

## **Jefferson Awards Foundation Recognizes Central Florida Volunteers for Philanthropic Work at National Ceremony Along With Arne Duncan & Sean Parker.**

**Washington, DC, June 15-16, 2016**—[The Jefferson Awards Foundation](#), America's gold seal of public service, honored this year's most outstanding public service achievers during its annual gala in Washington, D.C. The events, held in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on June 15 & 16, 2016, recognized and celebrated students, grassroots public service individuals, employees and companies making a difference. Honorees included celebrities, public service professionals, entrepreneurs, local heroes and corporations all dedicated to public service.

In their first year as a Students In Action Team, Cocoa Beach Jr/Sr High School made a huge impact in their community: over 21,000 community service hours were recorded, and an estimated \$484,000 was given back to the community. With the joint effort of school and community organizations, the team was able to donate food, clothes, and toys; raised thousands of dollars to purchase 13 prosthetic limbs for those in third world countries; and funded a Secret Santa program to provide Christmas gifts for students in difficult financial situations. The team's biggest accomplishment was fundraising to send Les Stafford, a Korean War Veteran and an individual who has volunteered for over 40 years at Cocoa Beach High School, to the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. through Honor Flight. They were also able to contribute to the flights of other Central Florida veterans.

"The Jefferson Awards Foundation is proud to continue in the tradition of our namesake as we recognize the incredible achievements of these individuals," said Hillary Schafer, Executive Director of The Jefferson Awards Foundation. "We hope that we can be a beacon for others who wish to contribute to their own communities, and that our honorees will help to activate these initiatives."

Sophia Sanchez-Maes, was honored with a national award for Outstanding Service by an Individual 25 or Under. Sanchez-Maes' research on algae biofuel and her work to pioneer a new process that produces a positive energy yield earned her national recognition. Previous recipients of the under 25 award include the Kid President team and 2015 Nobel Peace Prize nominee Patrick Ip.

Silicon Valley philanthropist and entrepreneur Sean Parker was presented with the S. Roger Horchow Award for Outstanding Public Service by a Private Citizen. In June 2015, Parker, founding president of Facebook and co-founder of Napster, launched the Parker Foundation with a \$600 million gift to build on more than a decade of support for cancer research, global public health and civic engagement. In April of this year, the Parker Foundation announced a \$250 million grant to create the Parker Institute for Cancer

Immunotherapy, an unprecedented collaboration between the country's leading immunologists and cancer centers — Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Stanford University, UCLA, UCSF, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, and the University of Pennsylvania. He will join the ranks of previous recipients of this award including comedian Bob Hope and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Kyle Zimmer, President and CEO of First Book, received the national award for Outstanding Public Service Benefiting the Disadvantaged for her tireless work to further equal access to quality education for children from low-income families. Zimmer co-founded the nonprofit social enterprise First Book to ensure that under-resourced schools and community programs across the country serving children in need have a steady supply of the brand-new, high-quality books, educational materials and basic items that are critical for learning. Previous award winners include: Paul Newman & Joanne Woodward and Bill & Melinda Gates.

At the gala, sponsored by Vodafone, CLEARLIGHT ADVISORS and United Steelworkers, the Jefferson Awards Foundation presented national awards in 3 other categories. These categories included: three top schools in its Students In Action program, two top employees in the Champions program and five top Media Partner local winners.

**About the Jefferson Awards Foundation** The Jefferson Awards Foundation (JAF) powers others to have maximum impact on the things they care about most. Through celebration, they inspire action. With programs and partnerships, they drive Americans to change their communities and the world. To learn more about the Jefferson Awards Foundation, visit: [JeffersonAwards.org](http://JeffersonAwards.org) or engage with our community on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), SnapChat, and [Facebook](#).