

2025 City Spirit Award Nominee Biographies

Justin Pardee

Nominated by Mayor Lock Dawson

Justin Pardee is the energetic founder of The Raincross Gazette, a digitally native newspaper reinventing local news to serve Riverside for the next 100 years. What started in 2021 with just 89 subscribers has grown into a thriving newsroom, delivering free, community-centered journalism to over 14,000 subscribers every morning. Pardee sits on the Economic Development Committee for both the Chamber and The Raincross Group, the Chamber's Downtown Council, and the Supervisory Committee for Altura Credit Union. He has previously served on the board of The Pick Group of Young Professionals, working to address Riverside's "brain drain" challenges.

A proud graduate of Riverside City College and California State University, San Bernardino, he is committed to creating high-quality jobs and career opportunities that help Riverside take its rightful place on the national stage. A lifelong Riversider, Pardee's commitment to the city runs deep.

Leimamo Taylor

Nominated by Councilmember Robillard

Over seven years ago, as a single mom with a big dream, Leimamo Taylor took a leap of faith and took over a small café at the Riverside Airport. What began as a modest venture quickly became a mission to create a welcoming space where families, friends, and neighbors could gather, connect, and feel at home.

Under her leadership, the Airport Café has blossomed into a vibrant community destination filled with laughter, creativity, and care. Leimamo has brought new life and awareness to the Riverside Airport, transforming it into a bustling hub of activity and connection. Her vision has helped showcase the airport as more than a travel stop. It is now a gathering place that reflects the best of Riverside's community spirit.

Leimamo is also a passionate advocate for local restaurateurs and small business owners. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, she created a coalition of restaurateurs to provide mutual support, resources, and encouragement during one of the most challenging times for the industry. Her willingness to lead and lift others has earned her deep respect across the local business community.

In addition to her entrepreneurial and civic efforts, Leimamo gives back in countless ways, from organizing toy drives to supporting neighborhood events and city partnerships. She helped launch the beloved *Planes and Treats* event at the Riverside Airport, bringing families, local businesses, and city partners together in celebration.

Leimamo Taylor truly embodies the spirit of Riverside. Through her generosity, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to others, she continues to make our city a warmer, stronger, and more connected place for everyone.

Lorna Jenkins

Nominated by Councilmember Conder

A resident, an entrepreneur of our great city, a past graduate of Leadership Riverside, having received a multitude of awards and recognitions, a leading member of our Riverside business community, and the founder of My Learning Studio. The studio offers private 1-on-1 tutoring for Riverside County students of all academic subjects, K-12, including adult learners, at-risk youth, court appointed, ESL students and additionally provides FREE Reading Assistance Program (RAP) to struggling students. This nominee has a passion for helping children with academic challenges.

Gerardo "Jerry" Pulido

Nominated by Councilmember Mill

Gerardo "Jerry" Pulido is the Executive Director of the Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Service, an organization he has supported from the very beginning as a dedicated volunteer. Motivated by a genuine desire to serve his community, Jerry steadily took on greater responsibility, becoming a Board Member and later President. His leadership is rooted in firsthand experience, deep community ties, and a strong commitment to finding meaningful solutions to local challenges.

Under Jerry's guidance, Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Service continues to provide vital programs that strengthen and uplift the community, including annual toy drives, turkey giveaways, back to school events, weekly food distributions, educational forums, and community clean ups, all offered at no cost to residents. Known as a unifying and collaborative leader, Jerry is widely respected for bringing people together and serving as a trusted advocate for Casa Blanca and neighborhoods across the city.

Elia Camarena

Nominated by Councilmember Perry

Elia Camarena has called Arlanza home for the past 28 years. She has dedicated several years of service- 15 years with the Alvord Unified School District as a member of ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) at the school level, and DELAC (District English Learner Advisory Committee) at the district level. Elia is a proud member of Padres Unidos, a Norte Vista High School parent group that is committed to raise funds to provide scholarships to Latino students. Her involvement with this group spanned more than 10 years.

Elia is a beloved member of the community. She is known as a gatherer who has organized various events including- National Night Out, multicultural events, recognition nights for Latino students, and fundraising activities for dance groups within the community. Her work as a Community Health Worker with the Riverside Community Health Foundation for the past 20 years has allowed her the opportunity to support the community in different areas. She has led health and wellness classes and this year alone she helped educate a cohort of residents via Resident Leadership Academies. Elia's commitment to education and civic engagement has enabled her to support and help families overcome difficult situations. Her understanding of the community and her passion for service merits her nomination for the City Spirit Award.