

Milton's Project 351 Ambassador Hokulani Panerio-Langer is ready to serve.

Every year 351 8th Graders, with one student chosen from every town or city across Massachusetts, often unsung heroes who quietly make a difference, is nominated by educators to represent their town or city as the Project 351 Ambassador.

Project 351 is a yearlong leadership youth-led program where ambassadors engage in service and community civic engagements.

This year Milton is proudly represented by extraordinary Pierce Middle School 8th Grader, Hokulani Panerio-Langer. Hokulani which means 'heavenly star' in Hawaiian is truly a star in so many ways. A stellar academic student, she is an avid Model UN participant on the Pierce delegation team and has captured the title of Best Delegate three times along with the award for Best Negotiator once, an enormous feat having competed against high school students.

Launch Day which kicks off the year of service for ambassadors is usually held on the Saturday of the weekend celebrating the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this year (1/19/19), who was adamant in his drive to build community, a driving force behind the mission of Project 351.

The program started during the tenure of Former Governor Patrick during his second term in office and who like Dr. King saw the potential of the young people as inspiring leaders and who advocated for a day of service with 8th Graders and together with other community leaders birthed the Project 351 youth service non-profit organization dedicated to building unity and leadership through the yearlong service and leadership engagement. The program now in it's 8th year continues under the distinction of Governor Baker and First Lady, Lauren Baker.

Historic Faneuil Hall was the venue for Launch Day. A magnificent day where all the ambassadors are introduced, get to meet their service heroes and engage in conversation with Gov and First Lady Baker on Dr. King and service leadership, before being broken up into their sub-groups to embark on a day of service at an assigned site. Hokulani's sub-group was assigned to The Pine St Inn, the largest homeless shelter in New England. Together with her team Hoku (as she is more commonly called) made turkey wraps for the homeless who would be fed that very day as a snow storm hit.

Hoku in her own words described her Launch Day experience as "really moving and encouraging, with the most impact part for me , was walking through the facility of the homeless shelter with the realization of just how much we can accomplish for our community if we work together."

We may all still be in a Winter frame of mind, but with three statewide platforms for ambassadors, Hoku is already planning her Spring Service Project, which benefits Cradles2Crayons, helping to support their mission to reach 368, 000 children in need of care. This involves collecting new and gently-used clothing and other essentials for infants through 12-year old. Hoku is hopeful that with the community's support involving area churches, places of worship and schools, she can make this service project a huge success.

A busy 8th Grader who dances with the Ballet Company at In Sync , she spends three days a week after school perfecting her art, and in addition she student interns on Mondays with 5-6 year olds in the Kinder Moves class. During the weekend of February 9-10th , Hoku was a featured dancer in the company's production of Mary Poppins.

When the congratulatory list was posted of all the Milton students who had auditioned for the South Eastern Bandmasters Association (SEMSBA) , her name was among the distinguished students. Hoku has been playing the viola since the 4th Grade and in addition to her being a member of the Pierce Middle School Chamber Orchestra, Hoku along with other advanced Stringed instruments students join the high school Chamber Orcherstra twice a week at 6: 45 am, to practice alongside the high school students,. It will be with Milton pride that she will represent the town at the Junior Semsba festival in March.

A young lady with a bright future ahead, Hoku, born to two parents in the health field has long expressed her interests and desire to one day become a doctor like her dad but of late with her interests in and her ongoing participation in Model UN among other things, Hoku has recently stated having a deep interest in becoming a United Nations Delegate, serving as an ambassador to other countries with an interest in working with foreign policy and social justice issues.

The logo of Project 351 calls ambassadors to Unite, Act, Lead and in addition to her many hobbies and activities, Hoku an avid baker loves baking cookies of all sorts, from simple chocolate chip to chewy ginger spice molasses, to macaroons. Often too many cookies to be consumed by her small family of her mom, dad and big sister Mahina, the cookies often make their way to the Brockton Health Center to the delight of the staff where dad an internist also serves as Assistant Medical Director.

A year of service and leadership lies ahead for our Milton Ambassador. Spring Service, followed by Memorial Day involvement, a 9-11 tribute and Fall service benefiting local area food pantries to name a few.

Superintendent of Milton Public Schools Mary Gormley in her Nov 8, 2018 Eblast , announcing Hoku's recognition remarked " she is truly genuine in all that she pursues and will make an outstanding Project 351 Ambassador." I am sure all of Milton agrees with this.

We look forward to hearing about all the ways you make an impact during your year of leadership and beyond.

To keep up with Project 351 Hokulani and to support her in her upcoming drives kindly reach out to her mom Maile at mpaneriolanger@gmail.com

Congratulations Hoku!

Elizabeth Thomas

