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Times-Tribune honors best of the best at Scholastic Superstar ceremony

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JAKE DANNA STEVENS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER The 2015 Scholastic Superstar winners, front row from left, Soo Gartland, Ashley Berlot, Anna Dyska, Alison Barrett, Erin Rome, Sarah Purawic, Joseph Sileo, Samuel Morano. Second row, Sophia Parola, Jacob Marciel, Peter Kulick, Riley Orr, Jill Patton, Aidan Cronin, Donald McGinnis. Third row, Jeffrey Zuber, Eric Sklanka, Robert McGowan, Ann Basting, Sal DeFrancesco, Clayton Hansen and Jack Shean. Below, publisher and CEO of The Times-Tribune George V. Lynett Jr. congratulates the 2015 Scholastic Superstars during a medal presentation

Ann Basting, a Holy Cross High School senior, completed 550 hours of community service over the last four years.

Pittston Area's Eric Sklanka interacted with students from across the world at the Hugh O'Brian World Leadership Congress and is an accomplished pianist who ranks first in his class.

Salvatore DeFrancesco, Riverside's valedictorian, earned his Eagle Scout award and helped complete a potentially life-saving project for the Greenwood Hose Company.

Joseph Sileo will attend the University of Pennsylvania to major in cognitive science when he graduates from Abington Heights High School in June.

The four scholars, along with 21 other graduating seniors, are among the 25 best and brightest members of the class of 2015. On Wednesday, The Times-Tribune honored the students as they became the 21st class of Scholastic Superstars.

The students are volunteers, musicians, athletes and role models. They plan to become doctors, teachers, engineers and scientists — at schools close to home and across the country. The newspaper's program honors 25 of the more than 5,000 students who will graduate from the region's high schools in June.

Members of this year's team are: Alison Barrett, Scranton; Ann Basting, Holy Cross; Nicholas Frank Beckish, Abington Heights; Ashley Berlot, North Pocono; Aidan Cronin, Tunkhannock Area; Salvatore DeFrancesco, Riverside; Jeshua DeJesse, Blue Ridge; Anna Dyska, North Pocono; Soo Gartland, Delaware Valley; Clayton Hansen, Susquehanna Community; Peter Kulick, Scranton Preparatory; Jacob Marciel, Delaware Valley; Donald McGinnis, Honesdale High; Robert McGowan, Scranton; Samuel Morano, Abington Heights; Riley Orr, Holy Cross; Sophia Parola, North Pocono; Jill Patton, Tunkhannock Area; Sarah Purawic, West Scranton; Sarah Ricupero, Wallenpaupack Area; Erin Rome, Tunkhannock Area; Jack O. Shean, Holy Cross; Joseph Sileo, Abington Heights; Eric Sklanka, Pittston Area; and Jeffrey Zuber, Montrose Area.

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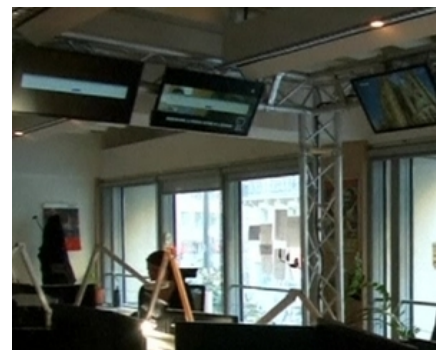
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ceremony in The Scranton Times Building on Wednesday.



“The Scholastic Superstars are the best graduating seniors that our more than two dozen area high schools have to offer,” said George V. Lynett Jr., publisher of The Times-Tribune. “We are extremely proud to honor them as they prepare to embark on the next stage of their lives.”

This year’s team was selected from more than 60 nominees from two dozen Northeast Pennsylvania high schools. All local high schools were invited to nominate up to three seniors who excel in academic performance, school activities and community service. A panel of judges made up of administrators from local colleges and universities, including Fran Calpin, Keystone College senior director of college relations; Dominick A. Carachilo, Johnson College vice president of academic affairs; Lois Draina, Marywood University retired dean; Sandra Feather, Penn State Worthington-Scranton director of enrollment management; Frank Goskowski, Lackawanna College retired academic dean; and Joseph Roback, University of Scranton associate

vice provost for admissions and enrollment, selected this year’s team. Team members are selected without judges knowing their names, gender or schools.

The 2015 team was honored Wednesday at a medal ceremony and reception at The Scranton Times Building in downtown Scranton. More than 100 people attended the ceremony, including the Superstars, their parents, grandparents, siblings, program judges and influential educators.

Mr. Lynett addressed the superstars and encouraged them to stay active in their communities, and after college, return to Northeast Pennsylvania.

“You truly are the best of the best,” he told the students. “You truly exemplify what a Scholastic Superstar is supposed to be.”

Mr. Lynett noted that not only do the students represent the top half of 1 percent of all 2015 graduates, but on forms submitted to The Times-Tribune, most students chose their parents or grandparents as the people they admire the most. A supportive family helps lead to student success, he said.

Starting today and for the next 24 days, each team member will be featured in alphabetical order in a story on Page A2 of The Times-Tribune. Alison Barrett’s profile appears on A2 today.

Contact the writer: shofius@timeshamrock.com, @hofiushallTT on Twitter

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