

**New York's Top Two Youth Volunteers Selected in 21st Annual National Awards Program**  
**Tuesday, February 09, 2016 01:01:00 PM (GMT)**

**Bellerose and Roslyn Heights students earn \$1,000 awards, engraved medallions and trip to nation's capital**

**Honors also bestowed on youth volunteers in Dix Hills, Belle Harbor, Sloan, Elmont, Corona, Massapequa Park, East Northport and Lynbrook**

Dimple Belani, 17, of Bellerose and Cole Faller, 12, of Roslyn Heights today were named New York's top two youth volunteers of 2016 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. Dimple was nominated by Girl Scouts of Greater New York in New York, and Cole was nominated by Roslyn Middle School in Roslyn Heights. The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 21st year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Dimple, a senior at Bronx High School of Science, produced a series of episodes for a public television station featuring interviews with accomplished women to inspire young girls to pursue higher education and their dream careers. In 2012, Dimple visited the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in London and learned about the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, which include promoting gender equality and empowering women. She was inspired to embark on a project that incorporated the UN goals, one that would promote higher education and career choices for women. "From an early age, I was encouraged by my mother and my Girl Scout leaders to dream big and follow my heart, but many other girls were not as fortunate," she said. "So I firmed my resolve to provide support to girls who could not pursue their dreams, or who were compelled to change their goals."

Dimple assembled a production team, including a script writer, director, editor, and a light and sound technician, and then interviewed on camera a different professional woman each month. They included a lawyer, school principal, CEO, doctor, navy pilot, computer engineer and guidance counselor. Each was asked to tell "how they were able to overcome financial hurdles, social pressures and gender discrimination, and pursue higher education to realize their dreams," said Dimple. After she oversaw the post-production process, the interviews were broadcast on a local public TV station. Dimple, who plans to eventually pursue a medical degree, has received requests to produce more interviews, and said she will continue with this project well into the future.

Cole, a seventh-grader at Roslyn Middle School, helped start an annual community-wide flag football event that has raised nearly \$50,000 over the past three years to support young people with autism. When Cole was in fourth grade, he participated as a mentor in an after-school program for kids with special needs, and became good friends with an autistic boy named Luke. "Luke has autism," Cole said at the time. "It's okay, autism is just a different way of thinking." Cole wanted other kids to appreciate the importance of embracing differences, and also wanted to raise money for Luke's future needs. So, with the help of his family, he planned a small flag football game.

The idea quickly took off, and word of the event spread through the community. On the day of the games, more than 120 youngsters showed up at a local park to play, along with a large number of spectators, a DJ, a tattoo artist and caterers. The event, called "Go Long for Luke," was so successful it's been held twice since then, raising more money and awareness each year for those with autism.

As State Honorees, Dimple and Cole each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for four days of national recognition events. During the trip, 10 students will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2016.

**Distinguished Finalists**

The program judges also recognized eight other New York students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion.

These are New York's Distinguished Finalists for 2016:

**Nikhil Anand**, 18, of Dix Hills, N.Y., a senior at Half Hollow Hills High School West, co-founded "Roote Foundation," a nonprofit organization for which he has raised \$3,300 to provide free pre-school and after-school programs to children in low-income areas. Nikhil and his mother, who lost their home in a fire and spent three years struggling to regain normalcy, lived temporarily in neighborhoods where poverty, drugs and crime were common, and Nikhil wanted to provide hope for a better future for the children in these areas.

**Ariel Creamer**, 17, of Belle Harbor, N.Y., a junior at Edward R. Murrow High School, created a Facebook page called "Survivor's Silver Lining" in 2013 where she posted photos and stories of people in the Rockaway area who were affected by the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. Ariel would hear of survivors in need of certain items, post the stories, and make arrangements to deliver items donated by those following her page.

**Kwentin Foster**, 10, of Sloan, N.Y., a fifth-grader at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, raised \$6,600 by collecting recyclable cans and bottles, and has used the money to purchase fabric to make and distribute more than 300 blankets for children who are ill and in need of comfort through his project, "Kwentin's Blankets for Sick Kids." Kwentin, who started the organization in 2013, distributes his blankets to the local hospital and through the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Wings Flights of Hope, Harvest House and Ronald McDonald House.

**John Iacona**, 16, of Elmont, N.Y., a junior at Sewanhaka High School, founded his school's recycling club and raised \$4,000 to benefit local veterans with the redemption of 80,000 water bottles. John, who is also on the board of the charity Rock Out Cures, continues to volunteer on behalf of veterans, and has raised \$4,500 by soliciting donations from friends and family to support America's VetDogs, an organization that provides service dogs to veterans at no charge.

**Sharon Lin**, 17, of Corona, N.Y., a junior at Stuyvesant High School, founded a high school hackathon called "StuyHacks" to foster a love for computer programming, and raised \$2,000 in sponsorships and donations to support the event, which featured project judges from Google and a partnership with national computer programming organization Major League Hacking. Sharon has also created "Bit by Bit," a weeklong coding camp for middle school girls, and is involved in many other STEM organizations and projects to inspire others.

**Anthony Morano**, 17, of Massapequa Park, N.Y., a senior at Massapequa High School, has donated \$10,000 over the past four years to a number of charities, including the Nassau BOCES Long Island High School for the Arts, by hosting an annual Halloween "Cemetery of Lost Souls" event at his home. Anthony, who turned his family's passion for Halloween décor into a service project, has recruited a "scare team" to perform live haunts and a team of volunteers to help with makeup, costumes, soundtracks, props and sets.

**Dylan Perles**, 18, of East Northport, N.Y., a senior at Northport High School, has raised \$8,500 to benefit the Northport Food Pantry since 2005 by hosting a neighborhood bake sale on Halloween. The bake sale has grown over the years, and today, Dylan has a team of 35 volunteers helping with organizing the event, while she also oversees the baking and coordinates donations and publicity.

**Hailey Silver**, 17, of Lynbrook, N.Y., a senior at Lynbrook High School, helped her family raise \$200,000 since 2006 when they founded the "Fly With Me Fund," a nonprofit organization that provides travel grants to families with children with Fragile X syndrome who cannot afford to travel to one of only 27 clinics that provide treatment. Hailey, whose brother was diagnosed with Fragile X, recently spearheaded a research study to determine how the fund can better provide for families, and is now in charge of increasing corporate donations in 2016.

"Prudential commends each of these young volunteers for using their creativity and compassion to bring positive change to their communities," said Prudential Chairman and CEO John Strangfeld. "We hope their stories inspire others to consider how they can make a difference, too."

"We are pleased to honor these students not only for their exemplary acts of service, but for the powerful example they've set for their peers," said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. "Congratulations to each of the 2016 honorees."

### About The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards represents the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteer service. All public and private middle level and high schools in the country, as well as all Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and HandsOn Network affiliates, were eligible to select a student or member for a local Prudential Spirit of Community Award. These Local Honorees were then reviewed by an independent judging panel, which selected State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists based on criteria including personal initiative, effort, impact and personal growth.

While in Washington, D.C., the 102 State Honorees – one middle level and one high school student from each state and the District of Columbia – will tour the capital's landmarks, meet top youth volunteers from other parts of the world, attend a gala awards ceremony at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and visit their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. On May 2, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2016. These National Honorees will receive additional \$5,000 awards, gold medallions, crystal trophies and \$5,000 grants from The Prudential Foundation for nonprofit charitable organizations of their choice.

Since the program began in 1995, more than 115,000 young volunteers have been honored at the local, state and national level. The program also is conducted by Prudential subsidiaries in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Ireland, India, China and Brazil. In addition to granting its own awards, The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program also distributes President's Volunteer Service Awards to qualifying Local Honorees on behalf of President Barack Obama.

For information on all of this year's Prudential Spirit of Community State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com> or [www.nassp.org/spirit](http://www.nassp.org/spirit).

#### **About NASSP**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States and 35 countries around the world. The association connects and engages school leaders through advocacy, research, education, and student programs. NASSP advocates on behalf of all school leaders to ensure the success of each student and strengthens school leadership practices through the design and delivery of high quality professional learning experiences. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Association of Student Councils. For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, VA, visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

#### **About Prudential Financial**

Prudential Financial, Inc. (NYSE: PRU), a financial services leader, has operations in the United States, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Prudential's diverse and talented employees are committed to helping individual and institutional customers grow and protect their wealth through a variety of products and services, including life insurance, annuities, retirement-related services, mutual funds and investment management. In the U.S., Prudential's iconic Rock symbol has stood for strength, stability, expertise and innovation for more than a century. For more information, please visit [www.news.prudential.com](http://www.news.prudential.com).

**Editors: For full-color pictures of the Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallions, click here: <http://bit.ly/Xi4oFW>**

View source version on businesswire.com: <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20160209005114/en/>

--30-- RC/NY

Contact:

Prudential Financial  
Harold Banks, (973) 802-8974 or (973) 216-4833  
[harold.banks@prudential.com](mailto:harold.banks@prudential.com)

Copyright Business Wire 2016

1.2

**Industries:** Education, Primary/Secondary, Other Education, Philanthropy, Professional Services, Banking, Finance, Children, Insurance, Teens, Other Philanthropy, Consumer, Foundation, Fund Raising

**Languages:** English

**Primary Identifiers:** PRU-US

**Related Identifiers:** PRU-US, 07QW70-E

**Source:** Prudential Financial, Inc.

**Subjects:** Award