14th Annual Awards Banquet

April 26, 2017
Franklin Plaza
Troy, New York

Champions of Character Award Honorees

2017
Honorary Committee Chairs
Dr. Susan C. Scrimshaw, President, The Sage Colleges and Allan Stern

Honorary Committee
Michael J. Castellana, CEO, SEFCU
Fredrick W. Erlich, CEO, Living Resources
Dr. Susan Groesbeck, Emma Willard
Randy Hall, Community Advisory Board Chair
Mel and Sissy Horowitz, Development Committee, Chair
Honorable Kathleen Jimino, Rensselaer County Executive
Honorable Lynn Kopka, Troy City Council
Honorable Paula Mahan, Supervisor, Town of Colonie
Dr. Angelina Maloney, Superintendent, Brunswick CSD
Josef M. Markowski
Marra’s Pharmacy, Cohoes
Honorable John T. McDonald III, Assembly Member, District 108
Joan Monk
Ralph Singh, CEO, Wisdom Thinkers
Samuel Shevat, CS Arch
John D. Walko, Ph.D.
Dr. Marie Wiles, Superintendent, Guilderland CSD
April 26, 2017

Welcome to the 14th Annual Champions of Character Awards Banquet.

We thank the generosity of our hosts—the Franklin Plaza, The Sage Colleges, The Esteves School of Education, the Honorary Committee, chaired by Dr. Susan C. Scrimshaw, President, The Sage Colleges and Allan Stern and our volunteer boards, community partners including our prime sponsor, Educational Vistas, and each of you in attendance.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to publicly recognize students, educators, community leaders, schools, school districts, civic organizations and businesses of outstanding character that make a difference in the quality of life for our children and our community.

Founded in 2000, the Academy for Character Education at The Sage Colleges has been implementing our mission of developing positive character and providing events/programs and support for students, parents, educators, businesses and community groups. We implement programs teaching civility, alternatives to bullying and violence, as well as excellence in the classroom and the work site. Our goal is to develop moral character traits such as respect, honesty, caring relationships, fairness, courage to do the right thing, responsibility, and performance character traits such as service to community, good citizenship, perseverance, creativity, punctuality, self-discipline, strong work ethic, and striving for excellence.

We extend to each of you our sincere thanks and appreciation for supporting this event and look forward to your continued involvement as we work together to realize our common vision of creating caring communities of outstanding character. Working together, we make a significant difference in the lives of our youth.

Sincerely,

John D. Walko, Ph.D. 
Dr. Philip Fusco
Associate Director

Kathy Jimino
Banquet Chairperson

Randy Hall
Board Chairperson
Dear Banquet Attendees and Award Winners,

On behalf of The Sage Colleges Esteves School of Education, I congratulate all individuals, schools and community members being honored this evening, and appreciate your continued commitment to the principles of Character Education in your work with children, families and community.

The Esteves School of Education faculty and staff support character education and believe that all children can learn and develop positive character.

Sage's Esteves School of Education is proud to offer the following programs:

- Physical Education, BS
- Childhood Education, BS
- 4+1 Physical Education BS and Health Education MS
- Childhood/Literacy Education, MS
- Childhood/Special Education, MS
- Literacy Education (Birth-6), MSED
- Literacy Education (5-12), MSE
- Literacy/Special Ed (Childhood), MS
- Professional School Counseling, MS
- Professional School Counseling, Certificate
- School Health Education, MS
- Special Education (Childhood), MSED
- Applied Behavior Analysis, MS (online)
- Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate (online)
- Educational Leadership, Ed.D.

For all of us in the Esteves School of Education, character education remains critically important, especially during an era when teachers and school leaders face many challenges associated with accountability for student achievement and school safety.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to our many community volunteers whose dedication and hard work ensure the success of the various character education programs and outreach initiatives in our schools and communities in the capital region and throughout New York State. Your support for The Sage Colleges’ Academy for Character Education and its mission is most appreciated.

Sincerely,
John J. Pelizza, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, Esteves School of Education
2017 Champions of Character
Program

5:30 p.m.  
**Reception:** Hors d’oeuvres, cash bar, & raffle

6:25 p.m.  
**Welcome:** Honorable Kathleen Jimino, Banquet Chairperson

**Greetings:** Dr. John Walko, Director, The Academy for Character Education

**Introduction:** Dr. Philip Fusco

**Presentation:** West Patent, New York State School of Character
- Live Presentation Student Drummers
- Character Education Video, audio visual compliments, Scott Crowder

**Introduction of Honorary Chairs Dr. Susan C. Scrimshaw, President, The Sage Colleges and Allan Stern:** Dr. John Walko

**Character Education Service Recognition:** Presenters Dr. John Walko and Dr. Ellen Adams

**Student Awards**
*Presenters:* Dr. Ellen Adams, Chair, Leadership Board and Joan Monk, Yorktown Hts

**Honorees:**
- Emiley Filuta, Student, Carroll Hill School, Troy
- Amara Grace Engel, Student, Chatham High School
- Elizabeth Floud, Youth Leader, Mechanicville Elementary School
- Egypt Ufele, Youth Leader, Queens NY

**Student Group Awards**
*Presenters:* Sandra Brower and Candy Santos Rataul, Leadership Board

**Honorees:**
- A World Of Difference, Averill Park High School (Students- Sarah Hemmerle, Hannah Brisee, Catherine Hannigan)

7 PM  
**Dinner**

Guests have been assigned a registration number on their name tags. Please write the registration number on the back of each raffle ticket before depositing the ticket into your preferred basket of choice. Each prize for the raffle will be distributed to the winners at their designated tables during dinner.
School of Character Awards

Presenter: Dr. Philip Fusco, Associate Director, The Academy for Character Education, Coordinator, NYS Schools of Character

Honorable Mentions
Honorees: Como Park Elementary School, Lancaster, LCSD
Lee Road Elementary School, Wantagh, LUDSD

New York State School of Character
Honoree: West Patent Elementary School, Bedford Hills, BCSD

School District Leadership Award
Honoree: Dr. Ralph Napolitano, Superintendent, Yorktown CSD

The Sage Colleges Awards

Faculty Member Champions of Character Award
Presenter: Dr. Gail Hughes Morey, Professor, The Sage Colleges
Honoree: Dr. David A. Salomon, Professor, The Sage Colleges

Administrator Champion of Character Award
Presenter: Dr. David A. Salomon, Professor, The Sage Colleges
Honoree: Kat Aviza, Director of Transfer Admission, The Sage Colleges

Student Champions of Character Award
Presenter: Dr. David A. Salomon, Professor, The Sage Colleges
Honorees: Kathleen Giarratano, Community Counseling of Psychology, Sage Graduate School
Kaylee Dalaba, Creative Arts Therapy, Russell Sage College

Administrator Leadership Awards
Presenter: Dr. Marie Wiles, Advisory Board, Superintendent of Guilderland CSD and Honorable Kathleen Jimino, Advisory Board, Rensselaer County Executive

School Administrator Award
Honorees: Laura Schmitz, Clayton A Bouton High School, Voorheesville
John Sawchuk, Columbia High School, East Greenbush CSD

Education Leadership Awards
Presenter: Dr. Marie Wiles, Advisory Board, Superintendent of Guilderland CSD and Honorable Kathleen Jimino, Advisory Board, Rensselaer County Executive.

Promising Practice Educator Awards
Honorees: John Carmello, Superintendent, Troy City Schools
Asheena Baez, Assistant Director for Pupil Services, Building Principal, Beacon City School District

Teacher Leadership Awards
Honorees: Patrick Mulligan, Jonas E. Salk Middle School
Margaret Rose Goodman, West Patent Elementary School
Guidance Counselor Award
Honorees: Gretchen Lynch, Shenendehowa High School
Cheri Vandenberg, Menands School

Athletic Leadership Award
Honoree: Brian Beaury, St. Rose College

School Psychologist Award
Honoree: Liz Gialanella, Albany High School

School Social Worker Award
Honoree: Linda Bille, Algonquin Middle School, Averill Park CSD

Youth Advocate Award
Honoree: Elizabeth Conners, Executive Director of Instruction and Assessment, Fulton City District

Business and Civic Leadership Awards
Presenter: Assemblyman John T. McDonald III and Dr. Bruce Crowder, Leadership Board

Business/Corporation Award
Honoree: Lou Stutzke, Business Owner, Fuel-n-Food, Mayfield NY

Civic Leader Award
Honoree: Seth Appert, Autism Awareness Advocate

Community Leadership Service Award
Honorees: Roberta Sandler and Mary Partidge-Brown, Grass Root Givers, Albany, NY

Community Mentoring Award
Honoree: Jerry Ford, Volunteer Team Program Coordinator, Block Center, Troy Boys & Girls Club

Civic Leadership and Community Award
Honoree: Beth Martinez, Education Director, Albany Region Anti-Defamation League

Educational Leadership Outreach Award
Honoree: Mark Weintraub, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center of Schenectady

Business Organization Leadership Award
Honoree: Trustco Bank, Home Town Heroes, Corporate Office Glenville, NY

Closing Remarks: Dr. John Walko, Director, The Academy for Character Education
2017 Champions of Character Honorees

Student Awards

Student Leadership Award

Emiley Filuta, Carroll Hill School, Troy, NY
Emiley is a 5th grader and a great classmate and friend to all at Carroll Hill School. She is helpful, responsible, trustworthy, and always takes the initiative, as seen by her dedicated involvement as Student Council President. In addition, she participates in Odyssey of the Mind and Peer Tutoring with the younger primary grades. She can often be found in the hallway tutoring first graders, demonstrating patience and compassion or heading the 5th grade fundraisers. Emiley is able to balance school and her extracurricular activities, demonstrated by her exemplary attendance and academic achievement. Emiley is a wonderful addition to our educational community at Carroll Hill and she will be missed when she moves on to the middle school.

Student Leadership Award

Amara Grace Engel, Chatham High School, Chatham, NY
Amara is a three sports varsity athlete participating in tennis, bowling and track and field. She has won co-MVP in tennis and has gone two years undefeated in the regular season. Amara is a member of Photography club, Community Service Club, Yearbook Club, Student Government and Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention. She has participated in the Fall Festival of Shakespeare for four years and the school musical. She has been class treasurer for the class of 2017 for the past two years and a treasurer for the Yearbook Club. This is the second year, Amara has been the Student Liaison for the Chatham High School Class of 2017 Sean’s Run Committee, which is an organization that promotes awareness of underage drinking and impaired driving. She is also a member of National Honor Society and National Art Honor Society. She is natural leader who leads by example, taking no credit for the hard work she does for the school and community, and she maintains good grades. She has volunteered with many community organization including Northern Columbia County Rotary, Upper Hudson Valley Zonta, Hands and Voices of New York and has taught grade 6 students in Hudson High School sign language. Amara is a strong and courageous person and supportive towards students with diverse backgrounds.

Youth Leadership Award

Elizabeth Floud, Mechanicville Elementary School, Mechanicville, NY
Elizabeth Floud is a 5th grader from Mechanicville who zeroed out her 30 dollar savings account to pay for pizzas for those who have no place to call home. She gave her all to help the homeless. Elizabeth delivered pizza to the Shelters of Saratoga. Her mother was touched by Elizabeth’s act of kindness, but was not surprised. Her mother knew that 30 dollars was not enough to cover enough pizza for the 40 individuals who go to the shelter each night. She started a gofundme page, Pizza for the Less Fortunate. Elizabeth and her mother aimed for 150 dollars but achieved $585. A local pizza parlor in Mechanicville, Bucciero’s Pizza heard about her generosity and decided to donate all the pies. This unexpected donation prompted Elizabeth to reconsider how to spend the money. She decided in addition to delivering the pizzas to donate 200 dollars to Shelters of Saratoga and the rest of the money to the food pantry at Mechanicville Area Community Center. Her acts of compassion combined with her passionate advocacy for positive change demonstrate her outstanding character and leadership. Aside from doing what she can to help the homeless, she has participated in Girl Scouts for 4 years and is an active volunteer at Mechanicville Emergency Community Center Food Pantry. It is true for Elizabeth: One act of kindness, can plant that seed that transforms the world.
Youth Leadership Award

_Egypt Ufele, Student, Queens NY_

Egypt (Ify) was diagnosed with a critical asthmatic health condition. She was in and out of the hospital on a regular basis and was put on major medicines and steroids that affected her physical appearance, mainly her weight. It wouldn’t be long Ify was in better health and returned to school, only to become bullied and made fun of by other kids in class. Being pushed around and called chubby, Ify knew that something had to be done. She wanted to make a difference, not just for herself, but so other kids could feel safe and not have to be tormented or bullied over something that they simply had no control over. In January 2015, with the help of her mother, Ify decided to start a charity called Bully Chasers. It’s an organization that supports youth who have been bullied and provides them a platform to speak against bullying. In her spare time, Ify was having fun making her Barbie doll clothing with her grandmother. After learning how to sew for her dolls, Ify began to make clothing for herself because she really couldn’t find fashionable pieces in her size. In July 2015 Ify was able to showcase her new fashion line and Ify’s fashion line was formulated around an anti-bullying campaign. Ify has taken something so negative and hurtful and turned it into a positive experience. She has created a platform to show her talent while putting out a positive message to help kids just like her that are bullied every day. In today’s society, bullying isn’t just at school like it used to be 20 years ago. With social media being so prominent in our world today, it can ruin and destroy our youth, and deter them from following their dreams, or lead them down paths that include drugs, alcohol abuse, or even suicide. One quiet voice has created a landslide of change with the joy of a child and the power of a warrior. So kudos to Egypt America’s Child Prodigy for Anti-Bullying.

Student Group Award

_A World of Difference at Averill Park High School, Averill Park CSD_

_Student Advocates- Sarah Hemmerle, Hannah Brisee, and Catherine Hannigan_,

Sarah, Catherine, and Hannah have demonstrated excellent character throughout their high school years. Now as juniors they are working to create programs that will help to eliminate bias, hate, and bigotry in their school. They have taken the initiative to teach other students what it means to be an ally, and not just a bystander.

New York State School of Character Awards

Honorable Mentions

_Como Park Elementary School, Lancaster, LCSD_

Como Park School has always recognized that we are responsible for developing the whole child. In the 2001-2002 school year, we began trying out strategies like, "Character Trait of the Month", "Caught Being Good" stickers, and assembly programs in which performers came in and talked to the students about good character. The positive results from these initiatives seemed to be short lived. Something felt wrong. It felt like rewarding positive behaviors constantly and focusing on one trait at a time was missing the target. We were looking for a more genuine and embedded approach to instilling character in our students. In 2007, a teacher joined our staff that came from out of state. There was something very unique about her first grade classroom. When you walked in, a student came up and shook your hand and welcomed you to the classroom. There was eye contact, a bright smile, and a firm handshake. We wanted to know more. She told us about "The Responsive Classroom." The next few years we were trained, conducted study groups, and began to live and breathe Responsive Classroom. We realized though that there are many different ways to develop great character, but it is important to make them a way of life for ourselves and our students. During the years since then, we have studied the "Growth Mindset", started a "Peaceful Bus" program, created a beautiful garden, and developed a leadership program for our third graders. It has been an amazing journey!
Lee Road Elementary School, Wantagh, LUFSD
As an ongoing process, our school community has continued to explore ways to help our students grow on a social and emotional level. Ten years ago, our school shared decision making team endeavored to create a more formal character education program. With this in mind, three teachers and the principal attended a Get-a-Voice Program workshop. Each year our school character education committee, comprised of teachers, parents and our principal, creates a theme that focuses on what is most valued in our community. The caveat to the program is that it allows our school the flexibility to adapt the program framework while allowing our school to focus on the values that are most important to the school community. Last year's theme was "Kindness" and this year our themes are "Leadership" and "Citizenship." All themes are aligned with our school Mission Statement which is as follows: "The Lee Road Learning Community is committed to creating an environment that promotes academic achievement. We believe in cultivating independent thinkers, promoting opportunities to become leaders, and fostering responsible citizens who positively contribute to society." After taking root at Lee Road, our district then adopted the program for each of our district's elementary schools. The "buy-in" from our school community comes from the passion and dedication demonstrated by the core committee members. Each year our challenge is to look for opportunities to grow and expand our program.

New York State Schools of Character

West Patent Elementary School, Bedford Hills, BCSD
West Patent Elementary School is a K-5 public school located 45 miles north of New York City. We serve a diverse, multilingual student population, and we deeply believe in the importance of teaching the whole child. Omode, our character education initiative, was born eleven years ago from a felt need on the part of staff for a more explicit, cohesive approach to teaching character education. A study group researched the essential guiding principles and elements of an effective character education initiative. These principles and elements were shared with and embraced by staff and served as the springboard for our initiative. A Climate Action Team comprised of staff, parents and community members was formed; core virtues were chosen and explicitly taught through children’s literature and facilitated dialogue; our school mascot was born; and a character education song was penned and proudly sung at assemblies. At that point we were off on our character education journey. Fast forward eleven years. Our character education initiative has grown in leaps and bounds and is still evolving. Character education is embedded in the curriculum and permeates our entire learning community. There is an emphasis on service learning and on creating a school-wide culture of kindness. Being kind to others is a clear expectation and our school symbol, Kit the Fox cub, is to be seen throughout the building and serves as a constant reminder to staff and students to, “Be kind every day. It's the West Patent way.”

Character matters
School District Leadership Award

Dr. Ralph Napolitano, Superintendent, Yorktown CSD
Superintendent, Dr. Ralph Napolitano is a leader and driving force. He entered Yorktown Central School District with a K-12 vision and a cohesive program centered on educating the whole child, rigor in the curriculum and the motto “Come to Learn, Learn to Lead and Serve”. He has created a wonderful school and community environment through his outreach and participation in district wide and community events. Due largely to his fantastic work his Yorktown School District was recognized last year as a National School District of Character.
Ralph willingly shares his time with parents, teachers and students and makes everyone feel heard as well as reinforce that they are important members of the school community. Dr. Ralph Napolitano leads by example every day. He greets staff and students by name and makes a point to visit each school. He participates in activities on every grade level, whether cooking for fourth grade or reading to students in the K-3 elementary school. He gives undivided attention, encouragement, support and consoles to students, teachers and staffs in situations like illness, family need, recovery or unfortunate loss of loved ones. He encourages staffs to participate in district wide fundraisers. He writes well and provoking newsletters where he highlights the “Good News” from around the district and continually emphasizes the importance of character education and service learning in the molding of our future citizen. He is man of character, a visionary and transformational leader. He passionately believes in molding our students into future compassionate citizens and leaders. He lives by his favorite quote by Mahatma Gandhi “Be the change you want to see in the world”.

The Sage Colleges Awards

Faculty Member Leadership Award

Dr. David A Salomon, Professor of English, The Sage Colleges
David is respectful, trustworthy, and dedicated in his work to develop the personal and professional character of not only students and colleagues, but of the institution as a whole. His “job” is to teach – literature, philosophy, composition-and he does so with grace, creativity and inspiration. Most of all he cultivates tremendous personal growth in his students both inside and outside of the classroom. David works tirelessly for the Sage community for positive character development that underlies many of his efforts. David Salomon serves as Director of General Education and coordinates the program entitled Women Owning Responsibility for Learning and Doing (WORLD). David is also Director of Undergraduate Research, a program that raises awareness of the importance of research not only in the sciences, but in the arts and humanities as well. David motivates students to apply, and faculty to encourage their students, and puts together a strong and inspiring conference every year. His newest endeavor through the faculty development committee is to set up a faculty mentoring program to pair junior faculty with more senior faculty. These endeavors with both students and faculty impact the character of the institution as a whole. He is helping to shape undergraduate character, shape and reshape faculty character, and reminds us all to focus on the tremendous impact we can all have on individuals, and ever entire institutions. It is no small coincidence that the respect he has held attracted seven recommendations from his colleagues for this award. He is challenging us all to be champions of character, and he does so without any expectation of recognition. He does this because that is who he is.
Administrator Leadership Award

Kat Aviza, Director of Transfer Admissions, The Sage Colleges
Kat is an incredible role model to students and everyone around her. She displays a constant ray of positivity and helpfulness. She is always willing to drop everything she is doing to help a prospective or current student in need. Moving up quickly at Sage has been a surprise going from a Graduate Assistant in Transfer Admissions to the Visit Coordinator in a matter of months was the best thing that could have happened to her. She inspired her student workers to challenge themselves and motivated them daily. Transitioning into an Assistant Director of Transfer Admission was clearly Kat's calling. Working with non-traditional students and staying late to get them through the door shows just a piece of her selfless nature. Watching her work tirelessly with students while completing her masters was incredible. She took so many of her counselling skills and applied them to her work. Watching Kat work with students is incredible. She is able to promote Sage ever so genuinely because she is a product of our programs. When as the Director, with new responsibilities and daunting tasks, she always comes to work with a smile on her face ready to face any challenges with creativity and energy. Even outside of work she volunteers at a soup kitchen, practices mindfulness, and displays the most positive and kind nature.

Student Leadership Awards

Kaylee Dalaba, Creative Arts Therapy, Russell Sage College '17
Kaylee has such a positive impact on the lives of the people around her. She is a great listener and a helping hand to friends in need. She is always willing to give advice, and she tries to help her peers find solutions to any problems they may have, no matter what she has going on in her own life. Kaylee also understands the importance of philanthropy. As a phoathon student worker she helps to raise money for The Sage Fund of Excellence, Sage’s Annual Fund. The Sage Fund supports student scholarships, campus improvement and much more. Kaylee understands the value of giving back, and has even become a donor herself. Kaylee exhibits the kindness and selflessness that we should all try to put out into the world every day.

Kathleen Giarratano, Community Counseling of Psychology, Sage Graduate School '19
A role model student leader, enthusiastic activist, and incredibly caring person, Katie Giarratano exudes positive character. She currently serves as a seasoned volunteer for Education Lead, Youth People in Recovery, where she mentors those in recovery from substance use disorder and speaks about mental illness at local public schools. She was prompted to serve in this capacity because her mother had a substance use disorder and being able to connect with students going through the same challenges while promoting recovery is vitally important to her. Students approach Katie after her presentations to thank her for helping them feel not so alone. Katie once said, “I volunteer to help those who need it most.”
Education Leadership Awards

Promising Practice Educator Awards

John Carmello, Superintendent, Troy City Schools
John Carmello is the superintendent of the Troy City School District and he has served as a beacon of light for his students, parents, faculty and staff. In a recent video welcoming his students back to school he enthusiastically told them that with hard work and a positive attitude, there would be no limit to what they could accomplish. Using Carol Dweck’s model of Growth Mindset, Superintendent Carmello created the motto, “We can and we will, end of story!” This past year for the first time in Troy High School’s history, minority students graduated at higher rates than their white peers. According to the Albany Times Union, as of last June, 79 percent of white students in the city school district graduated on time compared to 85 percent of black students and 86 percent of Hispanic students. Congratulations to Superintendent John Carmello and the Troy City School District for believing in the power of hard work, determination and positive thinking for all students in the Troy City School District.

Asheena Baez, Assistant Director for Pupil Services, Building Principal, Beacon City School District
Asheena Baez is a consummate educator and administrator, and an equally passionate advocate for character education and social emotional learning, often quoting Aristotle, “Educating the head without the heart is no education at all.” She is constantly looking for ways to reach the “bottom third” those student populations who are left behind. While Assistant Director for Pupil Services, she saw the potential of Wisdom Thinkers, “Stories to Light our Way” to unlock the stories in her special needs and non-verbal students. Over the course of a 5 week summer program the students flourished, jumping reading levels and able to express themselves publicly, in some cases for the first time. In addition she has worked with the gangs in Newburgh to help them change their story, bringing them together with community leaders to listen to what their needs are. As a result of her positive results, she is constantly looking for ways to improve and expand Wisdom Thinkers’ curriculum, to help more student populations in need. She recently presented her experiences, along with Wisdom Thinkers Ralph Singh, at the joint Harvard – Tisch School conference on Moral Education. In great demand, she is an internationally renowned mindful leadership coach, curriculum developer, and educational consultant. She currently serves the Summer Principal Academy Administrative Graduate Program at Columbia University, as a Leadership Coach and Summer Instructor, collaborates with Yale University’s Center for Emotional Intelligence through the 1440 foundation as a curriculum developer for Social and Emotional Learning practices and techniques.

School Administrator Leadership Awards

Laura Schmitz, Principal, Clayton A. Bouton High School, Voorheesville CSD
Laura Schmitz exemplifies someone/educator who recognizes the importance of character development in not only students but every staff member in the building. Her boundless energy and optimism makes her an example and mentor to all who come in contact with her. She supports each and every student in their endeavors, whether attending a sports event, music event, or academic issue. No matter, she is visible to students, parents and teachers. Her efforts are endless. She is student oriented; truly pulling for the best successful outcome for all. She supports clubs and activities and encourages anti-bullying and inclusiveness. She is one of true character.
John Sawchuk, Principal, Columbia High School, Columbia CSD
A school leader not only has the responsibility to model positive character traits, but also to provide opportunities for ALL students to demonstrate character. John Sawchuk has made the socially disadvantage, at-risk students a focus of his leadership. John has consistently demonstrated a sincere interest in the disconnected student by providing various opportunities through education programs, field trips, and clubs for his school’s most troubled students to build self-worth and strong character. To see so many disconnected students suppressed by drug issues, teen pregnancy, dysfunctional families, and even poverty, volunteering at food pantries, homeless shelters, at a horse rescue farm, or succeeding academically through one of the alternative programs he helped create and supported, is the most sincere image of a leader with character who truly cares about the entire school population. John Sawchuk is a school leader who recognizes the value of strong character. He embraces his leadership role and his personal belief that ALL students should be provided with opportunities to develop and demonstrate positive character traits.

Teacher Leadership Awards

Patrick Mulligan, Jonas E. Salk Middle School, Levittown Union Free School District
Patrick Mulligan exemplifies an administrator who shows and supports good character. After communicating with the staff at Salk, he spearheaded the initiative on character education to develop a home grown program, instead of a store-bought one. The parents, teachers and district-level administrators all supported these new initiatives. Since this beginning, he has lead the charge in the name of R.I.S.E, creating committees for parents, teachers and students to provide input and feedback for school-wide initiatives. His leadership and dedication to character education is one of the reason why Salk Middle School won the State and National School of Character awards in 2016 after completing the rigorous application for two previous years. He continues to support the spread of character education programs in other schools in the district sharing his knowledge of the 11 Principles. Outside of school, he demonstrates good character. He is a soccer coach who models and expects positive behavior and character from his athletes. He also has been and continues to be a lifeguard during summer months at the local beaches on long island. Finally, to celebrate his family heritage, he plays drums in an Irish Pipe Band, both in school and in his community.

Margaret Rose Goodman, West Patent Elementary School, Bedford CSD
By her own example and work ethic, by her caring and helpful nature, Mrs. Goodman exemplifies the traits and characteristics of what they hope to instill in their students at West Patent Elementary School. Mrs. Goodman has been the initiator and champion of the school in Bedford Hills, NY since 2006. After devoting much of her own time researching various programs and approaches to systemically implement a character education program, she laid down the foundation by carefully engaging staff, parents, and the community. Together they understood the benefits of and need for a comprehensive approach to character education instruction. Mrs. Goodman accomplished this through a series of small group meetings that expanded to faulty meeting time and eventually, the creation of the Climate Action Committee. This group has expanded in their numbers, enthusiasm and the scope or their work. Mrs. Goodman’s commitment to providing a solid foundation in developing children of character are the main focus of her work. She continues to study new research findings in the field and brings the best information to her work. She is a highly respected member of the school and surrounding communities.
Guidance Counselor Award

Gretchen Lynch, Guidance Counselor, Shenendehowa High School
For over a decade Gretchen Lynch has selflessly and skillfully served our youth. In her role as a professional school counselor at Shenendehowa High School, Ms. Lynch has made and continues to make a positive difference in the lives of the students and families for whom and with whom she works. Her competence resides not only in her highly effective counseling skills but also in her collaborative, consulting, advocacy and leadership abilities. She is a role model to her education colleagues and a genuine asset to the school community and to the school counseling profession.

Cheri Vandenberg, Guidance Counselor, Menands School
Cheri Vandenberg’s goodness, her genuineness and empathy are evident in her thoughts, words, and deeds. As a professional school counselor at the Menands School, she has delivered a school counseling program that has and continues to address the diverse needs of the K-8 student population at the school. She is passionate about her role as a school counselor through which she counsels, advises, mentors, advocates and leads. Her skillful and careful attention to the students and families in the Menands School community is to be admired. She is a positive contributor to the learning culture that is carefully nurtured by the administration and her fellow educators. Her presence is highly valued and respected. The Menands School and the profession of school counseling are very fortunate to experience the skills and talents inherent in Ms. Cheri Vandenberg.

Athletic Leadership Award

Brian Beaury, Basketball Coach, St. Rose College, Albany NY
One of the most decorated and affluent college basketball coaches in the country, Brian Beaury has developed a program that gains the utmost of respect from every corner, on every level of the game throughout his years at The College of Saint Rose. Brian Beaury, who is a member of three Halls of Fame, has continually left an indelible impression upon a group of young men who continually surpass all expectations. Brian’s skills and efforts reach well beyond the basketball court. He inspires his players to be concerned about others and provides them with opportunities to instill a sense of Community Service. His players often can be seen at Middle Schools reading to students and involved in discussions with them. He became just the ninth active NCAA Division II head coach to reach the 600-win plateau, has an uncanny ability to instill his knowledge of the game and respect for others into his student-athletes’ performance.
Brian has earned Coach of the Year plaudits on five separate occasions and was nominated for National Coach of the Year in 1989. He has also guided several college All-Star teams on summer tours throughout the world. He also directs his own successful youth basketball camp every summer at the College and was the founder of the Saint Rose Summer Sports Academy.

School Psychologist Award

Liz Gialanella, Psy. D., Albany High School, Albany CSD
Dr. Gialanella has been making a difference at Albany High School, where she is recognized as the personification of extracurricular activities and student health issues. She advocates for students through her support of clubs and after school activities. Among the activities she mentors and advises are the Gay Straight Alliance and the Chess Club. She is the point person for suicide prevention and Dr. Gialanella was awarded the prestigious Golden Apple Award in 2016 for her innovative approach to student life.
School Social Worker Award
Linda Bill, Algonquin Middle School, Averill Park CSD
For the past 15 years Linda has served as Algonquin’s social worker. In that time she worked to improve our school culture through collaboration with students and staffs. In 2013 Linda founded the Rensselaer County Coalition for Safe Schools. The group has worked to coordinate resources among school districts and county agencies to support an integrated approach to addressing chronic bullying/harassment issues, provide a forum for the discussion of best practices in prevention and addressing school-community student issues. Linda has been serving as our building’s DASA Coordinator where she worked with students, teachers and the principal to focus on a holistic approach to promoting the goals of the DASA regulation. She initiated our school’s participation in the ADL’s “No Place for Hate Program” and has led to our building’s two time designation as a “Gold Star No Place for Hate” school. Linda developed student peer leadership groups to help guide this process and develop activities to support our goals of making school more inclusive and a positive environment for learning. Over the past year, Linda has worked diligently to integrate service learning into our school program. New “AMS Serves “ initiative was Linda’s brainchild, leading to all 7th & 8th graders spending a day out in community connecting middle schoolers with senior citizen and preschool aged children. This work is focused on developing deeper empathy and understanding of the importance of community service into student life.

Character Education Youth Advocate Award
Elizabeth Conners, Executive Director of Instruction and Assessment, Fulton City District
Elizabeth’s formal titles, include Executive Director for all Instructional and Assessment Programs Pre-K –12 in a district of 3594 students, Director of School Improvement, Director of Academic Intervention Services and Response to Intervention. That’s just the first 3 lines of her 3 page CV. But that doesn’t come close to defining Betsy. We’ve heard of teachers greeting each student, but Betsy dances for her Jr. High kids to welcome them before their tests. Looking down the hall, a student recently shouted, “Who’s that crazy lady?” The kid next to him responded, “She’s the girl who saved my life.” Last year Betsy had prevented his suicide by simply caring about him. With Betsy, “amazing” is the norm.

For over 20 years, she has been on the front lines making sure all of Fulton’s students, especially those who need someone to listen to their stories and care about them, whether the 2 new Yemeni girls with their hijabs, the students who have to sleep under bridges, or the “tough” kids others may just allow to fail or drop out, get the education they deserve; all the naturally talented, wonderful young people she mentors in the normal course of her day; and teachers and administrators she supports in their efforts to deliver the best possible education to their students. And sometimes she has to break up fights - it could help that her husband was one of the best and most feared wrestling coaches in the state. In addition, Betsy has been the remarkably supportive mother of Tim, the inspirational young man who found his vision by losing his sight.
Business and Civic Leadership Award

Business/Corporation Leadership Award

Lou Stutzke, Business Owner, Fuel-n-Food, Mayfield NY

Lou owns a gas station and a store that provides grocery items, complete deli of freshly made salads and soups, meats and pizza and specialty breakfast and lunch menus. Lou and Nan's shop is a favorite to many people and Lou is known as a good neighbor. He knows people by their names, and takes time to say hello and chat with them. Lou is involved in the community, supporting a number of events & contests throughout the year, events that bring additional business to the area, particularly during the winter months when the summer camping session has come to an end. Contests like Fall Fishing and Big Buck Contest, A weekend fishing contest in March, A spring fishing contest and a turkey contest is hosted by Lou. The biggest attraction to the area is the annual Walleye Fishing Challenge, which awards upwards of $70,000 in cash and prizes. People from all around the state come to participate in this contest. Lou also supports by helping the junior class at the local school fundraise money with a fishing contest of their own. He regularly donates to such school events as Post Prom, sends them extremely big and long submarine sandwiches to satisfy a hungry crowd of teens. He has hosted and has been directly involved with community events, opened a beach to the public for community events, as well as welcomed his employees to cool off in the summer heat with a swim. Lou is a wonderful example of character in motion for not only to the resident of Mayfield, but for all those who come to visit the little town. Lou’s big smile and cheerful “Hello” is just a beginning of a great experience.

Civic Leader Award

Seth Appert, Autism Awareness Advocate

In 2016, Seth was awarded the Autism Society of the Greater Capital Region's Leadership Service Award because of his outstanding work in this area. He has shown tireless dedication to the Autism cause. He is the founder of the RPI Hockey Autism Awareness Game. His contribution to autism advocacy has been recognized both locally and nationally because the annual event is the only one of its kind in Major Division I College Sports because of the total accommodation it provides for persons on the autism spectrum by limiting noise and visual stimuli that can adversely affect them during the game. Seth during his time at RPI guided them to a NCAA berth, numerous Top 20 rankings and was a finalist for Coach of the Year in the 2012-2013 season. Seth was a pivotal cog in two College Hockey National Championships when he was Assistant Coach at Denver University. He and his wife Jill are the proud parents of Campbell and Addison and reside in Niskayuna.

Community Leadership and Service Award

Roberta Sandler and Mary Partidge-Brown, Grass Root Givers, Directors, Albany, NY

The Grass Root Givers connect with individuals, families and businesses to collect like-new donations: clothing for children and adults (casual and professional), accessories, housewares, linens, small toys and books for all ages. We share these resources with individuals, nonprofits, academic programs, literacy projects and other agencies serving those in need. All donations to the Grass Root Givers are carefully screened, sorted, sized, organized and displayed. The mission is to always give with dignity. The Grass Root Givers does what they can to empower lives. Whether it is to get a young man ready for a job interview, help a veteran supplement their budget, or start a child on the road to reading, the goal is to continue to share resources with local families, and help more people move closer to achieving sustainable independence.
Community Mentoring Award

Jerry Ford, Volunteer Team Program Coordinator, Block Center for Troy Boys & Girls Club
Jerry Ford started the Block Center Program for the Boys and Girls Club. The Block Center is a youth development program for young people ages 11-16 in Troy NY area. The Block Center connects youth with caring adult mentors, who are committed to building character. The Block Center program offers group sessions, field trips, community events, tutoring, and situational support service. One example of this is the forum that was held on Martin Luther King Jr. day. The forum and workshops were based on nonviolence, justice and change that Dr. King stood for. The Block Center program is for youth to understand Dr. King and his legacy so that they can adopt those principles and make a favorable change. They also brought in the Troy Police Benevolent Association President Aaron Collington and city Officer Ralph Southward to explain the law enforcement side of helping youth understand their rights and what to do if they are stopped by police. At the end of this event, there was a panel discussion including law enforcement and youth organization officials that focused on community policing. Ford’s goal for the Block Center is to try to push positive change in the community. He wants to create conversation that is going to lead to positive change.

Civic Leadership and Community Award

Beth Martinez, Education Director, Albany Region of The Anti-Defamation League
Beth Martinez has been instrumental in providing students the support they need to be future leaders. With character and compassion students are able to develop projects in their school which support the concept of learning to be ally and not simply a bystander. She has provided time, energy and resources as well as continually acting as a positive role model for our young leaders.

Character Centered Extended Day Program Award

Mark Weintraub, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center of Schenectady
The Early Childhood Program at the SJCC working with Living Resources and Niskayuna School District provides quality childcare for a variety of ages and developmental levels. It is the belief that each child should be given the freedom to develop at his/her own rate. Through play, children learn to think by being encouraged to solve their own problems and answer their own questions, with guidance from the teachers. It is the mission of the Early Childhood Program to provide every child with a safe and an appropriate learning environment to develop a positive self-image, to encourage exploration and experimentation, to foster imagination and creativity and to develop the self-esteem and confidence to function in a positive manner in a group situation, no matter what the religious, ethnic or socioeconomic level of the family. All of the programs are designed to help each child learn to work cooperatively, develop literacy and math readiness, select activities according to interests, enjoy creative projects and practice cognitive, physical and social-emotional skills.

Business Organization Leadership Award

Trustco Bank, Home Town Heroes, Corporate Office in Glenville, NY
Trustco Bank has honored outstanding members of the community who have excel in acts of leadership and courage. They created the “Trustco Bank’s Home Town Heroes Hall of Fame” to honor individuals who demonstrate strong community involvement and work hard to make a positive change in the community. If you know someone that you believe is making a difference in the community and would like to recognize their hard work, please nominate them at https://www.trustcobank.com/page/home-town-heroes-62/register.html. A committee will review all of the nominations and select up to 5 individuals or groups that best demonstrate what it means to be a real Home Town Hero! Congratulations to Trustco for a job well done.
**The Academy for Character Education wishes to express sincere thanks to the following for their significant support:**

Educational Vistas, Inc., Scott Crowder CEO  
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Durham School Services  
Pioneer Bank, Thomas Amell, President  
Esteves School of Education, The Sage Colleges; John Pelizza, Ph.D., Dean  
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region, Inc.  
Stewart’s Shops  
Susan Law Dake, President, Stewart’s Foundation  
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Troy Housing Authority, Thomas Hulihan, Director of Program and Planning Development

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Donna Baratta. Yorktown CSD

[Image of thank you card]

[Image of stand up for character logo]
THANK YOU!

The Academy sincerely appreciates all of those who have helped with the many tasks required to put this event together. We apologize if we have inadvertently left anyone off this list.

The Sage Colleges:
Susan C. Scrimshaw, Ph.D., President
Susan W. Beatty, Ph.D., Provost
John Pelizza, Ph.D., Dean, Esteves School of Education

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The Honorary Committee Chairs: Dr. Susan C. Scrimshaw, President, The Sage Colleges and Allan Stern

The Community Advisory Board, Randy Hall, Board Chair
Banquet Chair: Kathy Jimino

Banquet Nominations Committee: Kathy Jimino, Chair

The Academy’s Graduate Assistants: Leanne Egan, Micala Hammond, and Alisha Sharma

Program Booklet Organization: Dr. John Walko, Editor; Leanne Egan, Assistant Editor; Philip Fusco, John Wands Sacca, Ph.D., and Graduate Assistants Leanne Egan, Micala Hammond, Alisha Sharma

The NYCSSOC “Champions of Character” School Selection Committee

The Sage Colleges Champions of Character Committee, Dr. David Salomon, Chair

The Academy Leadership Board, Dr. Ellen Adams, Board Chair

John Wands Sacca, Ph.D., Leadership Board and Advisory Board General Secretary

Photographer: Kevin Buess, HVCC

Awards by Walsh’s

Student dinners donated by Franklin Plaza

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Raffle Donors, Kerri DiCaprio, Capital District YMCA, Joan Monk, John Wands Sacca, Ellen Adams, Kathy Jimino, Randy Hall, John Walko

Volunteers: Candy Santosrataul, Nadine Cunningham, Ellen Adams, John Wands Sacca, Bruce Crowder, Lukas Crowder, Scott Crowder, Maureen Flanigan, Randy Hall, Bernice Hebert, Mel Horowitz, Sissy Horowitz, Kim Macica and Anna Grace, Mary VanVliet, Leanne Egan, Micala Hammond, Alisha Sharma
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Congratulations to
2017 New York State Champion of Character

Dr. Ralph Napolitano
Superintendent of Schools
Yorktown Central School District

The Yorktown Central School District Board of Education thanks Dr. Napolitano for his leadership and service to our district. Your vision, character and integrity have left an indelible mark in Yorktown. Your commitment to character education and personal modeling of honesty, integrity and character, helped guide us to the designation of a 2016 New York State School District of Character and a 2016 National School District of Character. We thank you for your dedication and commitment to our schools.
- Jackie, Mike, Anthony, Tom, Christine, Cheryl and Reshmi

Character is the indelible mark that determines the only true value of all people and all their work.
- Orison Sweet Marden
Congratulations to
Dr. Ralph Napolitano

Superintendent of Schools
Yorktown Central School District
2017 New York State Champion of Character

The YCSD Administrators thank you for your leadership, service and commitment to character!

"Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

- Unknown
The West Patent Elementary School community salutes its

Champion of Character:

Margaret Rose M. Goodman
Elementary Consulting Teacher

for her untiring work in the area of character development with students and the ongoing commitment to the families and staff of West Patent Elementary School in the Bedford Central School District in Bedford, New York.
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Summer Academic and Cultural Enrichment program for Elementary Students and Families (July, 2017): In its fifteen year this exciting venture is organized in partnership with the Troy Housing Authority, Pioneer Bank, Stewart’s Shops, and Educational Vistas. Held each weekday morning in July, it creates positive character trait reinforcement, academic enrichment, and enthusiasm for learning for inner city students in grades 1-6 and their families.

Think Ahead!

- The Academy's 9th Annual International Bullying Prevention Awareness Month (October 2017)
- 15th Annual Youth Leadership Summit December 2017
- Champions of Character Nominations are due by December 2017
- New York State School of Character applications are due by December 2017

15th NYS Schools of Character and Champions of Character Awards Banquet (April 2018)

The Academy has two volunteer boards:

The Leadership Board of teachers, school administrators and community organization representatives, meets monthly and helps organize The Academy's major programs. This board holds a Retreat each summer.

The Community Advisory Board of public officials, business and community organization leaders and school administrators, meets 3-4 times a year and helps cultivate Academy policy and resource development.

The Academy also reaches out to the community with special programs. Additional focal points include: Moral and Performance Character, Bullying Prevention, Service Learning and the alignment of character education committee with the Common Core. On site workshops are held for educators, community groups and businesses.

To join a board, volunteer, make a contribution or obtain additional information visit www.sage.edu/charactered or contact The Academy at 518-244-2336, email the Academy at charactered@sage.edu or contact Dr. John Walko, Director at walkoj@sage.edu

For complimentary consultation about Character Development programs including State Schools of Character please contact Dr. Philip Fusco at 518-244-2337