

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH PRESENTS 2020 AND 2021 PUBLIC HEALTH AWARDS

***Top Honors go to the Open Door Baby Box Program and Hana Zalvan for 2020;
Amy Kirschenbaum, Neighbors Link and Nolan James for 2021***

(White Plains, NY) - Together with County Executive George Latimer, the Westchester County Board of Health presented the 2020 and 2021 Public Health Awards today, recognizing the outstanding contributions to public health in Westchester by nine people and three organizations, and celebrating the accomplishments of the public health community.

Latimer acknowledged the work of the Westchester County Department of Health and others in a proclamation declaring today “Public Health Appreciation Day,” to recognize the vital contributions of dedicated public health professionals, volunteers and community partners to improving the health of our community, and to honor National Public Health Week which was observed April 5-11.

Latimer presented the winners with proclamations honoring their achievements and said: “These awards help us highlight the important role that public health plays in our daily lives to preserve, protect and promote the health of Westchester residents. After the past 15 months, we have a much keener understanding and appreciation both for the importance of public health and for the people who look out for the health of our population. With their extraordinary concern for others, these volunteers set an example for all of us. I congratulate the winners and I encourage other residents to follow in their footsteps.”

Latimer thanked the volunteer members of the Westchester County Board of Health for safeguarding the County’s health, along with Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, and the Health Department, who work together to preserve, protect and promote the health of Westchester residents.

Board of Health President Robert Baker, MD, presented the Dr. Harold Keltz Distinguished Public Health Service Award for 2020 to the Open Door Family Medical Center for its Baby Box Program, which has provided infant essentials, a safe place to sleep and parent education to more than 1,300 families.

Board of Health Member Cynthia Chazotte, MD, presented the 2021 Dr. Harold Keltz Distinguished Public Health Service Award for 2021 to Amy Kirschenbaum of New Rochelle and Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco. Kirschenbaum, a physical education teacher at Westchester Day School in Mamaroneck, launched numerous efforts to assist Westchester individuals and families touched by COVID-19 and to give back to healthcare workers and first responders throughout Westchester and beyond. She delivered meals, raised fund, distributed iPads and iPhones to patients hospitalized with Covid-19, collected and distributed toys and baby care products and more.

Neighbors Link was recognized for the hot meals, groceries, referrals for support, medicine and public health messaging it provided to more than 1,000 new immigrant families each week during the pandemic.

Dr. Baker said: “With so much of our attention focused on the pandemic this past year, it is reassuring to know we have so many dedicated community partner agencies and selfless volunteers working to improve our community’s health. This is an impressive and accomplished group we are proud to honor.”

The Board awarded the 2020 J.R. Tesone Youth Public Health Service Award to Hana Zalvan of Briarcliff Manor for her advocacy of eating disorder awareness in schools. The Board awarded the 2021 J.R. Tesone Youth Public Health Service Award to Nolan James, an 11th grader from Larchmont. Nolan organized a bicycle brigade of school friends from Rye Country Day School who delivered meals to clients of Caritas, a Catholic charity in Port Chester. He also collected carloads of reusable bags for those deliveries.

Dr. Baker said: “The Board also recognized six Public Health Honorees for service to our community and we are thankful for the work they do.”

For 2020:

- Kathryn Joblon, a Montrose resident who has volunteered to help the needy, veterans and first responders, among others; and
- At Home on the Sound, an organization that helps Larchmont, Mamaroneck and Rye Neck seniors connect with each other and provides rides to medical and dental appointments; and
- Ellen Herlihy, who worked in her North Salem high school to destigmatize behavioral health issues.

For 2021:

- Molly Howson of Rye, who raised funds for personal protective equipment for hospital and nursing home workers; and
- Caitlyn Carpenter of Mamaroneck, who organized students to lobby for free legal representation for tenants facing eviction; and
- Milan Acosta of New Rochelle, who raised funds to feed essential workers.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “Improving public health takes creativity, commitment and collaboration, and we are grateful to all the honorees, the nominees and to all our non-profit partners for helping to fulfill the Health Department mission of promoting and protecting public health.”

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