

performed their talent showcases from last year in front of the crowd, something they didn't get to do last year due to the competition moving online due to COVID protocols.

"There's an energy that comes with these local, live performances that can not be matched," Auvinen said. "It was amazing to be able to be back and perform this year."

Additionally, last year's changes also caused Auvinen and Smith to miss out on the \$1,000 scholarships normally given out. However, to the surprise of Auvinen and Smith, both

were awarded with scholarships Saturday night.

One of the evening's emcees, membership specialist for the Keizer Chamber of Commerce Fatima Falcon, was a Distinguished Young Woman of Keizer 2016, and understands what the program is meant to offer its participants.

"One of the biggest points we give to young participants is public speaking ability, and being on Zoom robbed them of that," Falcon said. "Them being able to be part of this program, even though they weren't competing, was such a key moment for them in their Keizer career."



- A. Anna Sponable reacts in shock when announced as a 2023 Distinguished Woman of Keizer as McKenna Eppley and Anet Quintero Salgado cheer her on Saturday, April 9, at McNary High School.
- B. Fatima Falcon, one of the emcees for Saturday's Distinguished Young Women of Keizer event, holds up an applause sign while giving her introduction to the audience along with 2022 representatives Sydney Smith and Ellie Auvinen.
- C. 2023 Representatives Kiele Jarnagin and Anna Sponable pose for photos together following the Distinguished Young Women of Keizer event on April 9 at McNary High School.
- D. McKenna Eppley plays *Menuet #1* from *Cello Suite #1* by Johann Sebastian Bach during rehearsals prior to the Distinguished Women of Keizer event on April 9.
- E. The 2023 contestants pose at the end of their fitness routine at Saturday's Distinguished Women of Keizer event at McNary High School.
- F. Anna Sponable sings *This Could Change Everything* by Francesca Battistelli for the talent showcase at the Distinguished Women of Keizer event April 9.
- G. 2023 Representative Kiele Jarnagin poses with her little sister Isabella Zaragoza Lopez after the Distinguished Young Women of Keizer competition.
- H. 2022 Representatives Ellie Auvinen and Sydney Smith react on stage when told they will receive the \$1,000 scholarships this year that they did not receive at last year.
- I. Ellie Auvinen performs her monologue from last year's competition. Auvinen and the other contestants were unable to perform in front of a live crowd last year due to the competition being moved online.

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