

Commack Council of PTAs
49th Annual
Founders Day Celebration
2021

*Distinguished Service,
Honorary Life Membership
and
Advocate in Action
Recipients'
Biographies and Thank Yous*



Council Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Toni Newman

It is with great pleasure that we award Toni Newman as the Council Honorary Life Membership recipient. Toni possesses all the qualities needed in a Founders Day recipient. She has gone above and beyond to enhance the student experience in the Commack School District. Toni exemplifies selflessness and is an excellent role model for our children and for all members of our community.

In addition to all of Toni's PTA volunteer work, she is dedicated wife and mother of three. She is involved with all of her children's activities, and is an active member of Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and her Temple.

Toni is a wonderful, caring, selfless person. Toni's volunteerism with various PTAs throughout her 13 years is an incredible accomplishment. She is an unsung hero. She more than qualifies for the Honorary Life Membership Award. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award.

I am truly honored and humbled to receive the Council Honorary Life Membership award. Thank you to Diana Michel and others for the nomination and Council for selecting me this year. It really means a lot!

Thank you to my husband, Alan for always supporting me and being my biggest fan. Thank you to my amazing children, as much as they pick on me, they do enjoy the volunteer work I do, especially when they would see me in their classrooms and buildings. Also, without them I would have no reason to be part of the PTA.

I feel very blessed to be part of a community and school district that allows so much parent involvement and allows me to do as much or as little as possible.

This year, in unprecedented times, I took on the task of picture day district wide and it was challenging to say the least. Even though this job led to my nomination I could not have done without the help of many, so I thank you for the support and help. In gratitude ~Toni Newman

Advocate in Action Award – Nicole Kregler

Since the Advocate in Action Award is meant to recognize someone who works for change, improvement and growth, the Commack Council of PTAs could not think of a person more deserving of this honor than Nicole Kregler!

Mrs. Kregler is currently our very dedicated Director of Guidance for the district. The depth of her passion and professionalism can be seen in all that she does. She puts the students first and foremost always looking for new and innovative ideas to help them succeed. She has made valuable suggestions and improvements to the CHS Counseling Center which has resulted in CHS students and parents being better prepared for the students' educational journey. Her contributions extend to the CMS Counseling Center as well where her support and guidance truly impacts all students early on in their journey.

She is deserving of the award because she embodies the essence of what this Founders Day Award represents. Ms. Kregler's outstanding contribution to the welfare of children and youth merits this special recognition and the community's appreciation.

We thank you Nicole Kregler, with our deepest appreciation for your time, energy, and love of our district.

I am honored to have been selected to receive Council's Advocate in Action Award during my third year at Commack. To be considered in this group, knowing the years of dedication, service and commitment of other recipients and their contributions to the Commack community, is very humbling.

I'm lucky to work with such a dedicated counseling staff, creative administrative staff, and compassionate community to plan for programs that we hope will benefit all of our students. The social emotional well-being, as well as the development of life skills for students to be successful during transitional years and leading to post-secondary life is especially important to me. I am thankful to Commack for focusing not only on extraordinary academics, but on students' social emotional growth and development.

It is a true honor to receive this award and I am beyond grateful. I promise to continue to work toward positive change in our school community. With love and appreciation, Nicole Kregler

Commack High School Recipient

Advocate in Action Award – Holly Bellisari

It is the CHS PTA's pleasure to honor Mrs. Holly Bellisari with this year's Advocate in Action award. Mrs. Bell, as she is known, is an outstanding educator who goes well above and beyond the expectations of a teacher at CHS. Besides being a highly respected AP world history teacher, she currently serves as the Class of 2022 advisor. She is a role model to the students and participates regularly in shared experiences at CHS. In her role she connects on personal levels with all the students to offer an amazing experience. She finds time to mentor and be advisor for Girls Scholar Athletes' Leadership Corp, assistant for Senior awards and Graduation ceremonies. She deeply involves herself in the culture and programs with a mindset of enhancing everything she touches. Mrs. Bell has a constant enthusiasm for the students of CHS and is the perfect person to receive this award!

I am grateful to the PTA for all that they do for our students and for selecting me as the recipient of this year's Advocate in Action Award. I am honored and humbled to be receiving this award for doing what I love to do. Thank you to the CHS administration for valuing what we do as educators and thank you to Mr. Jeffrey Sautner and the entire CHS Social Studies Department for the hard work and dedication they show to our students every day. I am blessed to have a wonderful family, especially my husband Tim who is always supportive and my children Abigail, Gregory and Noelle that provide me with inspiration to try new lessons in the classroom. I am fortunate to work in a school that has deep commitment to do what is best for all students and to work with some remarkable colleagues that continue to challenge me to be a better teacher. Thank you again for this wonderful recognition. – Holly Bellisari

Commack Middle School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Madhu Dutta

Madhu Dutta has been an active PTA member since her daughter Mayah entered North Ridge Primary school in 2013. She took on the task of Military Bridge co-chair and managed this fundraiser for 3 years building a comprehensive database of Commack businesses, helping to reinvent the look and feel of the event and raising more than \$20,000 for school initiatives. As a class parent for both her son and daughter, she has worked in partnership with other PTA members to ensure that every child had a warm, inviting class experience and that parents had special mementos to remember their child's experiences even if they could not always attend events. She has volunteered for numerous PTA events ranging from fun fairs and book fairs to photography committees and sports events. As a board member, she has never been afraid to speak out and advocate on behalf of Commack's children and as a two-term PTA President both at Burr Intermediate and Commack Middle School, she has consistently introduced new programs and new ways of communicating with parents to make the PTA community more inclusive.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Founder's Day Committee for selecting me to receive the CMS Honorary Life Membership award. I have been a lifelong volunteer, giving my time, skills and heart to causes ranging from children's literacy and women's leadership to promoting arts and culture but it has been through my PTA participation over the last 7 years that I've seen how volunteers can truly strengthen a community and build bonds where none existed before.

Winston Churchill once said that "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." By giving my volunteer hours to the PTA, I have received so much more – meaningful friendships, the chance to be part of my children's education and the opportunity to build my skills as a leader. Thank you to the wonderful parents, administrators and staff who make the Commack PTA an organization that welcomes everyone in the community.

Advocate in Action Award – Denise Pihlkar

Ms. Denise Pihlkar has been at the Commack Middle School for twenty years. She was a special education teacher for ten years and is currently a guidance counselor. For the past ten years she has been the middle school liaison to the Arts and Education Committee for their Usdan scholarship/Summer STEAM scholarship. She is also the guidance liaison for the PREPaRE crisis intervention support team. She is the founding and current advisor of the LEGO Club at the middle school and has served on several curriculum writing committees and as a presenter during the 5th to 6th grade parent orientation. She is a tremendous asset to our school, community, and most importantly our children. One only needs to walk into her office to get a true feel for who Ms. Pihlkar is and what she does for her students. She creates a safe haven for children to work through their worries or problems. Ms. Pihlkar treats every child interaction with the utmost importance and care. She teaches them strategies to be able to tackle current and future issues on their own, empowering them to help themselves and be more independent. Ms. Pihlkar is the true definition of an Advocate in Action for our children.

I would like to thank our Founders Day Committee and the Commack Middle School PTA for selecting me as this year's Commack Middle School Founders Day Advocate in Action Award recipient. I am truly honored and grateful to receive this recognition and distinction. I also want to take this opportunity to thank our PTA and administrators for everything they do to better our schools and community. As both a parent and counselor in the district, I recognize the importance of creating positive learning environments and building relationships with students, parents, co-workers, and the community.

Before becoming a school counselor, I was a special education teacher for many years. My role as a special educator made me realize that I wanted to take my knowledge, skill set and passion for helping others and extend it beyond my special education students and help as many students and families as possible. It's with this passion that I can truly say that I love what I do each day and I feel very fortunate and blessed to be a part of the lives of the children and their families as well as the lives of the wonderful staff and administrators in our Commack community!

Burr Intermediate School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Tracy Decena

Tracy Decena has been an integral member of the Burr community for the past 10 years when her eldest son Luke began third grade. She is always an active participant on committees and executive boards at the school level as well as district special interest committees such as the Common Core Specialty Committee. A mother of 4 boys, Tracy has also served as class parent many times and is always ready to lend a helping hand. Tracy will be missed by the Burr PTA, but her legacy will live on through the programs she helped develop.

Thank you to the Burr Intermediate School Founders Day committee for this honor. Thank you also to my family and friends for all the support over the years especially my husband Eric, and my four children, Luke, Zachary, Devin and Logan. I am humbled and blessed to have you all by my side through these many years in the district. I am truly thankful to be in a community that places its children first. I am grateful to have had wonderful role models throughout the PTA community and worked with great teachers and staff throughout my many years in the Commack School District.
-Tracy Decena

Advocate in Action Award – Alison Butler

Mrs. Alison Butler has been a member of the Commack teaching staff for over 20 years. She is a dedicated educator who continuously works to foster an environment in which staff and parents work together to create a positive school experience for our students. Mrs. Butler is a leader on the Character Education Committee and collaborates with SBMT to keep our Good Character Awards and bulletin board up to date. An active member of the Burr PTA, Mrs. Butler works tirelessly with staff, students, and parents to build collaboration relating to student activities. The Commack School District is lucky to have such a dedicated educator!

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this recognition. I have been a proud member of the Commack teaching staff for over 20 years and feel extremely fortunate to be part of the Parent

Teacher Association. The partnership between our PTA and staff is second to none. Each and every day we share a common goal, and that is for each child to climb a little higher and smile a little broader. I feel blessed to be part of the Commack Community. Thank you for all that you have done for us!

John Mandracchia-Sawmill Intermediate School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Robi Bart

Robi Bart, has been an active member of the PTA since 2015. Her devotion and commitment to ensuring the well-being of all our students epitomizes the Founders Day Honorary Life Membership Award. She began her PTA journey as a member of the Gala committee for two consecutive years. In the following years, Robi continued to expand her roles and responsibilities, often taking on numerous positions simultaneously. She has been an elected officer of MSIS and CHS PTAs, including MSIS PTA Co-President, and Board Member and President of Sisterhood at her Temple. In every role, Robi exceeds her responsibilities, is extremely reliable and easily approachable. Not only did Robi excel in these areas, but she also continued contributing by chairing several committees, such as Fall and Spring Socials, Book Fair and serving as Council Representative. In addition, Robi has spent countless hours volunteering as a Class Parent and for many events including Holiday Boutique, Plant Sale and arranging thoughtfully crafted Bulletin Boards. In her true caring fashion, Robi's commitment and engagement does not end when she leaves. She is constantly offering advice and assistance to her successors ensuring continuity and a smooth transition. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty and is a truly deserving recipient.

I am truly appreciative to receive the Honorary Life Membership Award and join the amazing past and present recipients. I would like to thank Sawmill's Founders Day Nominating Committee and PTA for this honor. I have had the privilege to be an active member in our schools and community and I am glad that I am able to help participate in our children's educational and social experiences. I enjoy all my years working alongside the faculty, administrators, staff, and the parents of Commack. I truly thank each one of you for all your support! I would also like to thank my husband Jay, my sons, Lucas and Adin and my daughter Zoey for their support. Thank you again for this honor-Robi Bart

Advocate in Action Award – Patricia Tappin

Since 2002, Tricia has worked side by side with Commack staff, parents, and most importantly, the children. As a fifth-grade teacher, Tricia plans and implements lessons to meet the individual needs of her students. Her dedication and commitment go well beyond the walls of her classroom. Tricia has served on various committees including representing the fifth-grade teachers in the PTA. She also promotes the annual PTA Reflections contest and always has a good turnout! Ms. Tappin has done an amazing job as an advisor for the MSIS fourth grade CML (Continental Math League). She also serves as the fifth-grade science liaison.

When she is not in school, Ms. Tappin spends time with her amazing family. She is devoted to her son and three grandchildren. Holidays and weekends are spent with her extended family (including her nine nieces and nephews).

Ms. Tappin embodies the essence of what this Founders Day Award represents! Her outstanding contribution to the welfare of children and youth merits this special recognition and unstinted appreciation. It is with great enthusiasm and respect for an outstanding teacher and Mandracchia-Sawmill PTA member, that we presented Ms. Patricia Tappin with the PTA Advocate in Action Award!

Thank you to the Sawmill Intermediate PTA for honoring me with this year's Advocate in Action award. I feel very humbled about receiving an award for something I am passionate about. Nineteen years ago, I became a member of the Commack Community through my job. As I reminisce about the children and their families, I realized this is not just a job, it is a community I have grown fond of.

Burr is where I began my career and made many friendships with wonderful and talented colleagues. I feel very privileged to have been associated with those colleagues as well as my friends and colleagues from Sawmill. We have an amazing team of educators at Sawmill. I must thank them all for always supporting me in being an advocate and educator for our children.

I would also like to thank my family for always supporting me through the years with their encouragement and understanding. Lastly, I would like to thank the students who I have shared my home away from home with. They have brought me such happiness, learning experiences, and the enthusiasm to be even better. Thank you again for this wonderful recognition.

Indian Hollow Primary School Recipient

Advocate in Action Award – Julie Cristello

Indian Hollow Primary School PTA is honored to present the Advocate in Action Award to Mrs. Julie Cristello. Mrs. Cristello is a well-respected member of the Indian Hollow community and is currently a second grade teacher. In her time as an educator in Commack, she has been an avid supporter of both the North Ridge PTA and Indian Hollow PTA. Mrs. Cristello's role in Indian Hollow's PTA is that of advocate and supporter from inside the classroom. As a member of the second grade team, she is consistently involved with the many unique events for our second graders. She offers a calm and child centered perspective. Her organization helps to facilitate memorable and safe events. She works closely with committees and class parents every step of the way.

In addition, Mrs. Cristello also supports our families, understanding the unique situations our families may be facing and also highlighting the noble and unique professions our parents have in her classroom. She consistently helps facilitate the connection between the parent(s), teacher(s) and the community. Mrs. Cristello goes beyond normal classroom responsibilities by supporting, sharing and helping to facilitate the PTA in various ways.

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Indian Hollow PTA for nominating me for this year's Advocate in Action award. I have been very fortunate to have a long, fulfilling teaching career in Commack and to have worked side by side with so many wonderful teachers, administrators, PTA members, and parents. I have witnessed firsthand the hard work and dedication of so many caring people who give up their time and energy for the one thing that binds us all- the children! Congratulations to all the other well-deserved honorees.

North Ridge Primary School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Linda DeAngelis

Mrs. DeAngelis is an inspirational leader and tireless volunteer in her efforts to support our students, faculty, and families of the Commack community. Mrs. DeAngelis has served in numerous capacities including sitting on both North Ridge and Burr PTAs' Executive Committees. She has served as a Council rep and has chaired a multitude of committees. As Vice President of North Ridge PTA and as grade level coordinator, Mrs. DeAngelis is notable in her support of other parents in their volunteer endeavors. She is a true leader and a compassionate, supportive parent who is a model of empathy, honesty, and hard work. One of Mrs. DeAngelis' most impressive talents is juggling so many different pieces with so many moving parts. Photography, Yearbook, KidsArt, Event Days, on top of being active in local Cub Scouts and a Soccer Mom, are just a few of the balls Mrs. DeAngelis keeps in the air, making it all appear seamless. In the words of a fellow volunteer, "She is organized, efficient, enthusiastic and manages everything with grace." In the words of another fellow volunteer, "Linda is the best kind of person to turn to--knowledgeable, supportive, and gets things done!"

I want to start off by thanking those who nominated and selected me to represent the community and receive this award. I am honored and humbled to join past and current honorees of this prestigious recognition. It has brought so much joy to my life to be able to be a part of something bigger than just one school, but rather a community of outstanding individuals. I am proud of our school district and those individuals who truly go above and beyond to help make our children's experiences something they will be proud of. I am hoping they will look back on these years and be able to tell their children about the wonderful time they had while in the Commack schools. I would also like to thank my children, Thomas and Joey, and my husband, Stephen, for their support. Without them, I would not be able to be a part of something so extraordinary. Thank you again for bestowing this honor upon me. It means more to me than you could ever know.

Advocate in Action Award – Christine Schultz

Mrs. Schultz has devoted her professional life to the children and families of Commack. She has taught kindergarten, first grade, and as a special education integrated co-teacher. She is active in her home PTA, SEPTA and our own North Ridge PTA. She has served on numerous committees for the district and has served on NYSUT to help communicate with the community regarding budgets and educational law. Additionally, she is involved in advocating for school funding by reaching out to politicians and administrators. She treats every child and parent with kindness, dignity, and respect. Mrs. Schultz uses her knowledge of education to shape the development of our students, not only through teaching the academics of reading, math, and writing, but by teaching her students to be critical thinkers, use appropriate social skills, and be active citizens in our community. In the words of a colleague, "She works tirelessly to support teachers and students using innovative methods and compassion." In the words of another colleague, "She leads by example as her actions speak louder than her words.... She is the best of a Commack education and one of the reasons that North Ridge remains 'A Very Fine Place.'"

I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for such an amazing recognition. I am thrilled to have been awarded the Advocate in Action Award for Founder's Day for the 2020-2021 school year. This is certainly one of the most significant events of my teaching career in the Commack School District. It is an incredible honor to work alongside some of the most dynamic and dedicated educators as well as among the most supportive and extraordinary families. Most importantly, is the honor and gift I am given each day in working with such special and incredible children. I look ahead to continuing my mission for change, improvement, and growth in a community in which I respect and adore. Moreover, I look forward to a continued mission of making each child's potential a reality. Again, I so appreciate the thoughtfulness of the PTA for designating me for such an incredible award. Warmest regards, Christine Schultz

Rolling Hills Primary School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – Jessica Larsen

The Rolling Hills PTA is pleased to award the Honorary Life Membership to Jessica Larsen this year. Jessica has brought so many smiles to children's faces at Rolling Hills. She has run the Fall Festival for many years, making it more special each time. Her bubbly personality and cheerful attitude inspire parents to be Rolling Hills PTA members and get involved. She currently serves as Co-President where she has continued to make the year fun for the kids despite all the constraints. Outside of PTA, Jessica has worked with the Girl Scouts and is a wonderful mom to her three girls.

Thank you for honoring me to be the recipient of the Rolling Hills PTA Founders Day Honorary Lifetime Membership Award. As you know, I have worked hard for the last several years to serve the Rolling Hills students and our community through my work with the PTA and many district committees. It means a lot to me to have my work recognized, especially by a group of people as distinguished and valued in this community as you all.

While my only goal has been to expand our efforts and do great things for our school, it was unexpected and extremely touching to be chosen for this award. Thank you for thinking of me and helping me broaden my experience here at Rolling Hills. Sincerely, Jessica Larsen

Advocate in Action Award – Pamela Dantzler

It is with great pleasure that the Rolling Hills PTA honors Mrs. Pam Dantzler as the Advocate in Action award recipient this year. Pam has had a career in Commack since 1999, but began at Rolling Hills in 2014. Her calming voice and welcoming smile are what visitors meet when they enter the Main Office. Pam not only is the Secretary to the Principal, but she is also the motor that keeps Rolling Hills running. From posting and distributing important PTA news online or on flyers, to fielding phone calls and creating schedules, Pam always gets the job done in a warm, professional manner. Pam helps new parents get involved by signing up for PTA during Kindergarten Registration. Over the year students have been lucky enough to have Pam be a secret reader during library or say the morning announcements. We cannot thank Pam Dantzler enough for her dedication to the families and staff of Rolling Hills. Congratulations to Pam Dantzler!

It is an honor to be nominated to receive the Rolling Hills PTA Advocate in Action award. I am proud to be acknowledged by our hard-working and dedicated PTA and am fortunate to work with the students, parents, and staff at Rolling Hills. Thank you again. ~Pam Dantzler

Wood Park Primary School Recipients

Honorary Life Membership Award – KristiLee Hender

Along with the entire Wood Park PTA board, we are proud to present Kristi Hender with the Honorary Life Membership Founders Day Award. She is currently the secretary for Wood Park PTA. Kristi is always willing to help/volunteer at any event or sit on any committee at Wood Park. She always tries to help in any way that she can, whether it be volunteering her time, sharing her thoughts or knowledge to support the children and families at Wood Park.

Mrs. Hender currently has one child in 3rd grade at Sawmill (Liam), one child in 1st grade at Wood Park (Landon) and Madison who is 2 ½ years old. Kristi Hender's contribution to the welfare of children at Wood Park Primary School merits this special recognition.

It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside Kristi. First, in her role as a PTA officer and second as a committee chair. Kristi Hender has always been focused on the welfare of children. Everything that Kristi Hender does as a committee chair or as a PTA officer, she always put the children first. Sincere congratulations to you Kristi.

I am very honored to be receiving the Wood Park PTA HLM Founders Day award. It is a great honor and privilege. Thank you to the members of the Wood Park PTA that nominated me for this award and who work so hard every day to put together such great programs and activities for the students. Thank you for the timeless effort everyone puts in as without all the wonderful volunteers the Wood Park PTA would not exist. Thank you to Mrs. Collison for all her guidance and support in everything we bring to her. Thank you to my husband Bill Hender for putting up with the late dinners, garage storage, and my running around trying to get stuff done. Thank you to Liam, Landon and soon to be Madison as you guys are the reason I participate, so that we can make your Wood Park Experience the best it can be. Thank you to the Wood Park faculty and staff for always supporting our programs and pitching to help when needed. It is a great pleasure to be receiving this award and I appreciate all the wonderful people I have met through the Wood Park PTA.

Advocate in Action Award – Stacy Washousky

Mrs. Stacy Washousky embodies the characteristics of the quintessential Kindergarten teacher. Her core values enable her to facilitate her students into becoming independent thinkers, problem solvers and lovers of learning. Her enthusiasm for teaching and passion as a life-long learner is evident in all that she does. Mrs. Washousky is not only a certified general education teacher, but she also holds certification as a special education teacher, reading specialist and Wilson Reading Teacher. She has been involved in numerous district level committees and curriculum writing, most recently in her work with the revised Science Standards where she contributed valuable insights into the learning needs of our young learners. In this role, she serves as a strong advocate for not only her own students but for all students districtwide. This year in particular, Mrs. Washousky has created a

delicate balance between academic instruction and the social and emotional needs of her learners. Mrs. Washousky is a valued member of her grade level and shares her wealth of knowledge freely with her peers. Her outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of children merits this special recognition and the community's appreciation. Congratulations Mrs. Stacy Washousky.

I would like to thank the Wood Park PTA for choosing me to receive this special award. I was incredibly happy to learn that I had been selected as the recipient for this year's Founders Day award and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for providing me this award. Receiving this award is a great honor. This award particularly recognizes my work, and it gives an amazing feeling of getting awarded for the efforts that I put in. I have been lucky enough to work for the Commack UFSD for over 20 years. I have had many wonderful opportunities and experiences to learn and grow as a person and educator. I am so thankful and blessed to be part of the Wood Park family. Next, I want to thank my colleagues who have always supported me and worked alongside me through my Commack journey. It has been more than I could ask for. Last, I would like to thank all the parents of the Wood Park Primary School for giving me the opportunity to work with their children through all these years. These are memories that will last with me always and I am so thankful.

SEPTA Recipients

Distinguished Service Award – Debbie Vilardi

Debbie Vilardi has put so much of herself into SEPTA. She has spent 14 years making it into what it is and has inspired and taught many people along the way. Debbie has been a council rep, treasurer, secretary, and president and has trained people for each position. She has also helped with any committee she was needed on. Even though she no longer has a child with special needs in the district, she continues to support SEPTA by donating time and acting as our institutional memory. We simply do not know where we would be without her support and continued dedication.

Thank you to SEPTA for nominating me for the Distinguished Service Award. I still cannot believe I have enough points, but I will take your word for it.

I would like to thank all the presidents who came before me and taught me how to PTA. I learned to advocate and organize from you. Thank you also to every committee member and chair and to everyone who attends events or contributes financially. Nothing happens without the community PTA's.

Thank you also to our administrators, teachers, related service providers, aides, nurses, and office and support staff for making school the place to be for our kids. I know you miss the norm as much as they do, but I also know the phenomenal work you do this and every year.

Thanks to Lydia and Sam for helping with boutiques instead of complaining about them and for sitting mostly quietly at meetings waiting for Dad to get you when you were too young to be home alone. And to my husband Greg for all the nights you've made dinner so I could be at a meeting or event and everything else you do, proving that we are in this together.

Honorary Life Membership Award – Amy Loguercio

Amy Loguercio became active in SEPTA from the start. She has held a variety of positions on the board as well as running many committees. She excels at supporting parents over the phone and in

our support group settings. She has really become SEPTA's heart through her caring for all our kids, their families, and SEPTA's mission. Her tireless dedication and support make an invaluable contribution. She will tell you that she does it because she finds each moment so rewarding. We say we are honored to serve with her.

I am so thankful & honored to receive the Honorary Life Membership award from SEPTA. I feel truly blessed to be doing something I really love. Over the last six years I have worked with so many teachers & parents and have genuinely enjoyed my positions on the board. I have made many new friends and treasure the people I am working with.

Advocate in Action – Kathleen DeLuca

Kathleen DeLuca graduated from SUNY Binghamton and worked in the field of Workers' Compensation Insurance for a decade before taking time away from business to start her family. Married 25 years to husband, Frank, they have two daughters: Gabriella, 21, pursuing a DPT at SUNY Stony Brook, and Christiana, 19, pursuing a degree in Geology at SUNY Brockport. She was introduced to the field of Speech Pathology when, after surgery to remove a polyp from her vocal cord, was prescribed speech therapy for her recovery. Completely intrigued by this experience, she enrolled in an Introduction to Speech and Language Pathology course at LIU Post, and the rest is, as we say, history! As an SLP, she has worked with all ages, and has loved aspects of each group, but working with teens has always been special for her. Since 2014, she has worked for Commack School District as an SLP providing therapy for students with speech and language disabilities in grades 9-12+. She is a SEPTA teacher representative, a member of CHS' Transition Team, and a member of the newly created Social Emotional and Developmental Learning Committee.

I am thankful to receive this award and feel truly blessed to be working at a job that I love. It is an honor to be in a position to advocate for young adults; to empower them by helping them develop into effective communicators. Through my role as a school based SLP, I work to guide students to understand how their words and actions are perceived by those around them. To help them develop the communication skills necessary to effectively take on the role of friend, classmate, student, son/daughter, brother/sister, and employee -- each with their unique roles and both explicit and implied communication demands. It is my privilege to work with, and advocate for, Commack High School students. Thank you to the many incredible teachers that I work with and the other SLPs in our District who I am inspired by. Thank you, SEPTA, for this honor.

***Thank you to the administrators, teachers, and parents of the
Commack School District for your ongoing
support and dedication to the
children of Commack.***

We once again extend our congratulations
and thanks to all of this year's worthy recipients.
~ Council Founders Day Committee

***The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes,
but also, by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker. ~Helen Keller***

***To the world you may be one person; but to one person you may be the
world. ~Dr. Seuss***



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