

## YOUTH OF THE YEAR

We are extremely grateful to Dawn and Keith Blackburn of the Blackburn Foundation, as well as Ted Vallas, for providing the scholarships awarded to our Youth of the Year.

### Prashant Bhat 2009 Youth of the Year



Intelligent, determined, passionate, and dedicated. These words sum up the essence of Prashant, but there is so much more. Currently a senior at Carlsbad High School, Prashant is destined to make a positive impact on a national or global level. Having parents that immigrated from India, Prashant's childhood education included a "cultural boot camp" that instilled at an early age the importance of family and traditional values. He is respectful and hard working, holds a leadership position on the CHS Speech and Debate Team, is a standout student, and cares deeply about the environment. In fact, that is how he became involved with the Club. Prashant wanted to raise environmental awareness, and structured a recycling program for the La Costa Branch. Upbeat and always quick with a smile,

Prashant is a young man with unlimited potential and is motivated by all the right reasons. In fact, his dream is to attend Harvard where he hopes to become a prominent leader in the environmental field of industry. We are sure he will do just that!

### Gerald Ball 2009 Finalist



"A big heart filled with lots of love," is how single mom Meshika describes her son. Gerald started attending the Village Branch four years ago, and became immediately enthralled with all the activities that were available. He lives the adage "good citizenship is doing good when nobody is looking," and is always willing to lend a helping hand, especially now that he's become a Junior Staff member. A self-proclaimed "tree hugger," Gerald is deeply concerned about the danger of pollution, and hopes to travel the world with his mother one day.

Another life goal is to become a master chef; he loves the rush of excitement when concocting a new dish. Currently enrolled in AVID and honors classes to prepare for college, Gerald is a Carlsbad High School freshman. He also enjoys participating in extra-curricular activities such as Science Olympiad. Here's how Gerald describes his feelings about being a Club member: **Beings Of Youth Seeking Assistance Needed to Display Greatness, Intelligence, Respect, Loyalty, So other Children Look upon these Unbelievable Boys and girls.** Kudos, Gerald, on the acronym and all your accomplishments!

### Jason Salinas 2009 Finalist



Jason's got his eye on the prize – a college education – and we believe he will achieve just that. He and his single mom have struggled economically over the years, and one of his biggest life goals beyond college is to purchase a house for her. At the Boys & Girls Club, Jason has found a place to hang out, relax, and just be himself. It's a positive alternative to being at home alone, bored. He's made new friends, gone on field trips, and gained life perspective by volunteering at a teen homeless shelter and family recovery center. Seeing how the less fortunate survive and even thrive has made Jason grateful for what he does have, and has motivated him to succeed. He's gotten leadership experience by being a member of Keystone, as well as serving as a Junior Staff member. The end result? Well, Jason hopes to attend UC Santa Cruz with an engineering degree, and then start looking for that house for his mom. High five, Jason!