

The Telegraph

Dinner celebrates outstanding teachers, academic success

APR 13, 2018

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Winners of the Power Hour award for teen Clubhouse members are Jeffrey Friedman, Joseph Lessard, Jacob Cantara, Tanya Bevis, Trinity Unthank, Kadenz Cardona, Hailey Lajoie, Tyler Murray, Brian LiRiano and Kalise Moore.

NASHUA – The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua hosted its 7th annual Great Futures Dinner on Wednesday to celebrate the academic achievement of club members and the teachers from schools throughout Nashua who have inspired them. During the dinner, the club presented awards to members who have made a commitment to academic success by becoming high achievers in education and

technology programs and those teachers who have made a significant impact in the lives of the members who nominated them.

Leading the program as the Master of Ceremonies was club member Tori Rondon-Escalera, who shared a few words on her own experience at the club before everyone in attendance enjoyed a meal made in-house by the club's junior kitchen staff members and Food Services Director Jasmine Torres.

“When I first became a member of the club, I was a nervous 5-year-old,” Tori said. “As I grew older, I eventually joined Clubhouse, where I was encouraged to work hard and do my best. Now that I’m in the Teen Center, I have been able to develop my leadership skills through Torch Club and Teen Council. I feel the club has helped strengthen my skills physically and mentally.”

Also speaking about the impact of the club was 2018 Youth of Year Mario Rodriquez Santana, who shared his winning speech as he gears up to compete for the state Youth of the Year title and Chief Operating Officer Kurt Norris, who shared more about the academic and leadership programs available to club members.



Cassandra Desfosses, right, accepts the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua Most Outstanding Teacher Award at the club's 7th annual Great Futures Dinner.

“The club does a lot in terms of academic success,” Norris said.

“This year, we had over 250 kids participating in computer programs, 150 kids participate in STEM mentoring and robotics programs and 1,000 kids participate in homework help programs that really makes a difference in helping them reach their educational goals.”

Presenting awards to members who have achieved academic success through the Club’s Power Hour homework help program were Teen Education Director Marcos Dias and Clubhouse Education Director Josh Goldman, who also was in charge of organizing the event.

“I love being a part of the education program at the Club where I’m able to see the commitment and growth of our members throughout the year,” Goldman said. *“It’s a really rewarding experience.”*

Winners of the Power Hour award for Clubhouse members ages 8-12 were Jaelyn Cruz, Yvette Byron, Bailey Byron, Dominick Coffie, Alyssa Santiago, Nico Frioni, Bishop Kearns, Chance Unthank, Aleighya Ray and Aidan Ray.



Nashua School District Assistant Superintendent Donna Fitzpatrick partakes in the food at the 7th annual Great Futures Dinner hosted by the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua. h.

The teen member Power Hour winners were Jeffrey Friedman, Joseph Lessard, Jacob Cantara, Tanya Bevis, Trinity Unthank, Kadenz Cardona, Hailey Lajoie, Tyler Murray, Brian LiRiano and Kalise Moore.

The club then closed the night with a performance by the Club Step Team and Dance Synergy group and the final presentation of the Outstanding Teacher Awards.

Teacher nominations were made by club members from every grade, all of whom wrote formal letters of recommendation for consideration. Members were tasked to write about the life lessons that they have learned from their teachers, what was unique about their favorite teacher being nominated as well as the activities and qualities that make this teacher special. A small committee then evaluated the forms and selected at least one teacher from each school.

The winners of awards included ELL teacher Claudia Castano from Nashua High School North and South, nominated by Yanelis Ramos; kindergarten teacher Iris Mattia from Main Dunstable Elementary School, nominated by Braden Dos Santos; first-grade teacher Patricia Gagnon from Sunset Heights Elementary School, nominated by Joshua Buckmire; second-grade teacher Maura McIntyre from Mt. Pleasant Elementary School, nominated by Isiah Santiago-Rodriquez; third-grade teacher Kristen Graven from Bicentennial Elementary School nominated by Briella Harrison; fourth-grade teacher Amy Seo from Charlotte Ave Elementary School, nominated by Haarish Babu; fifth-grade teacher Amy Shuler from Ledge Street Elementary School, nominated by Tiana Brown; sixth-grade teacher Bradley Schott from Elm Street Middle School, nominated by Alyssa Santiago; seventh-grade teacher Jennifer Chantler from Elm Street Middle School, nominated by Teaghan Silva; eighth-grade teacher Cassandra Desfosses from Elm Street Middle School, nominated by Tori Rondon-Escalera; ninth-grade teacher Suzanne Taylor from Nashua High School North, nominated by Levy Lantigua; tenth-grade teacher Heather Sylvia from Nashua High School South, nominated by Azaria Theriault; eleventh-grade teachers Douglas Beals and Jeffrey Leone

from Nashua High School South, nominated by Hailey Jaloie; twelfth-grade teachers Patrick Coad, nominated by Flossie Kimungu; and Stephanie Cassidy from Clearway, nominated by Anthony Godfroy.

During the award presentation, Tori spoke about the impact her teacher, Cassandra Desfosses, has had on her life.



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“My eighth-grade teacher Mrs. Desfosses has impacted me in a profound way,” Tori said. *“She truly cares about how well I do in school and how my life is going before and after school. I could not ask for a better teacher for my last year in middle school.”*

There to celebrate the achievements of the club members and the nominated teachers along with staff, mentors, friends and family, were members of the Nashua District Board of Education, including Gloria Timmons and Raymond Guarino, as well as Assistant Superintendent Donna Fitzpatrick.

“I’m impressed by how well the club prepares their members for high school through their wonderful STEM programs,” Timmons said. “And there are a lot of great teacher nominated who I know are really great at what they do, such as Suzanne Taylor from Nashua High School North.”

“I think it’s fantastic that the club is recognizing teachers because they do all the hard work,” Guarino said. “They are the unsung heroes of our district.”

Fitzpatrick pointed out what made the Great Futures Dinner and its recognition of teachers stand out among other academic and education-based award ceremonies.

“It’s wonderful that students have the opportunity to nominate teachers,” Fitzpatrick said. “It makes it a very special award and one to be especially proud of.”