

THE DISTINGUISHED YOUTH AWARD



*Suffolk County Legislature's
Award for Youth*

The Distinguished Youth Award

THE AWARD

The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is a competitive voluntary recognition program. It challenges Suffolk County's youth to become more civically involved in their communities and to focus on activities that they enjoy or have an interest in for which they would like improve their aptitude. The Award focuses on four categories: Volunteer Service, Personal Development, Exploration and Physical Fitness.

The Distinguished Youth Award is open to all Suffolk County residents between the ages of 13-18. After registering for the Program, participants spend the year laying out and reaching personal goals. Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award Medal are earned by the participants for their hard work and dedication in accomplishing their established goals in the four program areas. Award-levels are based on the number of program areas that participants select as part of their individual challenge.

HISTORY

The Suffolk County Legislature established the Distinguished Youth

"When I think about what makes Suffolk County special, the dedication and talent of our young people is one thing that comes to mind. I am moved by their voices, their passion, and their desires to challenge themselves and give back to the communities they call home. Our young people already have roots in Suffolk County, and this program is designed to help them grow those roots. Participants in the Distinguished Youth Award are given a unique opportunity to work with their local officials, connect with their communities, and set and reach goals for their own personal development. These young people are our future, and through this program, we aim to help them become leaders. We look forward to recognizing their hard work and dedication."

- DuWayne Gregory, Presiding Officer (District 15)

Award in 2017 by Resolution No. 419-2017, sponsored by Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (LD 15) and co-sponsored by Legislator William Spencer (LD 18), to encourage positive youth development, and to recognize young people on becoming well-rounded and more civically engaged individuals. The resolution was adopted with bi-partisan support and Charter Approved on May 16, 2017.

"As a public official, I am always so encouraged and inspired by our youth. At a time when the media spends much more time covering bad news, there is so much good news to share. From the earliest of ages through high school and beyond, our kids are engaging in public discourse, participating in community events, excelling in academics, the arts and in sports, supporting a variety of local charities. The Distinguished Youth Program encourages students to set measurable goals in self-development and in service to our community and then recognizes deserving students for their achievements. Participants in the program will find it rewarding on many levels."

- Tom Cilmi, Minority Leader (District 10)

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth



Initiative - Service - Achievement



THE FOUR PROGRAM AREAS

Volunteer Service — Using your time to serve others and your community at large.

Personal Development — Developing your personal interests, social and/or employment skills.

Exploration — Undertaking an outdoor Suffolk County park experience.

Physical Fitness — Improving your quality of life and health through fitness activities.

The Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is comprised of four program areas that are aimed at challenging youth to become more active and engaged in local issues and initiatives. Participants take part in volunteer service, personal development, and exploration and physical fitness activities so that they are exposed to formative experiences that will allow them to gain valuable lessons and life skills.

HOW TO EARN THE DISTINGUISHED YOUTH AWARD!

Visit the Suffolk County Legislature's website at www.scnylegislature.us/ and search for the Distinguished Youth Award under Programs to find the registration form. Download and mail completed registration form to The Distinguished Youth Award, Office of the Presiding Officer, Suffolk County Legislature, William J. Lindsay County Complex, Bldg. 20, P.O. Box 6100, Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099. All applicants must include a signed waiver along with their registration. You must register and identify the award level you wish to pursue along with a brief description of the activities that you plan to accomplish while achieving your goal. You must be registered prior to recording hours dedicated to fulfilling your award. The minimum age to register is 13. Goals must be reached during the 12-month period of program year of your registration. Beginning on the date that you register for the program, activities completed towards achieving your goal can begin to be logged. Please note that activities completed before registering for the program cannot be backdated.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Follow These Steps:

1. SELECT AND WORK WITH AN ADVISOR

- ◆ Any adult may serve as an Advisor with the exception of your parent, relative, or peer.
- ◆ Review program guidelines and the Record Book with your chosen Advisor.
- ◆ Develop Goals with your Advisor's approval.
- ◆ Select appropriate activities that will help you achieve your goals.

2. REGISTER FOR THE AWARD

- ◆ Anyone between the ages of 13 and 18 may register for the award during the open registration period (May 1st—June 30th) for the program year.
- ◆ **Registration** for the Distinguished Youth Award **must be received by June 30th each year.**

3. SET FIRST MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR

- ◆ Contact your local Suffolk County Legislator to set up a meeting to discuss your goals for this challenge and how you plan on achieving those goals.

4. WORK TOWARD ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

- ◆ Once you register, you have 12 months to complete the activities that you outlined in your Distinguished Youth Award registration form.
- ◆ You must keep a record of your activities to show your Advisor and Validators.
- ◆ Validators verify that you completed the activities logged in your record book.
- ◆ After accomplishing your goals for the level that you are working towards, have your Validators and Advisors sign off on the completed Record Book pages.

5. SUBMIT COMPLETED RECORD BOOK TO THE LEGISLATURE

- ◆ Submit materials to the Distinguished Youth Award, Office of the Presiding Officer, Suffolk County Legislature,

William J. Lindsay County Complex-Bldg. 20, P.O. Box 6100 Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099.

- ◆ Record book **submission deadline is July 1st** each year.
- ◆ You will not receive notification of receipt of your submission.
- ◆ Make copies of everything that you submit. We do not return submissions, so DO NOT send anything that you would like returned.
- ◆ Reviewing Record Books can take four to six weeks.

6. SET SECOND MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR

- ◆ Contact your local Suffolk County Legislator to set up a meeting to share lessons learned throughout the process.
- ◆ The Legislator's Office will submit an evaluation form to the Program Coordinator at the Legislature, once you complete the second meeting requirement.

7. REVISIONS

- ◆ If we have questions regarding your record book, you will be notified in writing regarding clarifications or changes needed to approve your submission.
- ◆ Follow the instructions in the email/letter from the Distinguished Youth Award regarding revisions.
- ◆ If you add any hours or months of activity to your Record Book, you must have a Validator or your Advisor sign off on the additions.
- ◆ If you do not address all the notes in the revision, or if you provide new information that requires clarification, you may receive additional revision requests

8. APPROVAL/ AWARDS CEREMONY

- ◆ You will be notified in writing once your record book has been approved.
- ◆ Details regarding the Medal level earned and of the Awards Presentation Ceremony

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Program Requirements:

DISTINGUISHED YOUTH AWARD	
Program Category	Minimum Hours
Volunteer Service	200
Personal Development	100
Exploration	15 Park Visits
Physical Fitness	100

There are three levels of the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Medals are awarded to Suffolk County youth for their accomplishments in completing the program and minimum hour requirements for each of the four categories (Volunteer Service, Personal Development, Exploration & Physical Fitness).

The requirements for the three tier Distinguished Youth Award Medal Program increase based on the level of recognition that the young person registers for. Each award level is aimed at recognizing the commitment of the Suffolk County youth to accomplish the goals they set for the selected categories they choose to pursue.

Activities completed towards achieving your goal can start to be logged in your record book beginning on the date that you register for the program. However, please note that activities completed before registering for the program cannot be backdated.

If you register for a higher level award and do not complete the requirements for that level, you may be entitled to a lower level award. For example, if you register for the Gold Medal, but only successfully satisfy the requirements of three of the four program categories, then you would be awarded a Silver Medal.

DISTINGUISHED YOUTH AWARD MEDAL LEVEL REQUIREMENTS		
Bronze	Silver	Gold
Two Program Categories	Three Program Categories	Four Program Categories

OPTIONAL VISUAL SUBMISSIONS

You are encouraged to submit videos and photos of yourself completing activities for each of the program categories in your individual challenge. The Distinguished Youth Award's exploration program category requires that a visual diary of the visits to the Suffolk County parks is submitted with your record book. Your visuals can be submitted throughout the year that you are enrolled in the Award. **Your submission may be featured on our website and promotional materials.** Your visual(s) can be submitted via email to DistinguishedYouthAward@suffolkcountyny.gov.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Advisors and Validators:

Advisors and Validators play an important role in your pursuit of the Distinguished Youth Award. Advisors and Validators assist you in the goal setting process and monitor your progress in earning the Distinguished Youth Award.

The Distinguished Youth Award is an excellent way for you to increase your mentor base and work with adults who will encourage and support you in earning your Award. As part of this program, you will choose one adult to serve as your Advisor and other adults to serve as your Validators. **Advisors and Validators must be adults other than your parents, relatives or peers.**

To earn the Award, you set goals in four areas: Volunteer Service, Personal Development, Exploration & Physical Fitness. Select an advisor who is qualified to help guide you through the goals-setting process. *Teachers, Coaches, Scoutmasters, Club Advisors and Civic Leaders are examples of potential Distinguished Youth Award Advisors.* Your Advisor will assist you in setting and achieving your goals and completing your Record Book.

Selecting the appropriate **Validator** depends on the activities that choose to achieve your goals. Validators should be knowledgeable or experienced in the

activities you pursue in each of the program areas. For example, if your Physical Fitness goal and activities involved basketball, your basketball coach would be an appropriate Validator.

Similarly, if you volunteer at an animal shelter, an employee or the volunteer coordinator of the shelter would be an appropriate Validator. If an appropriate Validator can not be found, and your Advisor is knowledgeable in the specific program area, then the Advisor may serve as the Validator.

Please be advised that the Office of the Presiding Officer does not match young people with Advisors. We encourage you to select an adult in your community with whom you feel comfortable working with on this endeavor. If you are applying for the Gold Medal, you should work with a minimum of five adults throughout the program, so that you are provided with a opportunity to learn from mentors who share your enthusiasm, skill and experience. One of the many benefits of the Distinguished Youth Award is the opportunity to establish new links within your community, which over time can have a profound influence. Advisors and Validators do more than just sign off on a Record Book.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Advisors and Validators: (Continued)

THE ADVISOR...

1. Reviews the Distinguished Youth Award requirements and guidelines provided in the program booklet with you.
2. Helps you set goals that are personally challenging, achievable, worthwhile, measurable, and fulfilling.
3. Approves your goals and ensures that you identify appropriate activities and qualified Validators for each goal.
4. Maintains periodic contact with you while you work towards the Distinguished Youth Award.
5. Helps you revise your goals, if needed, by helping you set new goals and find activities to achieve them.
6. Encourages you to obtain written comments and signatures from your Validators as soon as your goals have been met.
7. Reviews your records and signs the front cover of your Record Book once you have completed your goals in each of the four program areas. **Your advisor's signature and comments will certify that you have completed all the requirements and should be obtained after all activities are completed for the submission.**
8. Retains a photocopy of your Record Book.

THE VALIDATOR...

1. Reviews the Distinguished Youth Award requirements and guidelines provided in the program booklet with you.
2. Discusses the specific requirements for the particular goal he/she will validate, including how your progress can be measured and documented.
3. Helps you identify your starting level in a particular areas of endeavor.
4. Makes certain your goal is personally challenging, achievable, worthwhile, measurable, and fulfilling.
5. Periodically reviews your records, which show your progress toward the goal.
6. Reviews all records pertaining to the appropriate category/activity that will be validated in the Record Book, after you reach the hour requirement for your goal. **This should be completed AFTER your activities have been completed. The Validator's signature and comments attest to the completion of the category requirements.**

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Volunteer Service

SAMPLE ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Animal Care Shelter Work
- Boys & Girls Clubs Volunteer
- Soup kitchen Volunteer
- Helping a neighbor who is Elderly or Handicapped with Chores
- Fire or Police Department Volunteer
- Hospital Volunteer
- Library Volunteer
- Park Volunteer
- Food and Clothing Drives
- Tutoring Other Students
- Helping to Build Sets, Set Up and Clean Up for a School Performance
- Performing for Disadvantaged Groups or the Elderly

A key component of the Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award is the volunteer service requirement. The Award incentivizes applicants to volunteer their time and talents for the benefit of others in their communities. Volunteering is a transformative experience that allows individuals to become more in tune with the needs of others. By volunteering, you will also learn about the importance of the commitment that is required to achieve your goals.

Identify an issue in your community and develop an action plan or partner with a local not-for-profit community organization to work on their proposed plans.

GUIDELINES

GREATER COMMUNITY AT LARGE Valid volunteer service must be performed for a not-for-profit organization and must not include inherently religious activities, such as religious instruction or worship. Although the community service may be performed at or with a faith-based organization, it must address a recognized need in the greater community. Additionally, volunteer activities must provide a direct service to the community at large and must be performed without compensation. It should be noted that while the program aims to increase civic engagement, political activities are not eligible to satisfy this program requirement.

UMBRELLA GOALS Similar activities may be combined to achieve one goal. Collections of unrelated volunteer service activities under one goal would not be acceptable.

PLANNING/TRAINING HOURS Planning and training hours for volunteer service work for the Distinguished Youth Award must consist of less than 25% of the total hours completed. While we understand that large projects and initiatives take a lot of time and energy, you must be able to show that a majority of your service hours provide a direct service to the greater community. All other hours must consist of a direct service.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Personal Development

SAMPLE ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Arts and crafts
- Creative writing
- Dancing
- Leadership training
- Theater/acting
- Photography
- Career development
- Cross cultural programs
- Language study
- Speech and debate
- Gardening
- Communication Skills

This exercise allows applicants to assess their skills and qualities, set goals for improvement and leads to increased confidence and to achieving positive and effective life choices in the future.

While other aspects of the Distinguished Youth Award require that you give back to your community, this category asks that you invest time in yourself so that you improve your self-awareness, sense of direction and path to personal fulfilment.

The personal development vision and action plan are to be submitted with your registration. The personal development category's main objective is for you to develop the ability to

analyze yourself so that you can learn and improve with purpose.

GUIDELINES

SKILL & IMPROVEMENT

In order to complete the requirements of the personal development category, the Distinguished Youth Award requires that you identify one or more areas of improvement within yourself. Once the areas of improvement have been identified, you are asked to prepare a personal development vision that outlines a specific timeframe and an action plan for how your goal(s) will be achieved.

GROUP WORK

Personal Development activities can be pursued either individually or as part of group. If your personal development goal is within a group activity, your individual contribution to the planning, execution, and completion of the group activity is the basis for the assessment in this category. Therefore, your individual progress should be measured against your goal, not other teammates.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Educational activities outside of the normal school curriculum could also serve as a personal development goal.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Exploration

SUFFOLK COUNTY PARKS LIST

- Arthur Kunz Park, Smithtown
- Berkley Jackson Park, Huntington
- Brookside Park, West Sayville
- Calverton Ponds Park, Manorville
- Cathedral Pines Park, Middle Island
- Cedar Point Park, East Hampton
- Champlin Creek Nature Preserve, East Islip
- Cornwood Landing Park, Miller Place
- Cranberry Bog Nature Preserve, Riverhead
- Cupsogue Beach Park, Westhampton
- Dwarf Pines Plains Preserve, East Quogue
- Farmingville Hills Park, Farmingville
- Forsythe Meadow Park, Stony Brook
- Gardiner County Park, West Bay Shore
- Hubbard Park, Flanders
- Indian Island Park, Riverhead
- Lake Ronkonkoma Park, Lake Ronkonkoma
- Lakeland Park, Islandia
- McAllister Park, Belle Terre
- Meschutt Beach Park, Hampton Bays
- Montauk County Park, Montauk
- Orient Park, Orient
- Smith Point Park, Shirley
- Southaven Park, Brookhaven
- Terrell River Park, Center Moriches
- West Hills Park, Melville

For more information on Suffolk County Parks, please visit:

<https://www.scnylegislature.us/896/Distinguished-Youth-Award>

Natural beauty surrounds Suffolk County with over 46,000 acres of park land, 200 historical sites and 100 public beaches. Therefore, the Distinguished Youth Award challenges you to explore a minimum of 15 Suffolk County Parks.

No matter your interests, taking on this challenge will allow you to discover that our parks in Suffolk County have something to offer to everyone. Hopefully, you will get to enjoy parks that you have not visited in the past and enjoy fun activities with family and friends, while experiencing first hand the beauty and diversity of Suffolk County's natural world.

In addition to visiting the Suffolk County Parks, you **must** compile a visual diary (Video & Pictures) of your visits and provide a brief reflection of your experiences.

The goal of this challenge is to connect you with nature, in order to promote stewardship of the County's natural resources. However, if you are not able to visit Suffolk County parks near you, you may satisfy the requirements of this category by visiting village, town and state parks. Finally, it should be noted that no park can be visited more than twice.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Physical Fitness

SAMPLE ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Aerobics
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bicycling
- Boxing
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Dancing
- Exercise Program
- Fencing
- Field Events
- Fitness Walking
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Hiking
- Lacrosse
- Martial Arts
- Personal Workout
- Pilates
- Rollerblading
- Rowing
- Running or Jogging
- Skateboarding
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Spinning
- Surfing
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Weight Training
- Yoga

The Distinguished Youth Award challenges you to increase your level of physical activity, in order to promote a healthy and active lifestyle. This will be achieved by setting and achieving quantifiable goal(s) in a physical activity. Your goal can involve an activity that you have never attempted before or it can be an activity that you have experienced before, but at a higher level.

In order to complete the requirements of the physical fitness category, you may perform individual activities or participate in team sports. If you are involved in team sports, your physical fitness goal has to demonstrate what additional effort you made to challenge your abilities.

GUIDELINES

MEASURABLE Include relevant physical fitness statistics to ensure that a challenging, objective goal can be achieved. For example: experience level, specific skills, times and distances.

IMPROVEMENT Include your current fitness level or sport skill and specify how much you plan to improve while working toward the Distinguished Youth Award.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES Physical Fitness goals for persons with disabilities are given special consideration. Often an appropriate activity can be identified with the help of a physician. Remember, a fitness activity does not have to be strenuous in order to be challenging.

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Setting Goals:

The Distinguished Youth Award is based on the concept that, as a participant, you set and achieve challenging yet achievable goals in each of the four program areas. **Before registering for the Award, set your goals and have them approved by your Advisor and Validators.**

Your goals should demonstrate initiative and forethought, When you complete work on a program category, you show your Advisor and Validators that you have provided the service you proposed or increased your knowledge and skills in the designated activities.

To Help you set goals, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my goal follow the guidelines?
- Is my goal...
 - Achievable?
 - Worthwhile?
 - Measurable?
 - Challenging?
 - Fulfilling?

ADDITIONAL GOALS

You may complete the required hours within one program area by working on more than one goal. To do this, you'll set an additional goal in that program area. If you set more than one goal within a program area, you must submit separate Record Book pages for each goal.

EXAMPLE OF ACCEPTABLE GOALS

Volunteer Service

Goal: "I am going to dedicate four hours a week to St. Patrick's Parish."

Activities: "I will work in the soup kitchen and clothing distribution Center."

Personal Development

Goal: "I would like to learn how to play the piano and progress in my ability to read the music sheets."

Activities: "I will take a private piano class with a music instructor once a week, practice at home to improve my abilities."

Exploration

Goal: "I will plan an itinerary for my family and I to visit a minimum of 15 Suffolk County Parks during the program year."

Activities: "I will research the location of all the Suffolk County parks and will plan to visit all throughout the County."

Physical Fitness

Goal: "I am interested in training to run the Suffolk County Marathon in October."

Activities: "I will run a mile three times a week and gradually increase number of miles I can run leading up to the marathon."

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

Setting Goals: (Continued)

EXAMPLE OF UNACCEPTABLE GOALS

Volunteer Service

Goal: “I will volunteer as a teacher at my church’s Sunday School Program.”

Why is this goal unacceptable?

While admirable, your volunteer service activities should benefit the community at large, not just private organizations. Activities related to internal membership may not be counted toward your volunteer service activity goal.

Personal Development

Goal: “I will continue to write every morning before school about whatever comes to mind.”

Why is this goal unacceptable?

Your goal should challenge you. Continuing an activity will only maintain your ability level. You should set goals that compel you to strive for greatness. Your goal should also make it possible to measure that growth.

Exploration

Goal: “I will visit parks.”

Why is this goal unacceptable?

The exploration category asks that participants in the program visit a minimum of 15 Suffolk County parks

during the program year. Therefore, simply stating that you plan to visit parks does not indicate that you intend on quantifying the number of visits.

Physical Fitness

Goal: “I want to be more physically fit.”

Why is this goal unacceptable?

Your physical fitness goal should be measurable and should include details of what you expect out of your activities. While becoming more physically fit is great to work towards, your goal needs to be more specific.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Greater Community at Large

Does your goal illustrate that your service benefits the greater community at large and not just the membership of an insular group? Activities that serve a select population rather than the greater community at large are generally not accepted as service activities.

No Compensation

The activities associated with your goal should not be a requirement; therefore, you should not receive school credit, and you should receive no monetary compensation.

Suffolk County Legislature’s Award for Youth

Setting Goals: (Continued)

VOLUNTEER SERVICE (Continued)

Direct vs. Indirect Service

Most of your activity should be associated with direct service: engaging your community through hands-on service and interaction. Indirect services such as training, planning meetings and event preparations should not account for more than 25% of your total service hours.

Active vs. Passive Service

Your volunteer Service work should mainly include you actively providing a direct service to the greater community at large.

Private vs. Public

When volunteering through an organization to complete service activities, you should ensure that the organization is a public, not-for-profit organization, which is accessible to all in the community. The organization should not be a group that serves only a select population or is exclusive to those that pay a fee or have to meet specific requirements.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Skill Development

Your goal should identify a specific

ability or talent that you are aiming to develop or refine.

No Class Credit

You may not receive any school/class credit for your Personal Development goal. This should be something that you strictly pursue on an extracurricular basis.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Skill Development

It is important to set a measurable goal in order to be able to document progress made toward achieving your goal. For this part of the challenge, you should only focus on a specific skill or skillset within your activity.

No Class Credit

You may not receive any school/class credit for your Physical Fitness goal. This should be something that you strictly pursue on an extracurricular basis.

EXPLORATION

New & Unique

Your exploration of the outdoors (15 Parks) should entice you to plan and enjoy new and unique experiences that challenge you to step out of your comfort zone.

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