BRC) in 2020 with two of her peers. Working to increase dialogue and representation of diversity in local elementary schools, they received two community youth engagement grants from On Earth Peace, an organization based upon Kingian nonviolence. Emi and her team were guests on local and international podcasts and led an international On Earth Peace seminar on diversity education. Working with Findlay City Schools, the BRC taught students in third to fifth grade about acknowledging and celebrating differences. Along with in-school activities, they organized and instructed a monthly program with activities, discussions, and read-alouds on cultural awareness and belonging at the Findlay-Hancock County Public Library. Emi was selected by Findlay’s mayor to become a city committee member to contribute ideas and work with other community members to better the city.

As an incoming freshman at Oberlin College and Conservatory, Emi will pursue psychology with an interest in cross-cultural mental health. She plans to work as a youth psychologist while organizing economically accessible avenues of mental health for teenagers and destigmatizing mental health abroad.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Catherine Tang



District 6

Citizenship: United States

Catherine Tang is the co-founder and head of communications and outreach of The Sex Ed Initiative (SEI), a youth-led not-for-profit advocating for more comprehensive and inclusive sex ed curriculums. SEI authored and published *Shattering the Taboo*, an 80-page handbook fact-checked by college professors and public health professionals that is used in more than 10 health curriculums across the U.S. and Korea.

Catherine also represents more than 2,000 students as the student representative of her school's safety committee, where she pushed for an official mental health first aid program that trained more than 1,500 students and staff in responding to mental health crises. She also founded her school's law club and serves as the executive board president of the World Languages Honor Society, where, after serving as a youth ambassador to Argentina and Chile through the U.S. State Department Youth Ambassadors Program, she implemented a pen pal program connecting her high school and a binational center in Argentina.

In her community, Catherine works as a policy assistant for her state representative, where she interviewed more than 30 advocacy groups to propose and draft bill ideas supporting victims of sexual assault that will be introduced at the next Illinois General Assembly.

Next fall, Catherine plans to pursue a major in health and societies and minors in French and Spanish at the University of Pennsylvania, where she hopes to examine the intersection of sociology, history and public policy in the healthcare field. Then, she hopes to earn a dual Juris Doctorate and medical degree and become a medical malpractice lawyer, representing underserved communities.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Wendo Kimori



District 7

Citizenship: United States

Wendo Kimori was very involved in her high school, serving as a student board member for her district's board of education and working as one of two students on her district's equity advisory council, where she helped identify and correct district and school policies, procedures and practices that perpetuated racial achievement disparities.

Upon entering her senior year, Wendo realized that many students felt disempowered to act upon their ideas to promote racial equity and did not know where to start. In order to address this, Wendo spearheaded the formation of Lawrence's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council, where she is the founder and president. The council serves as "ground zero" for Lawrence youth to act on their ideas to advance race relations and promote racial equity in schools and throughout the community. Wendo was recognized for this work recently as she won the 2023 Princeton Prize in Race Relations for her region.

Wendo has also volunteered globally, working for Streams of Hope International Missions and participating in setting up medical camps where healthcare would otherwise be a distant luxury most could not afford. This experience helped her gain a worldview and better understanding of people's reality of life in places outside of the United States.

An incoming freshman in college, Wendo is majoring in communication studies with a concentration in public relations on a pre-law track. She hopes to become a lawyer after completing her undergraduate degree and in her work wants to level the legal playing field by serving underprivileged communities.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Pauline Ngigi



District 8

Citizenship: United States

Pauline Ngigi is a leader in community outreach, extracurriculars and academics. She is the co-founder and co-chairwoman of her school's Diverse Leadership Committee (DLC), a student-run organization focused on promoting inclusion and diversity as well as making community connections and highlighting student voices. She also served as the president of her school's chapter of the National Honor Society and helped organize blood drives and community meals. She has demonstrated leadership skills as a camp counselor for children with developmental disabilities and at Oregon Summer Star for military youth.

Pauline demonstrated her commitment and passion through extracurriculars and varsity sports. She was an Oregon Ambassador of Music and toured in Europe as a vocalist and a representative of her state and her community. As an alumna of Inspiring Girls Expeditions, she inspired women in STEAM. She competed in state championships for both cross country and track and was the captain of her varsity soccer team. She also competed in state solo ensemble championships as a solo soprano vocalist. Pauline simultaneously graduated as valedictorian from Glide High School and with highest honors with her associate degree from Umpqua Community College.

Pauline will attend Johns Hopkins University where she plans to study microbiology and work in medical research and policy. As a woman of color, Pauline wants to work to make medicine more accessible and equitable for rural communities.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Jolina Le



District 9

Citizenship: United States

Jolina Le is the 2023 California's Central Coast Girl Scout of the Year. She voted on nationwide scouting policies as a Girl Scout National Delegate and Girl Advisory Board member. She co-chaired the Palm Oil Project, educating girls on environmental activism and successfully negotiating to improve palm oil sustainability in Girl Scout cookies.

Passionate about educational equity, Jolina is a Justice in the Classroom member and organized the first-ever student panel at the Ventura County Office of Education's Equity Conference. She co-authored a College & Career Pathway Handbook to improve accessibility to local opportunities and is currently developing summer workshops on diversity, equity and inclusion in classrooms.

As part of the Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSA) Network's California Youth Advocacy Council, Jolina raised awareness of LGBTQ+ student rights through statewide presentations. She sat on the Oxnard Union High School District's Inclusivity Task Force, improving institutional support for LGBTQ+ students. As president of her school's GSA, Jolina organized student input groups, hosted annual Pride celebrations and coordinated a Pride Prom across local schools.

Jolina notably founded her school's Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Student Association. She spearheaded the first-annual Lunar New Year festival on campus and collaborated with social studies teachers to develop a History in the Halls campaign, which educated students about significant figures during AAPI Heritage Month.

Dedicated to a life of public service, Jolina will be studying politics and public policy analysis as an incoming freshman at Pomona College. She plans to pursue a career in social policy and governance, implementing social justice through legislation.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Araceli Coker



District 10

Citizenship: United States

Since joining the Junior Reserve Officer's Training program at the start of high school, Araceli Coker has fostered a love for anything that mentions flight. While she has many goals she wants to accomplish in her career and future, in the end, they all involve the same thing: aviation.

Araceli wants to attend an aeronautical university and become a private pilot, a monumental goal that requires challenging work and effort. After she acquires her private pilot's license, she will be able to advance to the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Another goal Araceli has is to join the Air Force Reserve Officer's Training Corps in college. Upon graduating, she can be commissioned as a U.S. Air Force officer, allowing her to contribute to her community, society and country.

Araceli believes her great passion for a career in aerospace will be able to help support the U.S. Air Force as they are in dire need of pilots. To her, being in the military is a massive way that can benefit society and is proof of a selfless act.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Ella Paligo



District 10

Citizenship: United States

Ella Paligo's passion for breaking barriers and advancing public health has led her to execute two initiatives in high school: Operation Second Chance and Be A Hero, Drop Vaping To Zero.

With Operation Second Chance, Ella created a three-week career development curriculum for incarcerated individuals at Sumner County Jail, consisting of resume building, mock interviews and accessing various resources. The course resulted in 70 men and women being connected with second-chance employers upon their release. The Be A Hero, Drop Vaping To Zero initiative sought to combat the youth vaping epidemic through education and legislative action. This initiative led Ella to work with more than 700 individuals across Tennessee to establish a universal vaping prevention policy in Sumner County, declaring April as the state's Anti-Vaping Month. The initiative also created a statewide video with support from elected officials such as U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn. She has also testified for the Food and Drug Administration in her role as a Tennessee Department of Health Ambassador and Tobacco Free Kids National Ambassador.

Ella has served in several leadership roles, including president of Beta, an organization for 4th through 12th grade students in the U.S., DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) and Key Club; mental health chair of STARS and vice chair of the Tennessee Department of Education Student Engagement Subcommittee. She is also the regional president of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and serves as vice president of student government and HOSA, a future health professionals organization. She has interned with the American Civil Liberties Union and the district attorney's office.

With more than 400 service hours, Ella was honored with the HOSA Barbara James Service Award. Ella's civic engagement includes being appointed as Model UN general assembly president and elected as floor leader at Youth in Government. Ella is active in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where she served as a youth group class president and graduated from the seminary program. She has participated in Leadership Sumner Youth and American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer Girls State, earning a nomination for Girls Nation and acceptance into Tennessee Governor's School.

Ella has received notable honors, including 2022 Youth Advocate of the Year, Distinguished Young Women of Music City, Coca-Cola Scholar, Princeton Prize in Race Relations Certificate Winner and United States Senate Youth Program Delegate.

An incoming freshman at Brigham Young University, Ella is studying political science with emphasis on legal studies and global women's studies in the honors program. She plans to earn her Juris Doctorate and master's in public health degrees and pursue a career as a nonprofit attorney and public servant.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Sophia Gomelsky



District 12

Citizenship: United States

Sophia Gomelsky was her state's DECA president and served on DECA's National President's Council, overseeing 225,000 members of the career and technical student organization nationwide. She managed multiple conferences, executed training and facilitated career and technical education across Wyoming. She also served as her school's speech and debate team captain and mock trial co-captain. She has held leadership positions in theatre, such as student director, assistant choreographer and acted in several lead roles.

Passionate about youth empowerment, Sophia has represented her student body through the Laramie Youth Council to the city council and Youth Advocacy Board to her school board. She was also elected Wyoming Girls State Governor. As a state director for March For Our Lives, Sophia led grassroots action and activism toward violence prevention. In this position, she received grant funding for mutual aid efforts, including a food drive, rent relief and mural painting project.

Sophia has spearheaded various initiatives promoting civic engagement, such as co-founding a non-partisan youth voter guide to provide accessible election information for young voters. To do this, she contacted politicians campaigning in her district, published their platforms in a digestible way, and endorsed candidates that best advocated for issues facing her generation. She also participated in the campaigns of candidates for local and statewide offices, establishing a social media presence, contacting voters directly, assisting with voter registration and phone banking. During elections, Sophia volunteers as a poll worker. Her involvement at the state legislature includes working as a page, lobbying, and proposing legislation for issues such as LGBTQIA+ rights, access to reproductive care, anti-hazing, cryptocurrency and more. Currently, Sophia works as a legislative aide for her state's senate minority leader. She was recognized as one of 104 students across the country for her outstanding public service by the U.S. Senate Youth Program.

Sophia will attend the University of Wyoming and enter with a junior class standing. She is pre-law, majoring in political science and international studies with minors in honors, Spanish and Arabic. Her studies will focus on governance, conflict resolution, peacebuilding dynamics and strategies for bridging polarization. Sophia was also recently elected as the university's youngest-ever student senate member. Persisting in her advocacy for social justice, Sophia will continue developing legislation and organizing within her community. She is also looking forward to furthering her competitive debate career and working on expanding public speaking programs throughout Wyoming.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Emilie Schmidt-Lund



District 13

Citizenship: Denmark

Emilie Schimdt-Lund's high school journey was marked by her involvement in various school and community initiatives. As an active member of the student council working closely with the school's administration, Emilie played a pivotal role in enhancing the school's environmental impact. Her efforts resulted in the successful implementation of initiatives promoting solar energy, a recycling program, and her own initiative to recycle bottles and cans, with the generated revenue donated to support local homeless individuals. By combining social and environmental responsibilities, Emilie showcased her commitment to making a tangible difference in her community.

Recognizing the importance of fostering a strong sense of community, Emilie co-founded a social tutoring group at her school. Beyond academic support, the group aimed to strengthen social connections among students, particularly in the wake of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to her school engagement, Emilie actively contributes to her community by teaching children Olympic weightlifting.

Emilie's passion for STEM subjects led her to participate in various talent programs at her school. She has engaged in national competitions and had the opportunity to attend the Science Talent Physics organized by Astra, further deepening her knowledge and skills in these fields. Emilie's academic pursuits will continue as she enters the University of Copenhagen, where she plans to pursue a dual degree in math and economics. Driven by a profound sense of social responsibility, she aims to leverage her skills to shape a better future. Emilie envisions a career where she can harness the power of finance as a catalyst for positive change, working toward innovative solutions to address global challenges.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Selin Tegethoff



District 14

Citizenship: Germany

Selin Tegethoff was highly active as a student representative and project initiator. In monthly school board meetings, she represented the interests of approximately 1,100 students. In 2021-2022, she helped organize a successful donation-in-kind campaign and a fundraising run that resulted in a donation of more than 16,000 euros, which was used to provide medical support to the Ukrainian population in war zones. Preparing political discourses concerning issues like gender-appropriate language in schools led to her team being awarded the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs' prize: Disenchantment with politics - no thanks!

When students were challenged with homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, Selin founded the Students Helping Students project, which provided a safe space for low-performing students to contact student experts to seek help in different subjects. This program was subsequently honored by her school district's reward program and selected as a good practice highlight by the *#wirfürschule* (*#weforschool*) panel. After attending computer science lectures at the Technical University Munich as part of an early study program, Selin became aware of the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. As a member of the CyberMentor community and while at various gatherings, she has participated in brainstorming sessions on how to make STEM professions more attractive for women and how to eliminate associated stereotypes.

Now that Selin has passed her A-levels, she plans to develop an app that encourages young women, including those from non-academic backgrounds, to pursue STEM studies from an early age.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Samantha Karoub



District 15

Citizenship: United States

Samantha Karoub is an active member of her small hometown in rural Michigan. As a leader in her community, she developed and chartered the Roscommon County 4-H Council, recruiting and building a board of young volunteers to lead the charge in creating 4-H programming and outreach for the area youth. In addition to her leadership experience in 4-H, Samantha served as her student body president in 2022 and 2023.

Samantha is also an accomplished musician both vocally and instrumentally, playing seven different instruments. She also held many leading roles in her annual fall musicals. Outside of school, Samantha is passionate about playing an active role in the fight against cancer. She has been involved in the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life for many years. As a teen, she held positions within leadership committees, and advocates and presents at the state level with the Cancer Action Network, influencing legislation and legislators to keep cancer a top priority.

Samantha is an incoming freshman at Saginaw Valley State University and plans to study pre-veterinary medicine. She would like to work specifically with large animals, as she grew up on a hobby farm surrounded by many animals. While attending college, Samantha will continue working with Relay For Life to grow the collegiate program at her university, recruiting new volunteers in the fight against cancer. In the future she intends to continue to give back to her community and inspire others to give.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Wei Tian Teo



District 16

Citizenship: New Zealand

Wei Tian Tao has worked closely with national and international charity organizations as the president of her school's UNICEF and Interact clubs, leading more than 600 students each year in numerous service projects and raising approximately NZ\$30,000. As head girl, elected Board of Trustees student representative and student council president, she has spearheaded the modernizing of school operations for intersectional inclusivity. Wei Tian has also demonstrated poignant international awareness as vice-president of the Intercultural Committee, raising both cultural awareness and money toward helping migrants and refugees assimilate in New Zealand.

Outside of school, Wei Tian advocated for a NZ\$1.045 billion city council budget toward reducing emissions and campaigned for increased youth involvement in civic affairs as a UN youth ambassador. Furthermore, she founded her school's UN chapter to enhance civics education, engagement in local politics and created spaces for students to develop debating, diplomacy and public-speaking skills. She has also led the coordination of the UNICEF Ball Committee, a national student-led initiative that raises money toward aid for Yemeni children.

Wei Tian co-founded and directed The Girl Empowerment Conference, an island-wide social case competition, aimed at empowering female students through critical-thinking, engaging influential speakers and mentoring. For her advocacy and initiative, she was named an international finalist in the Youth-To-The-Front-Fund and received several national accolades.

Wei Tian intends to pursue a career in medicine as a physician in memory of her aunt and plans to use her love for learning and charity to serve others who are like her aunt in the future. She hopes to continue her advocacy for the vulnerable through commandeering service initiatives, engaging in volunteerism or supporting patients through clinical practice. She aspires to be involved in healthcare legislation in later years.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee



Rysa Antonette Ang

District 17

Citizenship: Philippines

Rysa Antonette first fell in love with science when she was only six years old. All it took was seeing a red panda in real life for the first time. Since then, she began dedicating herself to not only exploring science but also empowering the youth so that they could fall in love like her.

For the past three years, Rysa has been a leader at Mitsa Tutoring, a youth-led organization that promotes STEM-based education in the Philippines. She began as the organization's founding curriculum development co-head, creating more than 100 open-access educational materials to assist elementary students in STEM. She has also become both a mentor and tutor, allowing students to learn more about science high schools and how to obtain full scholarships for these schools. Currently, Rysa leads Mitsa as one of its executive co-heads as it transitions to more face-to-face projects while partnering with local schools and organizations.

In school, Rysa has been active by fundraising as the head of her school fair, serving as council secretary and leading the preparations for the graduation ball. Rysa was able to bring out the best in her fellow students, especially during hard times. Moving forward, Rysa aspires to become a pediatrician and researcher for her country. In doing so, she hopes to continue exploring her love of science while still serving the youth for years to come.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Chinnicha Boonyoo



District 17

Citizenship: Thailand

At the age of 13, Chinnicha Boonyoo represented Thailand in a cultural exchange program in Hungary with other representatives from 10 countries. It was a remarkable experience where she had the chance to perform with a pong lang, a traditional Thai musical instrument and represent her country while learning about different cultures firsthand.

Chinnicha was a leading volunteer, and a captain of the Friend Teaches Friends Organization (FTFO) in the English study area while she was in grade 11. As the classes were held online, more than 600 students in the school could have access to participate. Students supported each other to overcome the difficulties. She was proud to start and be a part of such a movement with her friends.

Chinnicha founded Pathway Speech Contest, an online speech contest that aims to improve youth speaking skills and raise funds to donate to the Duang Prateep Foundation. Her starting point was to equalize youth opportunities by inviting youth throughout all of Thailand participated in this contest. Since the first contest in 2020, the number of applicants has increased from 100 to 502. Chinnicha brought 15 student representatives from six high schools in Bangkok together, and since 2020, they organized three contests in three categories.

Chinnicha plans to apply to the faculty of dentistry as she enjoys precise work that combines science with art. In Thailand, not all kids or adults can access dental care, so she wants to be a part of the solution and enhance the dental care system.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Tia Bhatia



District 18

Citizenship: Ghana

Tia Bhatia is a year 12 student at the Roman Ridge School who serves as the middle school prefect for the 2023 academic year. She works closely with the sectional head to address the student-related challenges. Although her future career plans are an ongoing conversation, she has always wanted to pursue architecture. Having had an interest in STEM, Tia did not want to restrict herself to the usual picks of engineering or computer science but instead wants to combine her natural artistic inclination with her interest in math and physics.

With a passion for art, Tia auctioned five paintings at the 2022 annual DDG Diwali Ball fundraiser event, receiving a total bidding amount of 60,000 Ghana Cedis, approximately US\$5,360, that funded a heart surgery for a child. To further express her passion for art, she painted a mural in a crèche classroom at Delhi Public School International (DPSI) in Ghana in August 2021. Since 2013, Tia has volunteered with the Indian Women's Association in Ghana to support their annual fundraiser for needy children.

Aside from her academic portfolio, Tia actively participates in extracurricular activities. In 2022, she interviewed a lawyer for a life lessons event in school, where she learned about the struggles of working as a woman in a male-dominated field and how to make your name in your chosen career. She also participated in a two-week community service program in school, where she interacted with students engaging in arts and crafts, reading and drawing sessions.

As an Indian girl born and raised in Ghana and studying in an international British school, Tia has learned to accommodate and appreciate diverse cultures. She gradually learned her national language, Hindi, by listening to her parents speak and picked up a few sentences of a local language from friends at school.

Tia is excited about the next phase of her life after high school as she looks forward to making significant impacts in architecture and her community.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Sofia Baquet



District 19

Citizenship: Uruguay

Throughout her secondary education, Sofia Baquet was the class president, overseeing the relations between students and authorities. She volunteers in distributing Christmas baskets to families in need. Sophia had the honor of being recognized by her peers and school authorities for her leadership, commitment and efforts during her academic studies. Despite having dyslexia and attention deficit, she was chosen for the honor roll. She served as president and secretary of the Interact Rotary Club where she engaged in volunteer work including providing companionship to the elderly. Furthermore, her commitment to the environment led her to participate in beach clean-ups and the care of rescued animals. She also organized visits with treats and entertainment for Children's Day at disadvantaged kindergartens.

Currently, Sofia is studying psychology, with the goal of becoming a dedicated psychologist focused on the emotional well-being of her patients. She wishes to utilize her personal experiences to connect with them on a deeper level and provide the necessary support to overcome their challenges. Despite facing obstacles along her journey, Sofia remains steadfast in her determination to achieve her dreams. Her experiences have taught her the importance of perseverance and self-discipline. She is determined to transform her challenges into opportunities for personal growth and to help others.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Iris Ots



District 20

Citizenship: Finland

Iris Ots co-founded a micro:bit coding club that aims to teach basic coding skills to younger students that she helped lead for half a semester. Among other peer tutor work, she has been a part of the student council for several years, through which she has organized university visits for her fellow students and been a mediator for several schools in her city and the city's youth council. In high school, Iris enrolled in a class specialized in mathematics and natural sciences because of her enthusiasm in biology and physics. Fascinated to learn about different cultures, Iris was chosen to participate in a Shapes of Water program to study biodiversity in the Czech Republic for a week.

An active youth council member, Iris is currently the chair of the mental health and equality group. She has led the planning of presentations for teacher conferences, in which the group has brought forward issues in the education system concerning mental health in front of hundreds of teachers. She is a dedicated advocate for bettering the access to mental health services for adolescents. Iris has spoken about discrimination and the rights of LGBTQ+ youth on a news report by *Yleisradio Oy* (YLE). She had a leading role in organizing a Pride event for youth in her city that almost 100 people attended. Being the alternate member of her city's Involvement and Attraction board is also one of her responsibilities.

Iris will apply for university next year and hopes to start studying biomedicine or biomedical engineering. She aspires to become a research scientist and help educate people on the importance of taking care of our planet.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Kristina Jamil



District 21

Citizenship: Sweden

During Kristina Jamil's first year of upper secondary school, she joined the impact committee to contribute diverse perspectives and enhance her leadership skills. This experience eventually led to her election as class council president. In this role, she bridged communication between her class and the school council and discussed viable solutions that sharpened her problem-solving skills.

Volunteering with Kvinna Till Kvinna, Kristina was appointed as their sole representative for a seminar co-organized with Amnesty International that attracted prominent politicians and led to discussions on improving post-rape care. Apart from volunteering, she has delivered speeches and secured a job at Länstidningen Södertälje as a columnist after an internship.

Kristina exercises student democracy by serving as a board member for Sweden's student council where she was elected as board secretary within a month. As a study-visit coordinator for FUF-Stockholm Södra, she collaborated with various organizations, authorities and embassies to improve women's conditions globally. Notably, she engaged with the Swedish Afghanistan Committee and the Bangladesh embassy to discuss women's welfare in their respective countries. Kristina's determination to empower women in different parts of the world led her to establish an association to connect with girls in Iraq, offering education and providing opportunities to establish their own businesses.

After the summer, Kristina will start 11th grade and continue her social behavior line of study. At the same time, she is going to evolve her association, continue her volunteering and develop her journalism career.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Thea Staxhammar



District 21

Citizenship: Sweden

Thea Staxhammar is engaged in Plan International Sweden, a global child rights organization with a particular focus on girls. She is a member of the youth advisory panel, consisting of a group of young people from all over Sweden. As the national spokesperson she represents the organization in national media such as “Nyhetsmorgon,” Sweden’s national morning news program. At Plan International’s award ceremony, Thea served as a host, where prominent politicians, activists and journalists were invited, allowing her the opportunity to make valuable connections with the organizations such as UN Women.

The latest campaign Thea arranged and participated in, Bloody Serious, highlighted the stigmatization of menstruation as a global issue, which received broad coverage in the media. Additionally, she writes debate articles for the local newspaper that mention similar topics.

Currently, Thea participates in an upcoming project called #StopYouthWashing. Together with 15 other youth organizations, she will work to encourage meaningful, societal participation among youth. She will take part in the Almedals Week, Sweden’s biggest political festival, sharing her expertise through the Book a Young Expert initiative and arrange interactive events on the topic.

Thea’s future vision is to study political science and development studies at university so that she can work with foreign-aid-related questions, for instance at the UN, and apply her interest in global social change.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Charlotte Gillies



District 22

Citizenship: Australia

In 2019, to support the Relay for Life Cancer council initiative, Charlotte Gillies organized a free dress and bake sale event at her school, raising AU\$1,050 for cancer research. Additionally, she volunteered at the Ithaca Creek State School after school care for two years, preparing meals and supervising kids. She volunteers as a Smith Family Student-2-Student reader, providing necessary literary lessons to disadvantaged students. She contributed to the Containers for Change initiative, and led the development and maintenance of a school-wide worm farm program, encompassing food waste into the circular economy. Charlotte's involvement in these activities and committees contributed to her school being voted the most environmentally friendly school in Queensland.

As a member of her school's Zonta committee, Charlotte addressed the declining levels of STEM participation in female students and issues regarding accessibility to sanitary products. She also raised awareness for female domestic violence victims and hosted discussions aimed at improving the reporting system. After listening to concerns raised by friends and family, she formed and led a committee of the principal, deputies and student support staff to discuss and alter the treatment of neurodiverse students in the school.

In year 12, Charlotte wrote an article contrasting women's employment 100 years ago to now. The article was accepted and published by the Association of Women Educators in their Redress Journal, which focuses on women's economic security and political issues. Outside of school, she spent two years as a Navy cadet and was awarded the commanding officer's commendation, as well as the executive officer's commendation.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Phoebe Bourke



District 23

Citizenship: Australia

Throughout Phoebe Bourke's scholastic journey, she has sought opportunities for social justice endeavors and ways to further community outreach. For six years, Phoebe has been an ambassador for OneGirl, a charity organization that aims to increase the education of women and girls in Uganda and Sierra Leone. In 2017, she became the youngest ambassador at 12 years old and raised AU\$3,700, enough to educate 12 girls for a year. This effort later saw her skiing in a school dress as a part of the fundraising initiative, Do it in a Dress, as well as increasing awareness by speaking at surrounding schools about women's barriers to education beyond borders.

Phoebe established her call to justice in middle school at Sacred Heart Girls' College where she was elected as St. Vincent de Paul captain in seventh to ninth grade and was a social justice student representative. During that time, she raised funds for Project Compassion, coordinating the gathering of mass donations of food, presents and clothing for the winter and Christmas appeal every year. She also founded the first Vinnies Conference at her new school, Sacré Coeur, where she was eager to share her passion for justice with young women everywhere.

As a founding member of the Open Hearts student voice club, Phoebe increased inclusion and acceptance of diversity be it socio-economic, color, gender identity or orientation. In her second year, she represented the school at the Sacred Heart AUSNET Conference in 2022, where she gave the opening address and spoke about the importance of understanding the mission for instilling the importance of service to humankind to girls and young people everywhere. On a grassroots level, Phoebe tutors disadvantaged and non-English speaking children around inner and outer Melbourne. She frequently says it is the best part of her week because she is able to provide a moment of peace in a safe place for little ones, or a listening ear and help for older students.

Phoebe was fortunate enough to be asked to speak at the Higgin's Voice to Parliament Forum 2023 among Indigenous panelists and constitutional specialists, regarding a referendum being posed. She spoke about the education needed in regional and rural areas, surrounding referendums and the parliamentary system, to have this passed.

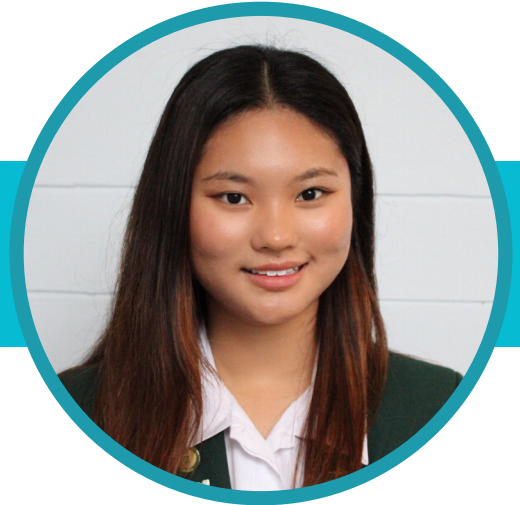
Phoebe is planning for the inclusion of an Indigenous scholarship for each year level at her school through a possible collaboration with Melbourne Indigenous Transition School (MITS). This way, not only will Indigenous girls be able to have the opportunity that she's had in her education and co-curricular opportunities, but so too will the wider community be uplifted through the facilitation of greater relations.

In the future, Phoebe plans to study arts and major in global politics or follow her other passion for music. Her ultimate goal is to find a career that betters Australians and the global community.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Emily An



District 24

Citizenship: Australia

Emily An was the 2022 Lion's Youth of the Year state winner and represented New South Wales (NSW) in the Australian National Final. Through this position and as the elected school captain, she founded and was elected the co-President for the James Ruse Leo's Club. By forging a partnership between her school and Lions, Emily greatly increased the community outreach of her school fundraising events. Through these roles, she has overseen numerous community and school fundraisers such as Christmas and Halloween events, leading to more than AU\$10,000 donated to Beyond Blue, Giant Steps and World's Greatest Shave organizations.

As a national finalist, Emily was privileged enough for Lions to sponsor a community project of her choice. As a two-time state public speaker and international debater, she launched a hybrid public speaking workshop and competition in partnership with the New South Wales Arts Department to provide more opportunities in public speaking for public school students.

As the James Ruse Model UN club president, Emily organized a Father's Day initiative with Southern Cross Care, Australia's leading aged care organization where students connected with residents through writing letters. She also organized a donation drive for Jesuit Refugee Services to aid refugee families settle into Australia.

Emily has been a volunteer in the aged care sector for the past six years, helping lifestyle teams support the wellbeing of residents. She also volunteers as a judge for the Lion's Youth of the Year competition, recently aiding the 2023 NSW State Final. She aims to pursue a career in medicine and seeks to incorporate her volunteer experience into her career by specializing in geriatrics. As a medical student, she hopes to join the Australian Medical Students Association and connect with representatives from the Medical Board of Australia to discuss a holistic curriculum where doctors are specifically trained to recognize symptoms of mental illnesses in women.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Yumna Zaheed



District 25

Citizenship: Sri Lanka

Last year, Yumna Zaheed was invited by UNICEF to speak on a panel for their 75th anniversary to discuss discrimination and social cohesion. There, she advocated for cultivating a more protective environment in Sri Lanka, free from violence, exploitation and unnecessary social differentiations based on caste and class. She also expressed the need for stringent legal restrictions and a zero-tolerance approach for all forms of abuse against women and children.

Yumna's passion for resolving world issues led to her participation in the executive committee of the Sri Lanka Model UN, one of South Asia's largest Model UN events. As the vice president of ESCAP and president of UNHCR, she was responsible for presiding over committee discussions and creating study materials. Through this experience, Yumna learned more about global issues and guided her committee members to develop feasible solutions.

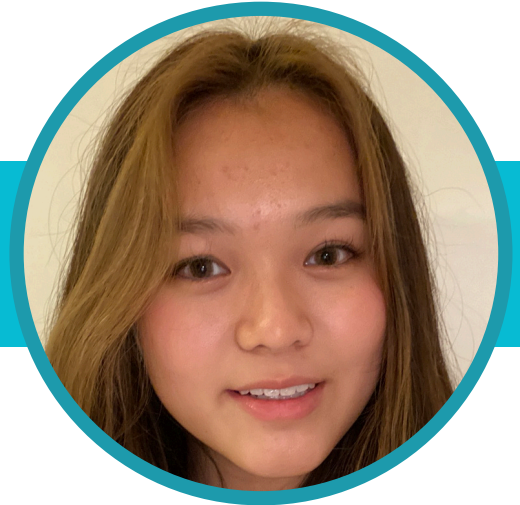
As a team leader in the Young Environmentalists' Competition, Yumna and her team developed a smart recycling bin that compressed trash to address Sri Lanka's waste disposal issue and reduce land pollution. Out of 50 teams, her team ranked first nationally.

In addition, Yumna taught English to the children at the boys' industrial home by playing educational games with them, forming meaningful friendships in the process. She has also recently volunteered to teach English at the Fathima Welfare Orphanage.

In the future, Yumna hopes to pursue a degree in computer science and public policy and then plans to join non-profit organizations to bring about widespread change among underserved communities.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee



Riko Kubo

District 26

Citizenship: Japan

A life-long animal lover, Riko Kubo developed her interest in animal welfare in elementary school after a school project on euthanasia. Since then, she has become passionate about raising awareness about animals and hopes to carry on her experience becoming a biology researcher, veterinarian or political advocate for animal lives.

To resolve animal welfare issues, Riko has looked into many aspects, seeking for greater possible impact in the industry. She created a donation cycle by selling products and donating profits to specific trusted animal shelters. Realizing the struggles of raising significant profits, she moved on to the STEM aspect, hoping to bring animals out of danger and into facilities where animals are needed, like nursing homes.

While Riko still continues to be involved in the STEM area by conducting research, her main focus now is advocating for animal lives and addressing animal welfare in the political field, where she can approach animals throughout the country by law and government. After participating in leadership and entrepreneurship programs and speaking to politicians, Riko started a non-profit social media account to educate people in Japan about animal welfare. Riko also published an essay, *A Voice for Animals*, and spoke at TEDxYouth to speak up for lives. She hopes to bring a broader understanding of animal welfare back to Japan and inspire others to take action.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Hannah Back



District 27

Citizenship: Germany and Luxembourg

Hannah Back discovered her political interest when engaging in sessions of the Model European Parliament and the Model UN at only 15 years old. Dedicated to working her way up the ladder, she took on the committee and conference president responsibilities.

Hannah is passionate about fostering critical thinking and exchange and holding speeches that empower future generations. As an ambassador to her school, Hannah represented her fellow students at various events about politics, climate change and Europe, having the opportunity to interact with public figures such as the minister for foreign affairs.

In the Youth Parliament, Hannah put effort into working on resolutions to present them in the parliament and persuaded politicians to realize the ideas of the youth. Highly interested in experiencing politics up close, she had the chance to intern with the minister of education.

Hannah is also interested in the social sector. She loves being a camp instructor for children with special needs and has recently become the creator and leader of a camp designed to foster the integration of migrants. This experience confronts her with new responsibilities not encountered before, a task Hannah relishes as she can push herself further, work in a team and inspire other young people, especially women.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Zakia Karwar

District 27

Citizenship: Afghanistan



In the wide-open gardens of Kabul, Zakia was pricked with thorns of war, injustice and suppression. When her lungs first inhaled peace in Brussels, she promised to blossom a flower from every thorn in her body.

To fulfill that dream, Zakia participated in the Conflixers project where she contributed to avoiding conflicts at school and took the lead in discussing sensitive topics such as gender equality, the LGBTQIA+ community, bullying and more. In school parliament, she engaged as an ambassador, organized Culture Day and undertook a project to provide free menstrual products for girls. As a member of the SOS Committee, she fundraised for projects such as Mercy Ships, which offers medical aid to impoverished countries. The committee also supported a girl in Mali to receive a free education along with living expenses and assisted under-aged refugees in Fedasil-Dilbeek. Furthermore, she tutored pupils to improve their language skills by engaging in linguistic games and dialogues with them during the daily lunch breaks.

In Anderlecht, she is a member of a literary club, Jeugdjury, which aims to make reading more approachable and exciting for teenagers. In youth council, she joined other teenagers in making an impact on improving living standards in her town. Moreover, she participated in debates on identity and inequality in projects Ananas and Globelink (Kras-project). As a result, she presented recommendations on these subjects to politicians in the European Parliament. By volunteering in these programs, she wishes to untie the thorns that chain war-affected children.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Mita Hollingshaus



District 28

Citizenship: Germany

Mita Hollingshaus was born in Ethiopia and since being adopted and moving to Germany, contact with her birth country has been very important to her. Mita became involved in school at an early age and was already class president in elementary school. From fifth grade on, she was a mediator. At 13 years old, Mita traveled alone to Ethiopia to complete a three-week internship at the German Church School. This school is for impoverished families where blind and non-blind students and children with other disabilities can learn together. At the age of 15, Mita was elected as school president and organized two minutes of silence for the whole school: one for a racist attack in 2020 in Germany where nine people were shot, and another one with her team after George Floyd was murdered in the U.S.

Since 2019, Mita has worked in the city student council of Wiesbaden and 2020, she was elected deputy city school speaker. In 2021 she was elected city school speaker. In this role, she implemented many initiatives, such as project days against all forms of discrimination for which she collected donations from Wiesbaden foundations. In addition, Mita worked to get more schools in Wiesbaden involved in the city student council and went with her team through the Wiesbaden schools to promote their work. Participation was greatly increased during her tenure. With her anti-racism group, Mita and her team organized an anti-bullying day to raise awareness. They organized readings, team-building games and workshops. For their efforts the team received the Leonardo Award from the Wiesbaden Foundation.

In 2022, Mita completed another internship in Addis Ababa at a leather company. The company's founder has set herself the goal of employing people, especially women, with poor job prospects to give them the chance of a better life.

Mita's work also attracted the attention of German media. Extensive interviews and a feature about her have appeared in *Sensor* and *FAZ* magazines.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Emiko L'Estrange



District 29

Citizenship: United Kingdom

Emiko L'Estrange has been head girl at two different schools and was a youth parliament member for Mid and East Devon. As a member of the European Youth Parliament UK,, she represents the rights and concerns of 45,000 young people, working with her three cross-constituency members of parliament.

Emiko has been involved in the rebranding of Devon for Young People group and played a pivotal role in organizing and delivering the Youth Voice Saturday event. This influential youth-led mental health conference brought together young activists, children in care, individuals facing mental health challenges and key figures from renowned organizations such as Kooth, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Devon County Council. This led Emiko to speak in the House of Commons, amplifying the urgency for improved mental health services. She also engaged with the charity Spark on their mental health ambassador scheme.

Through her involvement in river testing and close collaboration with ecologists and environmental campaigners, Emiko chaired a transnational meeting with members of the Australian Youth Parliament, fostering cooperation and exploring policy agreements to tackle the climate emergency. In recognition of her advocacy, Emiko was chosen to represent the youth voice to the UK COP27 negotiation team. She engaged with Barrenness Barran and civil servants from the department of education on the government's commitment to decarbonize by 2050.

Emiko also represented the youth voice to civil servants from the department of culture, media and sport, ensuring young perspectives were incorporated into policy decisions.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee



Pauline Ziegler

District 29

Citizenship: Germany

Pauline Ziegler is an 18-year-old law student at Maastricht University. During her school years, she tutored younger students in math and physics and shared her experiences with them to help them find themselves and pursue their own goals.

At 16, Pauline started participating in various international events and competitions to get out of her comfort zone. She particularly enjoyed being a delegate at Model UN. She won the best delegate award in Dubai at BDMUN and the outstanding delegate award at a diplomatic conference in Istanbul. To date, she is a part of the New York-based organization BestDiplomats, which organizes international conferences for young students from all over the world. She is the head of the academic department and is responsible for preparing the topic for each conference and shaping and moderating the debate.

Pauline works with her team to improve the experience of young delegates by running training sessions where they share their experiences and learn more about diplomacy. She especially wants to offer this opportunity to young women because many girls who participate in their conferences come from regions where it is unusual for women to get involved in politics. Pauline loves seeing young girls gaining confidence in diplomacy because world politics often lacks young people, especially women.



2023 Young Women in
Public Affairs Awardee

Carlotta Faina



District 30

Citizenship: Italy

Carlotta Faina is of Italian descent living in Monaco, a city abundant with opportunities. Her education throughout the years has enabled her to keep an innovative and open mind. She constantly keeps up with the news and tries her best to broaden her knowledge and help others through service and advocacy.

Carlotta has always believed that collaboration can change society and allow for a more inclusive community. She has served as the president of the Z Club of Monaco and finds joy in being a part of a supportive community of like-minded professionals from diverse countries and cultures. With 40 club members, she diligently leads her club. They are present on social media where they try to reach as many people as possible. Moreover, they have organized daily brioche sales to energize their peers during the day and fundraise. Seeing smiles on her peers' faces has ignited something in her: the need to fuel progress. To raise funds and help girls in need around the world, she has also organized a second-hand sale in Monaco, where she vigorously worked with her board to attract people and raise awareness.

To provide people with opportunity, education and discipline, Carlotta wishes to be a leader as much as a parent. She plans to study business at ESCP Business School next year to perfect her brainstorming skills and fuel her own imagination.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Inès Roda



District 30

Citizenship: France

Inès Roda is a driven individual passionate about learning and making a positive impact. Her journey began with her love for the Chinese language, which she pursued independently and later gained admission to a selective school's international Chinese section. Despite facing stiff competition, her dedication and hard work allowed her to excel and become the top student in her class. In high school, Inès demonstrated her leadership abilities as president of the Council for Student Life (CVL). She initiated a school newspaper, showcasing her organizational skills and motivating her peers. She empowered others to overcome their fears and share their ideas through her role, fostering collaboration and teamwork.

Outside of school, Inès actively participated in extracurricular activities as a volunteer. In her hometown, she played a key role in relaunching the French movement of Fridays for Future, known as Youth for Climate. In collaboration with regional institutions, she helped organize a groundbreaking festival focused on sustainable fashion, challenging industry norms and advocating for ethical practices. Inès has also consistently advocated for women's empowerment, raising awareness about domestic violence, consent and period poverty. Her dedication to these causes reflects her commitment to making a positive difference in women's lives.

Looking forward, Inès plans to pursue her studies at Stanford University. She aims to deepen her law and public policy knowledge to become an international lawyer specializing in human rights and climate justice. Her ultimate goal is to advocate for the rights of others and propose solutions for a sustainable future.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Yu-Ching Tsai



District 31

Citizenship: Taiwan, R.O.C.

In high school, Yu-Ching Tsai's main focus is on science and medicine. She actively participated in two national and three regional science fairs, where she achieved significant recognition and won several prizes. Additionally, she triumphed in the Taiwan Physics Tournament Debate, which reinforced her belief that women can excel in any field when they have confidence in themselves.

Driven by her love for science, Yu-Ching finds immense fulfillment in sharing her knowledge and helping others. This passion has led her to engage in various volunteer projects, including teaching children and providing first-aid assistance. In rural areas, she teaches children essential scientific concepts and practical life skills, engaging them in enriching hands-on activities. Moreover, as the chief director of planning at Concordia Red Cross, she takes responsibility for developing plans and applying for financial assistance. Despite the demanding nature of these tasks, she finds the impact she can make through these endeavors rewarding.

Looking ahead, Yu-Ching's aspirations center around becoming a doctor and contributing to the humanitarian efforts of organizations like Doctors Without Borders. Driven to acquire a comprehensive understanding of global health issues, she plans to utilize her skills and knowledge to help those in need around the world.

Yu-Ching's high school experiences in science, volunteering and planning shaped her desire to explore the world and make a difference. She has developed a strong sense of purpose and commitment to global well-being through science, teaching and leadership roles. She is determined to continue expanding her horizons, making a positive impact and striving to create a better future for individuals and communities in need.



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Setbeul An

District 32

Citizenship: South Korea



Setbeul “Grace” An is the founder and CEO of AromaStones, a non-profit organization that sells diffuser necklaces to promote youth suicide prevention in her home country, South Korea. By incorporating aromatherapy into accessories, she combined the common treatment for depression with the growing jewelry trend to offer an innovative and trendy approach to therapeutic resources for the youth community. Through AromaStones, she raised about US\$1,000 in her first month of sales, all of which she donated to Lifeline Korea, a non-governmental organization sponsored by South Korea’s Ministry of Health and Welfare. Eventually, AromaStones won the Best Idea Award from Columbia University’s Entrepreneurship Immersion program, leading Grace to receive the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) Global Citizenship Award in 2022.

Alongside her experience in an NGO, Grace served as the 25th secretary general of an international Model UN conference with 20 participating schools from six countries while leading her school’s club as president. Inspired by her debate experiences on diplomacy, international relations and policy-making, she has been actively involved in academic public speaking and received an outstanding performance award from the Cornell-Yonsei Advanced Debate camp course.

Grace is an incoming freshman at the University of Edinburgh,. There, she will study social policy and economics and earn her integrated master’s degree. She hopes to become a legislative policy analyst and is also interested in continuing her work at suicide prevention NGOs.