



Young changemakers awarded \$15,000 each from Prudential Financial at Emerging Visionaries Summit

The five Grand Prize winners were among 25 young people honored by actress, activist and author America Ferrera and Prudential Chairman and CEO Charles Lowrey for their work addressing the challenges of a changing world.

NEWARK, N.J. – For initiatives that range from promoting financial literacy to combating mental health stigmas, five young people were named Grand Prize winners by [Prudential Financial's Emerging Visionaries program](#) at a four-day summit held this week at Prudential's Newark headquarters.

The Emerging Visionaries program is conducted by [Prudential Financial](#) in partnership with the social entrepreneurship network Ashoka, with advisory support from the Financial Health Network. It honors remarkable young people between 14 and 18 years old from across the United States for leading initiatives that produce fresh, innovative solutions to current financial and societal challenges.

"The goals of our Emerging Visionaries program reflect Prudential's overarching purpose: to make lives better by solving the financial challenges of our changing world," said Prudential Chairman and CEO Charles Lowrey. "We applaud all of our honorees for their commitment to improving the lives of others and creating inclusive and thriving communities."

The 25 winners, named in February, each earned a \$5,000 award and an all-expenses-paid trip to this week's Emerging Visionaries Summit, plus a chance to win an additional \$10,000. The summit included an awards ceremony, where winners were celebrated by special guests including actress, activist and author America Ferrera. The students also consulted with Prudential senior leaders on topics of strategy and impact, and worked with Prudential employee coaches who helped them refine and advance their projects.

The students join a community of like-minded changemakers that includes 2022 Emerging Visionary Sriya

Tallapragada of New Providence, New Jersey. She was honored for her efforts to encourage girls to participate in STEAM programs — science, technology, engineering, art and math. She describes her Emerging Visionaries experience as “life-changing.”

“The prize money I received completely changed the scope and accessibility of our programs,” Tallapragada explains. “And suddenly, I had 24 new friends, all of whom were leading inspiring initiatives and changing their community. We all support each other, sharing opportunities and celebrating each other’s wins.”

During the summit, the five young people whose solutions are focused on financial challenges were selected to pitch their ideas to a panel of judges for a chance to win an additional \$10,000 in funding for their initiative. Pitch-off judges included Lowrey, leaders from Ashoka and the Financial Health Network, and two program alumni.

The judges were tasked with selecting one Grand Prize winner from the five who pitched their projects. However, after hearing the pitches, judges decided to award \$10,000 to each of the five presenters, in recognition of the societal impact of their initiatives.

In addition to the Grand Prize winners, Prudential employees voted on an Employees’ Choice Award winner, who received an additional \$5,000 to support their work.

Read on to learn about the five Grand Prize winners and the Prudential Employees’ Choice Award winner.

Grand Prize Winner: Nikita Agrawal, 17, of Chicago

Nikita is the co-founder and president of “FinPro World,” an initiative that promotes financial literacy among middle and high school-aged students by teaching them computer programming skills. Through a 10-week series, participants learn financial concepts that they then apply and demonstrate through coding.

Nikita’s inspiration came when she realized she could use her programming skills to build financial wellness and resiliency for those around her. “That feeling of being able to add value using my skills, along with my desire to make an impact in my community, triggered the idea of combining financial concepts with computer programming into a powerful educational platform for students,” she explains. So far, her project has helped more than 100 students across 15 countries.

Grand Prize Winner: Okezue Bell, 17, of Easton, Pennsylvania

Okezue founded “Fidutam,” an accessible mobile app that is expanding financial access to unbanked and low-income communities.

The initiative offers microloans specifically targeted to underserved communities to expand their access to financial services. “As a person of color and a Nigerian, I’ve seen the devastating effects the racial hegemony in banking and finance can have on communities,” he says. The initiative has reached more than 100 people across the United States and will expand to Nigeria.

Grand Prize Winner: Aaryan Doshi, 16, of Cupertino, California

Aaryan leads “CirFin,” a global initiative that aims to inspire young people to use fintech to develop more sustainable economies. “CirFin” equips young leaders with education and resources they need to create innovative fintech solutions that address sustainability issues, such as reusing materials and decreasing waste, and use them in innovative enterprises that serve their communities.

“I realized how little this generation knew about the circular economy and its financial components. Who will be the change agents if youth do not understand how crucial the circular economy is to combat biodiversity loss and pollution threatening our planet?” he says. To date, the initiative has more than 100 participants across four international chapters.

Grand Prize Winner: Catherine Mellett Felix, 17, of New York

Catherine started a mobile app to address gender economic inequality by teaching young women how to manage and grow their personal finances. The app assesses each user’s financial health and priorities to customize a learning journey of engaging modules on topics such as credit scores and the basics of investing.

Catherine started this project after learning about the difficulties faced by women and those impacted by

domestic violence, and how financial autonomy might provide an opportunity for a better life. “My project centers on giving the millions of young Latin American women who want equality, but are unaware of how to achieve it, the tools to break from antiquated roles and end the cycle of violence through financial education,” she says.

Grand Prize Winner: Jordyn Wright, 15, of Rosharon, Texas

Jordyn started a youth entrepreneurship program to teach young people how to identify their passions and use them as a launching point for creating innovative enterprises that serve their communities.

Jordyn’s initiative gives young people access to the resources and mentors to help them explore a business venture. Programming covers topics including entrepreneurial mindset, business budgeting, pitching and financing. At the end of the training, students convene to present their product or service. So far, Jordyn has mentored more than 60 young people and hosted 17 youth entrepreneurs at the annual summer convention.

Employees’ Choice Award Winner: Kean Dao, 17, of Winterville, North Carolina

Kean Dao, 17, of Winterville, North Carolina, co-founded “Environmental Droners,” an initiative that uses technology to engage and educate the public on protecting the environment by identifying polluted areas in need of cleanup. He started the project after noticing an alarming increase in single-use plastics during the pandemic.

His project uses drones to film polluted areas on land and identify trash islands in waterways. This technology, along with a mobile app, identifies locations where trash removal is needed. So far, the team has located and removed more than 5,000 pounds of trash and engaged hundreds of volunteers in cleanups.

To learn more about Prudential Emerging Visionaries and all 25 winners, visit prudential.com/emergingvisionaries.

About Prudential Financial

Prudential Financial, Inc. (NYSE: PRU), a financial wellness leader and premier active global investment manager, has operations in the United States, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Prudential’s diverse and talented employees help to make lives better by creating financial opportunity for more people. Prudential’s iconic Rock symbol has stood for strength, stability, expertise and innovation for more than a century. For more information, please visit news.prudential.com.

About Ashoka

Ashoka is the largest global network of leading social entrepreneurs — individuals with new ideas to systemically address the world’s biggest challenges and the entrepreneurial skill to transform those ideas into national, regional and global social impact. Over 40 years, Ashoka has supported more than 3,600 social entrepreneurs in 90 countries with solutions addressing society’s most pressing issues. Ashoka’s vision is a world in which everyone is a changemaker — a society that responds quickly and effectively to challenges, and where every individual has the freedom, confidence and societal support to address any social problem. For more information, visit ashoka.org.

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