



# ***PROGRAM DESCRIPTION***

The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is a voluntary recognition program that focuses on four categories: *Volunteer Service, Personal Development, Exploration and Physical Fitness*. The Award program is open to all Suffolk County residents between the ages of 13-18. Program participants earn the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award Medal for their hard work and dedication in accomplishing their established program area goals. The Medals are awarded based on the number of program areas that participants select as part of their individual challenge. The Bronze Medal is awarded to participants who successfully complete two of the four program areas. The Silver Medal is awarded to participants who complete three of the four program areas. The highest level of achievement in the program, the Gold medal, recognizes the participants who complete their established goals in all four program areas. The main objective of this competitive program is to encourage positive youth development and to recognize young people on becoming well-rounded and more civically engaged individuals.

### **Program Categories:**

The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is comprised of four program areas that are aimed at challenging youth to become more active and engaged in local issues and initiatives. Participants are challenged to take part in volunteer service, personal development, and exploration and physical fitness activities so that they are exposed to formative experiences that will allow them to gain valuable life skills.

#### ***Volunteer Service***

A key component of the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award program is the volunteer service requirement. The award program incentivizes applicants to volunteer their time and talents for the benefit of others in their communities. Volunteering is a transformative experience that allows individuals to become more in tune with the needs of others. By volunteering, applicants will also learn about the importance of commitment that is required to achieve their goals.

The Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award requires that applicants identify an issue in their community and develop a plan, which is to be enclosed with their registration. Once an issue has been identified, applicants are to partner with a community organization to work on their proposed plans.

Valid volunteer service must be performed for a not-for-profit organization and must not include inherently religious activities, such as religious instruction or worship. However, if the community service is performed at or with a faith-based organization, it must address a recognized need in the greater community. Additionally, the volunteer activities must provide a direct service to the community at large and must be performed without compensation. It should be noted that while the program aims to increase civic engagement, political activities are not eligible to satisfy this program requirement.

***Personal Development***

This exercise allows applicants to assess their skills and qualities, set goals for improvement and leads to increased confidence and achieving positive and effective life choices in the future. While other aspects of the recognition program require that applicants give back to their communities, this category asks that youth invest time in themselves so that they improve their self-awareness, sense of direction and path to personal fulfilment.

Personal development activities can be pursued either individually or as part of group. Educational activities could also serve as a personal development activity goal. Some examples of personal development activities include the following:

<b>Personal Development Activities</b>	
Arts and crafts	Career development
Creative writing	Cross cultural programs
Dancing	Language study
Leadership training	Speech and debate
Theater/acting	Gardening
Photography	Communication skills

In order to complete the requirements of the personal development category, this Award program requires that applicants identify one or more areas of improvement

within themselves. Once the areas of improvement have been identified, applicants are asked to prepare a personal development vision that outlines a specific timeframe and an action plan for how their goal(s) will be achieved. The personal development vision and action plan are to be submitted with the applicant’s registration. The personal development category’s main objective is for the applicants to develop the ability to analyze themselves so that they can learn and improve with purpose.

***Exploration***

The Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award challenges applicants to explore 15 Suffolk County Parks to expose the youth to the beauty and diversity of Suffolk County’s natural world. In addition to visiting Suffolk County Parks, applicants must compile a visual diary of their visits and provide a brief reflection of their experiences. The goal of this challenge is to connect the youth with nature, in order to promote stewardship of the County’s natural resources. However, if the program participant is not able to visit County parks near them, they are able to satisfy the requirements of this category by visiting village, town and state parks. Additionally, it should be noted that no park can be visited more than twice.

***Physical Fitness***

The Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award challenges applicants to increase their level of physical activity, in order to promote a healthy and active lifestyle. Applicants are challenged to set and achieve a quantifiable goal in a physical activity. Examples of physical fitness activities include the following:

<b>Physical Fitness Activities</b>	
Gymnastics	Baseball
Bicycling	Canoeing/Kayaking
Exercise program	Football
Hiking	Martial Arts
Running or jogging	Skiing
Weight training	Soccer
Skateboarding	Basketball

In order to complete the requirements of the physical fitness category, individual activities or participation in team sports is acceptable. If the participant is involved in team sports, the physical fitness goal has to demonstrate what additional effort was made by the participant to challenge his/her abilities. It is important to note, that physical fitness requires an extended commitment to the set goals. Therefore, the months of activity are as important as the number of hours dedicated to physical fitness.

**Program Requirements:**

Participants in the program earn the Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award Medals based on three tiers of recognition. Bronze, Silver and Gold medals are awarded to the youth for their accomplishments in completing the program requirements for each of the four categories. The requirements for the three tier Distinguished Youth Award Medal Program increase based on the level of recognition that the young person registers for. Each award level is aimed at recognizing the commitment of the Suffolk County youth to accomplish the goals they set for the selected categories they choose to pursue.

<b>Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award</b>	
<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Minimum Hours by Program Area</b>
<b>Volunteer Service</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Personal Development</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Exploration</b>	<b>15 Park Visits</b>
<b>Physical Fitness</b>	<b>100</b>

**Bronze Medal Award**

The Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award recognizes applicants who successfully complete the requirements of **two** program areas with the Bronze Medal.

**Silver Medal Award**

The Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award recognizes applicants who successfully complete the requirements of **three** program areas with the Silver Medal.

## **Gold Medal Award**

The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award recognizes applicants who successfully complete the requirements of all **four** program areas with the highest award, the Gold Medal.

### **Program Registration:**

To earn the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award, applicants have to identify the award level they are registering for and set their goals for the number of program areas that correspond to that award. The program registration should include a brief description of the issues that the applicant is going to address, as well as a detailed plan of activities that will be performed to accomplish the set goals.

Once the goals and activity plans has been prepared, applicants must schedule the first of two meetings with the Suffolk County Legislator who represents his/her district. During the first meeting, an applicant will discuss their goals for the challenge and present their proposed plan for achieving those goals. Upon completion of all activities, an applicant will schedule the final meeting with their Legislator, to share the lessons learned throughout the process and to request a letter of recommendation which will be included in the application for their selected Award.

The registration deadline for the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is June 30, 2017. Once registered, applicants will have one year to complete the program area requirements of their selected award level. Registration forms are available online on the Suffolk County Legislature Distinguished Youth Award Program's [webpage](#) and can be downloaded and mailed to The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award, Office of the Presiding Officer, Suffolk County Legislature, P.O. Box 6100 – Bldg. 20, Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099. All applicants must include a signed waiver along with their application. Applicants can begin to log activities completed towards the program, effective on the registration and signed waiver date. Please note that activities completed before registering for the program cannot be backdated.

**Award Selection Process:**

Applicants, who complete all of the program area requirements for which they registered, can apply to be part of the Annual Medal Presentation Ceremony. Commencing in 2018, an Annual Medal Presentation Ceremony will be held during the July/August General Meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature. Requests to attend the Annual Medal Presentation Ceremony must be received by the Office of the Presiding Officer of the Suffolk County Legislature no later than July 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following the program registration.