



THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

Honoring Outstanding Community Service by Young Americans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2015

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NEW YORK'S TOP TWO YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SELECTED IN 20th ANNUAL NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM

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

**Honors also bestowed on youth volunteers in Armonk, Sleepy Hollow,
Wynantskill, Grand Island, New York City, Bay Shore and Clay**

ALBANY, N.Y. – David Jaslow, 17, of Roslyn and Jake Gallin, 12, of New Rochelle today were named New York's top two youth volunteers of 2015 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. David was nominated by Roslyn High School in Roslyn, and Jake was nominated by Volunteer New York! in Tarrytown. The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 20th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

David, a senior at Roslyn High School, co-founded a charity that has raised more than \$300,000 over the past four years to find a cure for cancer and ease the burdens of families afflicted by the disease. David's is one of those families. His mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001, his uncle died from pancreatic cancer in 2007, and his grandfather has battled gall bladder cancer. "I knew I needed to take action to prevent other families from suffering these same tragedies," said David. He began participating in annual fundraising walks to support cancer charities, but soon realized that much of the money raised was going to organizational overhead instead of research and patient care.

So David and his mother formed a charity that delivers donations directly to critical research work and to families struggling with cancer. Their nonprofit organization, "Go With Courage, Inc.," has hosted a series of fundraisers including "Ladies' Day Card Parties," holiday shopping events, and "Casino Nights," which typically draw 200-300 supporters. David is responsible for almost every aspect of the planning for these

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events, including selecting locations, creating invitations, promoting attendance through social media and mass email marketing, maintaining guest lists, and selling sponsorships and advertising. He also recruits fellow high school students to solicit raffle prizes and stuff goody bags. In addition, David's charity has aided cancer-burdened families by conducting toy drives and delivering meals. "I have learned through personal experience that life can unexpectedly shatter the innocence you once enjoyed," said David. "It is what you do next that defines you. I chose to take a stand."

Jake, a seventh-grader at Albert Leonard Middle School, has raised more than \$12,000 for the United Service Organization (USO) by selling star-shaped magnetic car decals that honor families of soldiers who have served in the U.S. armed forces. Jake says his life changed the day he saw First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden on a television show in 2011 discussing the need to recognize military families. "Mrs. Obama reminded the audience that 1 percent of our country is protecting the other 99 percent," said Jake. "This statistic compelled me to design a star-shaped magnetic decal in hopes of raising awareness of the sacrifices that these brave families make every day."

Jake sells his decals - which read "We Support Blue & Gold Military Families"- in person, on his website (starsforcars.org), at sporting events and through local businesses. After his first printing, the USO of Metropolitan New York contacted him and agreed to become his partner. Last summer, Jake expanded his efforts by sending more than 7,000 letters to New York state schools, school superintendents and government officials, urging them to make an announcement recognizing military members and their families on three days each year: Memorial Day, Patriot Day and Veterans Day. More than 100 schools have notified Jake that they intend to follow his recommendation. "I hope I am having an impact on every single person who hears the announcement or sees a star decal on the car in front of them," said Jake.

As State Honorees, David and Jake 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 2015.

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 2015:

James Fallon, 13, of Armonk, N.Y., an eighth-grader at H.C. Crittenden Middle School, raised \$20,000 to provide 5,000 backpacks filled with school supplies to children in need throughout the New York public

school system through "Operation Backpack," a project he implemented as the head youth volunteer for the Heavenly Productions Foundation. James, who founded the annual Operation Backpack project in 2011, has recruited and oversees a team of 20 young volunteers to help with the packing and preparation of the backpacks each year, and has also organized a teddy bear collection on behalf of the foundation.

Sara Friedman, 18, of Sleepy Hollow, a senior at Sleepy Hollow High School, donated \$6,000 in profits from the sale of her book, "The Gluten-Free Guide to Washington, D.C.," to the Center for Celiac Research at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she has also served as an intern. Sara, who has celiac disease, wrote the book as a resource to help others with the condition find gluten-free restaurants, bakeries, and health food stores, as well as support groups and healthcare professionals throughout the Washington, D.C. metro area.

Shay Kerwin, 10, of Wynantskill, N.Y., a fifth-grader at Gardner-Dickinson School, has raised nearly \$18,000 to support the American Heart Association since he began volunteering for the organization's annual Heart Walk in 2012 after his father died from a heart attack. Shay, who also helps to prepare and serve meals at the Damien Center for people with HIV and AIDS, has organized various fundraising and awareness events for the heart association including raffles and a bowling event, and is planning a bottle drive in the coming year.

Devin Mueller, 17, of Grand Island, N.Y., a senior at Nardin Academy High School, raised \$20,000 to provide for various needs of children living in poverty overseas through her youth service organization, "Devin's Drive." Devin, who founded her organization in 2007, has used the funds to provide school supplies and computers, pay teachers' salaries, help support new school construction and the purchase of textbooks, and purchase a new pair of shoes for all 350 students at Crossroads Springs School and Orphan Care Center in Kenya.

Brook Peters, 18, of New York, N.Y., a member of the McBurney YMCA in New York and a senior at Gramercy Arts High School, has created and produced several documentary films to help raise awareness or provide assistance to people in need - including his most recent project, about post traumatic stress disorder among our nation's veterans, that is being used by veteran's foundations and VA hospitals as part of their PTSD patient assistance programs. Brook's first documentary was about the aftermath of 9/11 and its effects on schoolchildren in downtown New York City.

Lillian Pravda, 15, of New York, N.Y., a freshman at Ramaz School, founded "Vision For and From Children," and has helped to raise \$150,000 from a dedicated team of youth diplomats across the country who plan and implement fundraisers. Lillian, who received sight-saving cataract surgery as an infant, has used the funds raised to provide more than 24,000 children from around the world with the eye surgeries and corneal transplants that they otherwise could not afford.

Eric Ramsay, 17, of Bay Shore, N.Y., a senior at Bay Shore Senior High School, has raised more than \$40,000 since 2011 by coordinating the “Charlie’s Champions Foundation Tennis Event” to benefit children with leukemia at The Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop University Hospital. Eric, who lost both his grandfathers to cancer, recruits sponsors and volunteers, supervises all activities, personally raises money, and organizes the annual event.

Damon Villnave, 11, of Clay, N.Y., a sixth-grader at Gillette Road Middle School, has collected more than 2,000 blankets and \$2,000 to support the Syracuse Rescue Mission through the annual “DJ’s Gift of Warmth” blanket drive he founded in 2010. Damon’s blanket drives have been so successful that the Rescue Mission has donated excess blankets to other branches throughout the state of New York.

“Prudential is honored to celebrate the contributions of these remarkable young volunteers,” said Prudential Chairman and CEO John Strangfeld. “By shining a spotlight on the difference they’ve made in their communities, we hope others are inspired to volunteer, too.”

“These students have not only improved their communities through their exemplary volunteer service, but also set a fine example for their peers,” said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of NASSP. “Each of their stories is proof of the impact one young person can have when they decide to make a difference.”

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 4, 10 of the State Honorees – five middle level and five high school students – will be named America’s top youth volunteers of 2015. 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 100,000 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 and China. 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.

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.

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