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Inland physician called ‘community champion’ for his generosity

Redlands resident Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela gives away laptops and cash to support students, local groups

By ALLYSON ESCOBAR

For Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela, a longtime philanthropist and Inland Empire physician, investing in local organizations and training for students is second nature.

“You give until you hurt,” Valenzuela, a 70-year-old Redlands resident, said, quoting a childhood lesson he learned growing up in Chile.

He had lots of help and support in pursuing his medical dreams there, and Valenzuela wanted to return the favor to others without the same opportunities.

For more than 12 years, he has given away laptops to children to encourage them to pursue college educations. This year, as the coronavirus pandemic brought new challenges for students, Valenzuela donated \$45,000 to two school districts and a local nonprofit group for technology needs and distance-learning programs.

“COVID-19 has changed the way children learn, so we changed our pace to where we could help (students) in this particular year,” said Valenzuela, a winner of Time For Change Foundation’s 2020 Community Health Champion Award.

The two school districts — which both received \$15,000 — were the Colton Joint Unified School District and the Lucerne Valley Unified School District. The Boys & Girls Club of Fontana also got \$15,000 for new technology and programs.

Colton Superintendent Frank Miranda called Valenzuela “a strong advocate for education” and add that the money will help buy laptops as students continue learning remotely.

“Our staff and students have stepped up to the challenge of these unprecedented times, and having a community champion like Dr. V in our corner is a huge boost to our efforts.”

In August, the Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation also awarded \$225,000 in grants to nine community organizations that help those in need during the pandemic. These include Catholic Charities San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, OneFuture Coachella Valley, Time for Change Foundation, Desert Sanctuary Inc., El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center, Inland Behavioral and Health Services, Inc., Reach Out and Southern California Public Radio.

The foundation has awarded more than \$1 million in grants since 2015.

Since 2008, Valenzuela has given laptops through his annual TECH Scholarship Program, which is separate from his foundation. The giveaway encourages young students and families to start thinking about college and picks winners through an essay and art contest.

Though there was no laptop giveaway this year, Valenzuela called the program an “investment into the future.”

Terri Schneider, chief executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Fontana, said that the donation went toward brand new laptops for over 150 students.

“This year was very challenging for many of the families and students we serve, and some were really struggling to continue their studies,” Schneider said.

Valenzuela, an OB-GYN, runs several practices in Riverside and San Bernardino counties and is the chairman of women’s health at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton.

He credits his charity to his upbringing, saying that he felt he was given many opportunities to pursue his career dreams.

“It’s like Christmas all the time,” Dr. Valenzuela said. “I feel a great satisfaction in being able to give, and don’t expect anything in return.”



Inland physician Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela, who has been awarding laptops to local students as part of his foundation’s annual TECH Scholarship Program, is seen outside Arrowhead Regional Regional Medical Center in Colton on Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2020. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)



Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela presents a free laptop to Miranda Carmona, a student at Patricia Beatty Elementary School in Riverside in 2014. (Photo courtesy of Michael Fisher)