

Briarcliff, Chappaqua youth among those honored by United Way

Posted by: Elizabeth Ganga - Posted in Briarcliff Manor , Chappaqua on Mar 02, 2011

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The Spirit of Volunteerism is Growing in Westchester and Putnam

Announcing the Volunteer Spirit Awards

Honoring Individuals for Outstanding Community Service

Tarrytown, NY, March 2, 2011 - What unites young social entrepreneurs with lifelong volunteers is the ability to see a problem, and the commitment to be part of the solution. The Volunteer Center of United Way will celebrate the contributions, initiative and ingenuity of dedicated citizens, young and young at heart, during the **2011 Volunteer Spirit Awards**—its annual recognition program. The 31st Annual Volunteer Spirit Awards celebration will take place on Friday morning, April 15, from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m., at the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in West Harrison, NY. Lou Young, the popular CBS 2 journalist, will emcee the event.

"Volunteerism is on the rise in Westchester and Putnam," said Alisa Kesten, Executive Director, The Volunteer Center of United Way. "The Volunteer Spirit Awards focus on outstanding individuals and group efforts as we applaud the invaluable contributions of all volunteers who support the important work of the nonprofit agencies in our communities."

The eight winners are individuals or groups who give selflessly of their time, experience and expertise to enhance the quality of life in their communities. They are selected by a blue-ribbon panel of judges.

The **2011 Volunteer Spirit Award Winners** are:

Arts & Culture Award: Missy Fink of Pelham for Pelham Art Center - creatively combined cooking, nutrition and art in an afterschool program for youngsters in grades 1-5 in Mt. Vernon. The children learned about healthy eating, food and cooking safety, and created a cookbook of their favorite recipes.

Education and Literacy Award: Olive Cooper of Hartsdale for Union C.A.R.E.S - mentored young women in the White Plains and Greenburgh area, helping them find funding sources for college and organizing visits to colleges.

Going Green Award: Joanne Fernandez for Friends of Westchester County Parks - played a leadership role in pursuing environmental initiatives as a board member of the Friends of Westchester County Parks, including securing funds for vital projects like tree planting in Kensico Dam Park.

Health & Safety Award: George Karp (Mamaroneck) and Jack Safirstein (Hartsdale) for Food Bank for Westchester - led food drive for more than 20 years, most notably the highly successful Yom Kippur Appeal that is now conducted by 30 synagogues throughout the county.

Quality of Life Award: Missy Palmisciano of Pelham for County Harvest - created a food rescue project that collects surplus food from catered events and restaurants and distributes them to hunger relief programs that serve the hungry and homeless.

Social Advocacy Award: Geoffrey Wiener of Mamaroneck for Hispanic Resource Center - a long time advocate working to protect the rights of Hispanic immigrants as well as day laborers' constitutional and human rights.

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New York Life Youth in Action Award: Project Relief youth group – This team of youth from Briarcliff, Chappaqua, Ossining and Peekskill raised funds, awareness and support and traveled to New Orleans to build houses for those devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

New York Life Youth Leader Award: Jamie Stein of Ardsley for Books to Soldiers – this industrious teenager established a program to supply and deliver donated books for military personnel serving our country overseas and at home.

The Volunteers Spirit Awards are made possible through the generosity of the following corporate sponsors: NY Life, TD Charitable Foundation, Belmay, Bunge, Kraft Foods, Mack-Cali Realty Corporation, Pepsi Beverages Company, Con Edison, Chubb, M&T Bank, O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins, LLP, Reader's Digest Association, Inc., The Dannon Company, Rollins Insurance Company, RPW Group, Webster Bank, The Westchester Bank. Additional support is provided through a strategic partnership with United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

The 2011 Volunteer Spirit Awards celebration takes place on Friday, April 15, at the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in West Harrison, NY, 8:00 to 10:00 a.m., and is open to the public. Ticket prices are \$55 per person and \$40 for non-profit staff members. For further information about reservations or to place an ad in the souvenir journal to congratulate winners call The Volunteer Center at 914-948-4452 or e-mail to vsa@volunteer-center.org.

About The Volunteer Center of United Way

The Volunteer Center of United Way – an independent nonprofit organization– has been inspiring meaningful change for over 60 years. Through a variety of programs and services, The Volunteer Center encourages people from all walks of life including businesses, nonprofits, schools, families, seniors and youth to volunteer and help deliver solutions that address community needs. This past year, The Volunteer Center supported 500 nonprofit organizations by connecting more than 18,000 volunteers who contributed over 276,000 hours of service, valued by The Independent Sector at \$8.5 million. The organization was recently honored with the Governor's Rose Award in recognition of its leadership, compassion, and ingenuity to advance volunteering and service initiatives. For more, visit www.volunteer-center.org.

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