



THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

Honoring Outstanding Community Service by Young Americans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ZACHARY RICE OF LONG VALLEY, NEW JERSEY NAMED ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP 10 YOUTH VOLUNTEERS OF 2016

OLD TAPPAN STUDENT ALSO HONORED FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE

*Academy Award-winning actress Hilary Swank pays tribute to both students
at national award ceremony in Washington, D.C.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Zachary Rice, 13, of Long Valley, N.J., was named one of America's top 10 youth volunteers of 2016 today by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards during the program's 21st annual national award ceremony at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium. Selected from a field of more than 29,000 youth volunteers from across the country, Zachary has earned the title of National Honoree, along with a personal award of \$5,000, an engraved gold medallion, a crystal trophy for his school, and a \$5,000 grant from The Prudential Foundation for a nonprofit charitable organization of his choice.

Also honored this week in Washington, D.C., was Benjamin Zangoglia, 17, of Old Tappan. Benjamin and Zachary were named New Jersey's top youth volunteers in February, and were officially recognized last night at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History along with the top two youth volunteers in each other state and the District of Columbia. At that event, each of the 102 State Honorees for 2016 received \$1,000 awards as well as personal congratulations from Academy Award-winning actress Hilary Swank. The honorees each also received engraved silver medallions and all-expense-paid trips with a parent to Washington, D.C., for this week's recognition events.

Zachary, an eighth-grader at Long Valley Middle School, initiated an annual 5K run/walk that has raised more than \$50,000 over the past three years to provide gaming systems and other fun distractions for young patients at Goryeb Children's Hospital in Morristown. Zach spent a lot of time in the hospital during fourth and fifth grade due to a painful hip infection and a subsequent debilitating bone condition. His father, however,

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made it a little easier for him by bringing his gaming system from home. “I quickly learned how important being distracted from pain can be to a child in the hospital,” said Zach. When he returned home, he announced that he wanted to buy gaming systems for all the kids in the hospital.

Zach and his mother agreed that a good way to do that would be to raise money with a 5K race. They mapped out a route, set a date, reserved a park and put together sponsorship packets for local businesses. Zach also secured donations of food and refreshments, and held a contest for kids at local schools to determine the design of the event’s official T-shirt. Zach had to undergo surgery just a month before the race, but despite having not walked in seven months, he managed to walk the entire course on race day, crossing the finish line to cheers and tears. More than 250 people participated in the event, and enough money was raised to purchase gaming systems for every room at the children’s hospital. Zach’s “Action for Distraction 5K” has been staged twice since then, raising more funds for other forms of distraction at the hospital, such as art and music programs, as well as for upkeep of its gaming systems.

Benjamin, a senior at North Valley Regional High School, organized a fundraising team that collected more than \$115,000 in donations last spring to fund a cure for a rare form of leukemia that Benjamin has had since he was 10 years old. When he was first diagnosed, Benjamin said he “hated everything about myself,” but after a “long, internal struggle,” he realized he couldn’t let his disease control his life. With a new attitude, Benjamin decided he wanted to help others living with blood cancer, especially children. “I needed to help rid the world of this insidious disease,” he said.

Benjamin got his chance when his oncologist nominated him to compete in the Leukemia Lymphoma Society’s annual fundraising competition, held each spring. He assembled a team of his closest friends and began strategizing ways to collect donations. Over the next 10 weeks, Benjamin’s “Team Be-CURE-ious” placed posters throughout Bergen County, sent emails and letters to potential donors, made telephone calls and in-person presentations, and solicited contributions from friends, family members and their business associates. When the deadline arrived, the team had raised \$115,332, the third-highest total in the New York City area. “Leukemia taught me that everyone has the power to overcome the bleakest experience, and the right attitude always yields success,” said Benjamin.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards is a national youth recognition program sponsored by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

“By using their time and talents to better their communities, these young people have achieved great things – and become examples for us all,” said John Strangfeld, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial, Inc. “Congratulations to an exemplary group of honorees.”

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“These students have demonstrated a truly remarkable level of leadership and commitment in the course of their volunteer service, and it’s an honor to celebrate their accomplishments,” said Michael Allison, president of NASSP. “We commend each and every one of them for a job well done.”

In addition to Zachary, these are the other 2016 National Honorees:

Kayla Abramowitz, 14, of North Palm Beach, Fla., an eighth-grader at Watson B. Duncan Middle School, has collected nearly 10,000 DVDs, books and other items for 81 hospitals and Ronald McDonald Houses in all 50 states through her nonprofit organization, “Kayla Cares 4 Kids.”

Connor Archer, 18, of Stillwater, Maine, a senior at Old Town High School, works to educate the public about autism and the challenges faced by people with autism like himself, and has raised more than \$12,000 for organizations that help people with special needs.

Grace Davis, 11, of Louisville, Ky., a fifth-grader at Greathouse Shryock Traditional Elementary School, has helped raise more than \$140,000 over the past four years to care for babies born prematurely by distributing piggy banks to students in her community and encouraging them to fill them up.

Maria Keller, 15, of Plymouth, Minn., a sophomore at Orono High School, founded a nonprofit called “Read Indeed” when she was 8 years old, and has since collected more than 1.7 million books for children in need in 50 states and 17 other countries.

James Lea, 17, of Las Vegas, Nev., a junior at Faith Lutheran Middle School and High School, helps brighten the holiday season for children who have recently lost a parent by surprising their families with an anonymous gift each day for 12 days, tied to the theme of the song “12 Days of Christmas.”

Jungin Angie Lee, 17, of Naperville, Ill., a junior at Metea Valley High School, co-founded a nonprofit organization that has generated nearly \$200,000 over the past nine years through annual fundraising events to help find a cure for her rare neuromuscular disease.

Jackson Silverman, 10, of Charleston, S.C., a fifth-grader at Advanced Studies Magnet-Haut Gap Middle School, persuaded a local food bank to let him start a youth volunteer program there in 2013 that has by now packed more than 14,000 weekend lunch bags for kids in need.

Clare Szalkowski, 10, of Dubuque, Iowa, a fifth-grader at Hoover Elementary School, started “Clare Cares” over two years ago to “build friendships and make our community a better place” by organizing projects that benefit bullied children, homeless and hungry people, and others in need of assistance.

Alisha Zhao, 17, of Portland, Ore., a junior at Lincoln High School, created a club at her school to provide services to local homeless people, and then founded a nonprofit organization called “Kids First Project” to expand her efforts and focus on the needs of homeless youth.

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The distinguished selection committee that chose the National Honorees was chaired by Strangfeld and included Allison of NASSP; Andrea Bastiani Archibald, chief girl expert for Girl Scouts of the USA; Robert Bisi, senior public affairs manager for the Corporation for National and Community Service; Tracy Hoover, president of Points of Light; Reneé Jackson, senior manager of education programs at the National PTA; Maxine Margaritis, vice president of volunteer services for the American Red Cross; Peggy McLeod, Ed.D., deputy vice president, education and workforce development at the National Council of La Raza; Dru Tomlin, director of middle level services for the Association for Middle Level Education; Frederick J. Riley, national director, urban & youth development at YMCA of the USA; and two 2015 National Honorees: AJ Mattia of Washington Township, N.J., a sophomore at Holy Cross Academy, and Morlan Osgood of Loveland, Ohio, a senior at Loveland High School.

Youth volunteers in grades 5-12 were invited to apply for 2016 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards last fall through schools, Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and affiliates of the HandsOn Network.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program was created in 1995 to identify and recognize young people for outstanding volunteer service – and, in so doing, inspire others to volunteer, too. In the past 21 years, the program has honored more than 115,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

For more information about The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards and this year's honorees, 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. 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 pictures of the Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallions, click here:
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For B-roll of New Jersey's honorees at the 2016 national recognition events, contact Prudential's Harold Banks at (973) 216-4833 or harold.banks@prudential.com.