



DuWAYNE GREGORY
Presiding Officer
Suffolk County Legislature



CONTACT: Luann Dallojacono
luann.dallojacono@suffolkcountyny.gov
(631) 853-5807

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Presiding Officer Gregory Announces Distinguished Youth Award

Program aims to connect and engage Suffolk County teens



At Blydenburgh Park, Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory announces the Legislature's new Distinguished Youth Award program with Legislators Leslie Kennedy and Monica Martinez and some program registrants.

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. – As part of his continued efforts to engage and retain Suffolk County youth, Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory today announced the launch of the Distinguished Youth Award program, which promotes and recognizes achievement, initiative and service in Suffolk County youth.

The program is open to county residents between the ages of 13 and 18. Registrants will work with local officials over the course of a year to lay out plans and goals that touch on volunteerism, personal development, exploration of Suffolk County, and physical fitness.

Presiding Officer Gregory made the announcement during a press conference at Blydenburgh County Park in Smithtown alongside young people who have already registered for the program. Also joining him were two of his colleagues, 9th District Legislator Monica Martinez and 12th District Legislator Leslie Kennedy.

“The goal in establishing this program is to encourage young people to become well-rounded and engaged in local issues and initiatives,” said Presiding Officer Gregory. “Our young people are our future. This program is one way to build a foundation on which these young adults can continue to develop a connection to their communities, to understand their needs, and to explore solutions. We are encouraging them to be leaders whose roots are firmly planted in Suffolk County.”

Modeled on the Congressional Youth Leadership Council, the Distinguished Youth Award program challenges participants to take part in two or more program categories: volunteer service, personal development, exploration of Suffolk County parks, and physical fitness. Medals will be awarded based on the number of categories in which participants engage as part of their individual challenge. The Bronze Medal will be awarded to participants who successfully complete two of the four program areas. The Silver Medal will be awarded to participants who complete three of the four program areas. The highest level of achievement in the program, the Gold Medal, will recognize participants who complete their established goals in all four program areas.

“Suffolk County is lucky to be the home to so many wonderful young people who have distinguished themselves in many ways,” said Legislator William R. Spencer, who co-sponsored the resolution to establish the program. “It will be a great honor to recognize them individually.”

Registration forms are available online on the Suffolk County Legislature’s Distinguished Youth Award program’s webpage, <http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov/DYA.html>. They can be mailed to: Suffolk County Legislature Distinguished Youth Award, Office of the Presiding Officer, Suffolk County Legislature, P.O. Box 6100 – Bldg. 20, Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099.

“The Distinguished Youth Award emphasizes the importance of a well-rounded, goal-oriented individual,” said Legislator Martinez. “I encourage the participation of our youth in this initiative being provided by the Suffolk County Legislature. Our children are our future and we must prepare them for the ever-changing world; they are capable of achieving anything they set their mind to.”

“In Suffolk County we have many accomplished young men and women,” added Legislator Kennedy. “The Distinguished Youth Award will foster an environment where our youth will continue to accomplish great things, and grow into civically minded adults.”

The Distinguished Youth Award program is just one of several of Presiding Officer Gregory’s initiatives to engage young minds of all ages in the legislative process. Last year, he established the Next Generation Advisory Council, which brings together residents in their 20s and 30s to discuss issues facing millennials and weigh in on proposals that come before the Legislature. In addition, this summer marks the third year of the new Page Program, which the Presiding Officer established to give college students a first-hand look into how local government operates. Finally, Presiding Officer Gregory’s Youth Leadership Caucus helps high school students develop leadership skills and become active in their communities.