




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: High School and Middle School Principals, Staff Members and Students

FROM: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: February 19, 2013

SUBJECT: Challenge to Educational Citizenship Award Program

This letter is our annual request for project submissions in the statewide Challenge to Educational Citizenship Award Program. These awards, which began in 1995-96, are the brainchild of the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE).

Any student-organized activity that represents a "good deed" is eligible for submission. Projects that demonstrate good citizenship, a commitment to others, civic awareness, leadership, responsibility and teamwork, and that provide opportunities for students to help others; will be judged in depth, breadth and quality of impact on others and the participating students. Projects submitted in the past have met the special needs of the homeless and the elderly; established peer mediation and student tutoring; and assisted other community organizations. The key is service to the school, community or those in need.

Schools may submit more than one project. Please complete a separate form (master copy attached) for each project. Every project submitted will receive a certificate of recognition and the members of SSACE will select 10 to 20 winners of the statewide awards. All submissions will be published in a book and distributed statewide to allow for replication of successful projects.

Awards will be presented in late May or early June. While we have averaged more than 100 submissions per year, we hope this year every middle and high school in Connecticut will submit at least one project. Thank you.

SP:1  
Attachment  
cc: Superintendents of Schools

## **PROJECT WINNERS: 2012-2013**

### **BETHEL – Bethel High School**

Superintendent	Dr. Kevin Smith
Principal	Christopher Troetti
Faculty	Mari Lerz
Student	Kelly Tyra

### **Our Dream**

This project began at a meeting of the Bethel High School Amnesty International Chapter as a way of illustrating select causes of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They hoped to make them more accessible for a student audience. A core production crew of five students with the help of a staff advisor and ten or so other participants helped take this idea and translate it into a stop motion video. As stop motion animation consists of hundreds of pictures, it took over fifty hours to film and edit the three-minute product. “Our Dream” ended up reaching many more people than those who attended the school film festival. It won Best PSA at the CT State Film Festival, has over 1,280 views on YouTube, and was shown to every audience who attended the Dalai Lama’s lectures at Western Connecticut State University. The video has spread the message of human worth and equality to well of 15,000 people so far.

### **NORWALK – Norwalk High School**

Superintendent	Anthony Dadona
Principal	Reginald Roberts
Faculty	Larry Anastasia
Student	Michael Bonebrake and Kaitlyn Solano

### **Bear Flop**

The Bear Flop is a belly flop contest at Norwalk High School that raised money for cancer relief. The flop was organized with the help of the Bears Beating Cancer Club for three months prior to the event. The fundraiser, which was held on January 17, 2013, included 28 student floppers and 7 teacher floppers. All participants raised money through a pledge system, and the large group of spectators paid admission to support the cause. The fundraiser was able to raise \$2,500, which was donated to the Closer to Free foundation at the Smilow Cancer Center at the Yale-New Haven Hospital.

## **WATERBURY – W.F. Kaynor Technical High School**

Superintendent	Dr. Abigail Hughes
Principal	Lisa Hylwa
Faculty	Lisa Henriquez
Students	Elizabeth Angelicola

## **Jane Doe No More – Escape Alive – Mother/Daughter Class**

Kaynor Technical High School Leadership students hosted the First Annual Escape Alive Survival Skills Program on April 25, 2012. The mother/daughter event was open to young women ages 10 and older and their significant female figure (mother, step-mother, etc.) The goal of this project was to educate and train women young and old and was their biggest class to date!

East Coast Training Systems joined forces with Jane Doe No More to offer the Escape Alive Survival Skills as a joint venture to teach as many women as possible the techniques and concepts that can prevent becoming a victim of domestic violence and sexual assault

Students took an active role in the planning and implementation of the event. They won a small mini grant from Waterbury Youth Services which required presenting the proposed plans for the grant and returning to debrief afterwards. This forum allowed our young people to be educated AND have a firsthand experience with survival skills that could potentially save their lives.

## **GRISWOLD – Griswold High School**

Superintendent	Dr. John DiLorio
Principal	Mark Frizzell
Faculty	Terry Cholewa
Students	Heidi Willard

## **Karing 4 Koen**

In the preschool program of the Griswold Community, a little boy named Koen Banker was diagnosed with stage 4 brain cancer. His family was informed that he didn't have much time. In an attempt to life the burden of Koen's medical expenses off of his parents' shoulders, the music department of not only Griswold, but Plainfield and Woodstock decided to produce a fundraiser. The three music departments came up with the idea of hosting a cabaret dinner to raise money for the family. The name Koen was spread throughout the entire community along with a desire to help. Soon, everybody was involved including the middle and high school student councils. They contributed to the cause by organizing coin drives named "Coins for Koen" and the "Penny War". These efforts combined with an auction and the cabaret, which was staffed by student performers and servers, raised over \$30,000 for the Banks family. Unfortunately, Koen passed away the day

before the event. However, his family still came to the dinner and they were overwhelmed with emotion when they saw how much their community cared for them.

## **HARTFORD – Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts**

Superintendent	Dr. Christina Kishimoto
Principal	Jeff Ostroff
Faculty	Jeff McQuillan
Student	Karishma Gordon

### **The Academy Therapy Band**

The Academy Therapy Band of Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts is a group of seven high School musicians, singers, and dancers whose focus is “healing arts therapy”. The ensemble’s repertoire offers audience participants a variety of music and dance styles including soul, rock, R&B, swing, salsa, rap, country, and the blues.

The musicians and singers provide the “feeling” as the dancers invite the audience to move. A country line dance, a salsa step, the Twist, or an interpretive modern movement to the tune of “Blue Velvet” with streamers of blue fabric (provided by the artists) drifting through the air, these are the ingredients that this ensemble blends together.

The magic of the arts changes our thoughts and feelings, about ourselves and others. The simple act of a senior citizen rising to the dance floor to participate is all it takes for the audience and the band to make a connection. The body language of the audience speaks for itself, as the music triggers memories of forgotten days, with family, friends, of school dances, parties, and the nightlife. But in a deeper sense, especially with those whose memories have faded, the power of rhythm and melody can still reach us all.

On January 30, the Academy Therapy Band traveled to Daybreak, a Hartford senior center in the West End. The center’s population is predominantly Latino, and the band’s strong rhythmic pulse was met with much enthusiasm as some of the forty to fifty seniors rose to dance. Some even found their way to the microphone to sing! The spirit of the music and the dance was truly transformational for this audience – but the payoff went both ways, as the high school students felt the love, respect, and sincere appreciation of the crowd.

Furthermore, the unification of young and old, of suburban and urban – of many cultures – and the ability of the students to reach an audience that is perhaps unfamiliar to the typical teenager, to create (and share) a beautiful moment together through the power of art, is what the band is all about.

This ensemble was a teacher/student vision, an outgrowth of a senior capstone project. In the fall of 2013, “The Academy Therapy Band” will be offered as an arts course at our school.

## **BETHEL – Bethel High School**

Superintendent	Dr. Kevin Smith
Principal	Christopher Troetti
Faculty	Lt. Commander Dwinells
Student	Jonathan Hart

### **Operation: Sweet Tooth**

With the overwhelming presence of anguish plastering the headlines and news lately, the presence of something “sweet” entering the news realm is a relief. Four years ago, Cadets in Bethel High School’s Navy JROTC program realized this pressing concern and acted upon it. And Operation: Sweet Tooth was initiated. Headed by the NJROTC program and the professional staff of Bethel’s Gentle Dental office, Operation: Sweet Tooth collects donated candy after Halloween to be sent overseas to impoverished children. Handed to them personally by military personnel who serve as “Ambassadors of Bethel”, these children are given a taste of sweetness and American hospitality to ease the hardships they endure each day. Cadet Jonathan Hart took charge of the Fourth Annual Operation, coordinating with local donors, arranging candy collection, organizing the students in collecting, packaging, writing letters to include, and shipping the candy to our Troops in Afghanistan.

## **WATERBURY – W.F. Kaynor Technical High School**

Superintendent	Dr. Abigail Hughes
Principal	Lisa Hylwa
Faculty	Lisa Henriquez
Students	Brandon Moher

### **Bicycle Santas**

On December 5, Senior Automotive students from Kaynor Technical High School spent the entire day assembling one hundred bicycles for the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, (CAFAP). The group of 12 students worked in the basement of the DCF Building on West Main St in Waterbury. They were very excited to volunteer for this great cause. The bicycles were donated by an anonymous donor and were part of a larger gift collection that benefitted about 1,000 foster and DCF children. Kaynor students are hoping the anonymous donor will continue with their generous donation each year so that they can make this wonderful partnership a holiday tradition.

## **WEST HAVEN – Notre Dame High School**

Superintendent      Neil Cavallaro

Principal              Patrick Clifford

Faculty                Patrick Clifford

Student                Kyle Torres

## **Kyle's Kids**

In 2007, Kyle's parents began fostering infants. When his now adopted sister came to his home to live at six weeks old, she only had the clothes she had on and a Pooh Bear pacifier clipped to her. As others came it always seemed to be the same thing, the infants only came to their home with what they had on and that was it. The reason for that is most children are removed in emergency situations from their biological homes and there is no time to gather personal belongings.

Feeling bad for these kids, Kyle started a project called "Kyle's Kids" in 2007 for foster children in the New Haven area of all ages. Blankets, stuffed toys, bottles, clothing, journals, toothbrushes, and all sorts of essential items of need and comfort are collected. They are sorted and individually bagged by age, and on a quarterly basis are presented to the Department of Children and Families for distribution to each child at time of placement

## **TRUMBULL – Trumbull High School**

Superintendent      Dr. Ralph Iassogna

Principal              Dr. Robert Tremaglio

Faculty                Tony Pijar

Student                Alanna Lynch

## **Soccer Swap**

As a competitive soccer player, Alanna was fortunate that her family has the ability to purchase new equipment each time she grew out of them. Yet, it got her thinking about the kids in town whose families could not afford to replace their equipment as she could.

So as a weekly "Buddy" for the TOPSoccer Program, a national outreach program that teaches mentally and physically handicapped children the game of soccer, she knew TOPS was a perfect place to develop her idea. She began collecting equipment through boxes that were set up around town from March to April. What people

donated, her team of 20 loyal volunteers cleaned, sorted and priced them from a range of \$5 - \$15, based on quality. On the first day of the AYSD spring season in April, she set up camp and tried to re-sell as much equipment as possible.

This was five years ago and has since raised over \$7,000, which is used to underwrite over 25 scholarships per year for the "Friends of Alanna" fund for TOPS, as well as recycled over 750 pairs of cleats. With this great experience, it has opened her eyes to the power of small actions and the impact they have on others.