

# Tyler Echevarria Mejia



It is my honor to introduce our next Courage Award recipient – Tyler Echevarria.

Tyler is currently a Junior at McClintock High School.

Over the last year, Tyler has overcome incredible adversity. Tyler is a transgender student and has struggled with coming out to his family and doctors. The distress of coming out to family and medical providers was further compounded by the isolation due to Covid-19 and led to Tyler experiencing severe depression. In November, Tyler was hospitalized for a week to treat his anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. He has had many courageous conversations to advocate for his needs and as a result is now working with his endocrinologist and is seeking hormonal intervention.

Despite personal struggles that would crush most, Tyler has continued with his rigorous coursework and his teachers report he continues to be a valuable member of his class. Tyler has decided to challenge himself with a rigorous course load this year, including Advanced Placement Psychology and Advanced Placement Environmental Science. This learning environment would be difficult for any student taking their first AP courses, but Tyler continues to work extremely hard to be successful in all his classes, despite the challenges of virtual learning and his personal struggles with mental health.

Today, Tyler continues to receive counseling and shares that therapy is very helpful. He encourages everyone to be mindful of their mental wellness and to get help if needed. He hopes that others will be on the lookout for changes in behavior and feelings in loved ones as well as themselves so they can get the care needed. He wants

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other teens going through similar challenges to know that “it does get better. There is always someone to talk to. There is always someone to help.”

Upon reflecting on his past year, Tyler says he is proud of “not giving up and giving my best in school.” After returning from the hospital, he had to catch up on additional assignments. Tyler remained persistent and has had the support of his family and teachers so he could be successful.

His current favorite class in school is AP Psychology. Tyler would like to continue to learn about the brain, how it works and about mental health. He has interest in becoming a therapist and being able to help others through their challenges.

Tyler’s nominator, his AP Environmental Science teacher Corey Ozan who has taught him over the past two years, shares that he is “courageous, caring, dedicated, and always willing to go out of his way to help anyone who needs help.” She shared examples of times when in virtual class he has supported his classmates during classroom projects and discussions.

Tyler’s compassion extends beyond people as he is known to regularly rescue and assist injured birds. Since he was young, Tyler has had a passion for helping animals and saving baby birds and injured pigeons in his community and helps ensure they get help at Liberty Wildlife.

When he’s not helping save animals, you can find Tyler expressing his creativity through writing poetry, sewing, sculpting or sketching a future runway look. Another

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career option he's exploring is Fashion Design, with Alexander McQueen being an inspiration. He'd love to live in New York City and attend one of the fashion design schools there.

Tyler thanks his parents and family for their love, support and understanding. He shared that his Mom is an inspiration for him as she also has had to overcome a great deal in her life. He thanks his best friend Isabel for being his "rock" over the last couple years and sticking by him. He also thanks his nominator, Ms. Ozan, for being a great, caring, understanding and supportive teacher and for recommending him for the Courage Award.

Tyler, on behalf of the City of Tempe, I am proud to present you with this 2021 Youthfest Courage Award.