

PRESS RELEASE



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Suffolk's Anti-Bias Task Force Honors Students and Educators at Annual Awards Convocation



(Hauppauge, NY – June 7, 2013) The Suffolk County Inter-Faith Anti-Bias Task Force held its Annual Spring Convocation and Awards ceremony on June 5, 2013 honoring more than 30 students, educators and school groups from all over Suffolk County who have demonstrated a commitment to promoting the principles of human rights, inclusion and equality within their schools and communities.

Over 130 people gathered at the legislative building in Hauppauge to recognize the impressive work and contributions of these individuals and groups. Task Force Co-Chair Rev. JoAnn Barrett spoke about the importance of events such as these, stating that “They not only recognize the tremendous efforts of these students and educators but they bring people together from different parts of the County to exchange ideas and be inspired by each other to do even more good. The connections made at this past event were incredible.”

“I congratulate all of the students and school administrators who received recognition at Suffolk County’s Annual Anti-Bias Task Force Awards ceremony,” said County Executive Bellone. “The devoted efforts of these students and educators in addressing the detrimental effects of racism and bias is to be commended and applauded. Through their continued advocacy they are helping to make Suffolk County and our communities a better place to work and live.”

Within the last year, the Task Force has become a subcommittee of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, which is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. In recognition of the Commission’s milestone, County Executive Steve Bellone designated 2013 “The Year for Human Rights.

Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission, Jennifer Blaske, stated, “The impact that students and educators have on their peers at school and in their communities cannot be overestimated, that is why it is so important for us to recognize, encourage and promote the outstanding work that these remarkable individuals and many others are doing every day to make our schools, towns, county and world a better, more inclusive and safer place.”

"It is truly inspiring to take note and recognize the students, educators and schools who are making a difference in their communities and will make a difference in our world," said Task Force Co-Chair and Human Rights Commission Chairperson Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss. “There is reason to have faith that the world can be a more peaceful and respectful place in the years to come."

The following individuals and groups were honored:

Students

- Jahmal Burt Amityville High School
- Jeffrey Dickran Babylon High School
- Spencer Schnorr Bay Shore High School
- Isaiah Washington Centereach High School
- Annie Witherspoon Centereach High School
- Samantha Galina Commack High School
- Tatiana Woellhof Dawnwood Middle School
- Zah-Niyah Jerrick Edmund W. Miles Middle School
- Cara Bracken Miller Place High School
- Gabrielle Angeloro Miller Place High School
- Rachel Dwyer Rocky Point High School
- Sarah Whitworth Rocky Point High School

- Lindsay Cox Sag Harbor Schools
- Gabrielle Gardiner Sag Harbor Schools
- Elizabeth Grigonis Sag Harbor Schools
- Kendra Weatherell Sag Harbor Schools
- Victoria Koffsky West Islip High School
- Matthew Wheeler Wyandanch Memorial High School

Educators

- Regina Casale Longwood Jr. High School
- Brooke Bonomi Rocky Point High School
- Linda Aydinian Sag Harbor Schools
- Ellen Martin Southampton Intermediate School
- Kerry Palumbo Southampton Intermediate School

Programs

- Peer Support Program, Bay Shore High School
- Center for Peace Program, Central Islip High School
- Holocaust-Genocide Project, Cold Spring Harbor High School
- A World of Difference Organization, Huntington High School
- Gay Straight Alliance Club, Islip High School
- Longwood Diversity Institute, Longwood School District
- Global Awareness Club, Shoreham-Wading River High School
- Gay Straight Alliance Club, Walt Whitman High School

(Additional photos from the event are available.)