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All Stars event helps kids, honors “Phat” friends

by Globe Staff

The Bay Area All Stars honored five “Phat” friends, adults selected by the youth group for recognition because of their work with young people, at an awards dinner last week.



The “Phat” Friend Award is the only honor in the Bay Area given to adults by young people. It is presented annually by Oakland and Bay Area youth to their community heroes and heroines – adults who demonstrate their support for kids and youth concerns.

This year’s “Phat” friends are:

- Dr. Jeanette Brunson, instructor of early childhood education in Contra Costa County;
- Darrick Smith, founder and director of TryUMF, a youth empowerment program based in Oakland;
- Megan Ball, a language arts teacher at Hayward High School;
- Eve Cowen, executive director of the Future Leaders Institute in Oakland;
- Willie Kelly, an Oakland based truck driver who produces music for neighborhood kids who like to perform.

Over many months, dozens of young people nominate deserving adults. A youth committee interviews the nominees and selects the winners.

The Bay Area All Stars is a project of the Bay Area Center for Independent Culture (BACIC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting human development for youth aged 5 to 25. The group raised \$50,000 at the All Stars event, held at Scott’s Seafood restaurant in Oakland.

“We create outside of school, educational and performing arts activities for thousands of poor and minority young people,” said a group spokesperson. “We sponsor community and experimental theatre, develop leadership training and pursue volunteer initiatives that build and strengthen communities.”

The event also featured All Stars youth performers.

A team of All Stars youth hosts welcomed Bay Area All Stars donors and friends to the fundraising event.

Independent of government funding, the All Stars is a unique partnership between young people and adults who invest financial and other resources in the social and emotional development of youth as learners and leaders.

For more information on the Bay Area All Stars and its youth programs, visit www.bacic.org or call (415) 986-2565.