



Dear Members of the Board,

It is my great honor to present **Mahini Balasubramanian**, a Nova Senior, as this month's recipient of the Nova Classical Spotlight Award. This award was established to recognize individuals who exemplify Nova Classical Academy's commitment to academic excellence, virtue, and a thriving school community. Through their outstanding dedication, they inspire those around them and contribute meaningfully to our pursuit of learning not for school, but for life.

Mahini joined Nova as a fifth grader. She was happy, kind, and eager, and as the weeks went on, it became clear that this was not a beginning-of-the-year impression. It was simply who she was. She has now spent most of her K-12 journey at Nova, and everything that was true of her then remains true today, expressed through an extraordinary record of service, leadership, and scholarship. As a senior, she has participated in too many activities to capture here, but highlights include four years of Track and Field, Cross Country, National Honor Society, Student Senate, and Letters of Love. She founded MedVenture in her junior year, connecting students to the medical field through hospital visits, a campus blood drive, and community fundraising. She also served as a student representative on the Strategic Plan Committee that shaped the current direction of Nova Classical Academy, bringing a student's perspective to one of the school's most consequential planning exercises and doing so with the understanding that her voice in that room would outlast her time here.

It is not possible to share the impact that Mahini has made on the Nova Classical community without sharing a few experiences that others in the community have had with her. Her language arts teacher and NHS advisor Sara Seal noted that when Mahini leads, students choose to follow. Upper School office manager, Kaitlin Ruppert, observed that she greets staff with a smile in the hallway every day and that, at Senior Retreat, when students didn't have a group for the duck hunt, Mahini reached out to bring them into hers. A small thing that is, in practice, not small at all. And, Laura Buri, who first taught Mahini as a fifth grader and now works with her on Multicultural Night, offered this: "Mahini is proof that optimism is more than a sunny disposition. She demonstrates that optimism is a cornerstone of fortitude, that it is essential to being able to see things through, get things done, and overcome obstacles."

Mahini embodies the virtues Nova seeks to cultivate. Her fortitude shows in the way she pursues difficult goals without fanfare. Her justice is in her instinct to include and to serve. Her prudence is evident in how she leads, not by doing everything herself, but by helping others do what they are best positioned to do. Her temperance is in the way she carries achievement without letting it change how she treats people. On behalf of Nova Classical Academy, I am proud to recognize and celebrate Mahini Balasubramanian. She is the kind of student our school aspires to send into the world, and the kind of person who will make the world better.

It's a Great Day to Be a Knight!

Dr. Brett Wedlund
Executive Director

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