

For Immediate Release—

Lesia Preston, Executive Director of the Ecumenical Hunger Program and Kate Young, VP Resident Services for Alta Housing are to be honored as the 2021 Kiwanis Angel Award recipients on October 28, 2021.

The Kiwanis Angel Award, sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto, honors an individual who has had a significant, positive impact on youth and provides a \$2,500 contribution to the recipient's organization. This year, the Kiwanis Angel Award committee has chosen to award two individuals who have gone 'above and beyond' during the pandemic for their organizations.

The 'hybrid' award reception will be held on October 28, 2021, 5:30–7:30 PM, at Mitchell Park Community Center in cooperation with the City of Palo Alto. 100% of the sponsor funds raised for the Angel Award in 2021 will benefit youth in the greater Palo Alto area through the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto Charitable Foundation. Information on sponsorship opportunities or to buy event tickets (\$50 per person) can be found online at <http://kiwanisangelaward.org>. The event will also be streamed live to those more comfortable participating virtually.

The Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto is an inclusive, welcoming community service organization. We do not discriminate in our membership, service projects or financial contributions, on any basis other than the desire to serve. We work to eliminate barriers to participation against any group.

The 2021 Kiwanis Angels are:

Lesia Preston, Executive Director of Ecumenical Hunger Program: Lesia's involvement at the Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP) began in 1978 at the age of 13 as a volunteer in the food pantry. In 1982, she began her career as the Food Coordinator before being appointed Executive Director in 2011, where she continues her work to this day.

Lesia embraces the needs of EHP families and their children, not only with food and clothing but with a wide variety of programs that nurture and create a support system for EHP children that allow them to experience the normal joys of childhood while building their self-confidence and bringing stability to their lives. Collaborative relationships with local school districts and other nonprofits deliver a wide range of programs that include back to school support, supplies and food to 1,000 youth per year plus tutoring, mentoring, and job training.

During the pandemic, Lesia kept EHP focused primarily on providing hunger relief to those in need but worked to keep their main youth programs intact, converting the food service to a drive-thru program and home delivery. The children's Pack-the-Bag weekend lunch program continued, uninterrupted, and EHP adapted the Back to School and Holiday Programs to offer laptops, tablets, and student desks to accommodate distance learning. Assistance was given to those who needed internet services and emergency help with college tuition.

Under Lesia's leadership, EHP provided services to 33,000 underprivileged children and individuals, and distributed over 40,000 food boxes.

"Lesia Preston has been a pillar in the community since she was an adolescent." Arnold L. Hart, Bayshore Kiwanis Club, East Palo Alto

For more information on Ecumenical Hunger Program go to <https://www.ehpcares.org>

Kate Young, Vice President of Resident Services for Alta Housing (formerly Palo Alto Housing):

Kate Young, 17 years ago, began creating the Resident Services Program and building up a team that provides thousands of hours of programming each year to serve the needs of Alta Housing's low-income residents.

The wide range of programs serving children and families include: Stepping Stones to Success, which offers academic support and skill-building opportunities at every step along the kindergarten through twelfth-grade journey from afterschool programs to engaging hands-on experiential learning opportunities during the summer; as well as Family Reading Club, which includes monthly family literacy events.

Collaborative work has resulted in two major on-going programs that serve the needs of Alta Housing families and their children: the annual Family Leadership Summit (in collaboration with Palo Alto Unified School District) and DreamCatchers (for 10+ years) an organization that serves low-income middle schoolers, providing tutoring and mentoring services. Kate has also developed the Opportunity Fund Scholarship for adult students wishing to return to school to pursue their educational and career goals.

During the pandemic, Kate's resourcefulness has helped her team focus on the families most impacted by COVID-19 income loss. They have distributed over \$32,000 in grocery store gift cards, created a drive-thru food distribution in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, home food delivery in partnership with La Comida, Peninsula FoodRunners and Loaves & Fishes, and worked closely with many families to ensure they were able to access unemployment and rental assistance when they most needed it. Her team also developed innovative ways to keep kids engaged in learning such as through a Reading Buddy Program in collaboration with the Jewish Coalition for Literacy.

"We see Kate as a visionary with extraordinary collaborative skills which allow her to bring so many enriching services and programs to Alta Housing families and youth." Bonnie Packer, Secretary of the Board of Directors, Alta Housing.

For more information on Alta Housing and the Resident Services Programs go to <https://altahousing.org/>