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Area teens vying for Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada's Youth of the Year title



Katie Leao, chief professional officer, and Matt Sampson, program director, of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada, with three club members competing in the local Youth of the Year contest, Natalie Ontiveros, McKenzie Malone and Autumn Cuellar, with competition judges and club board members Andie Wilson and Jonathan Olivas, Cynthia Pennington, vice president of sales of the Change Companies, Ben Bianchi, juvenile probation officer, and his wife, Karen.

Family, safety and confidence were the topics of the day as three Carson City teens competed in the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada's Youth of the Year competition on Friday.

Carson High School senior, 18-year-old Autumn Cuellar, and freshman Natalie Ontiveros, 15, and McKenzie Malone, also 15, delivered speeches discussing what the clubs mean to their lives before spending more than an hour meeting with members of the judging panel in private interviews.

Each contestant must submit a comprehensive application packet including three essays on topics selected for them, letters of recommendation as well as speaking to and interviewing with the judges. Participants must be at least 14 years old and have been a clubs member for two years.

"Each of these young ladies has an incredible story and has overcome something significant or tragic, or lives with adversity," Matt Sampson, program director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada, said. "These are incredible young women with incredible stories."

The Carson City competition is the first step in the national Boys & Girls Clubs of America Youth of the Year competition. The winning teen from Carson will move on to the state round in Las Vegas in February. State winners advance to the regional competition and finally on to the national

competition held at the White House.

Judges included Boys & Girls Clubs board member Andie Wilson and past president Jonathan Olivas, juvenile probation officer Ben Bianchi and his wife Karen, and Cynthia Pennington, vice president of sales for the Change Companies, also the host of this year's local competition.

Carson City's Youth of the Year will be announced at the Clubs' annual awards celebration Jan. 29.

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