Linakis Leaders Scholarship

The John S. and Yorka C. Linakis Leaders Scholarship was created to honor the exceptional community service work of John S. and Yorka C. Linakis, long-time residents and avid supporters of the Borough of Queens. They were active in a multitude of community, civic, and interfaith organizations. Their philanthropic endeavors include a legacy of scholarships to be granted to worthy Queens College students based on merit, financial need, and a keen interest in the betterment of their communities. This spring, 15 Queens College students, with outstanding records of both service and academic performance, are each receiving an award in the amount of $1,000 in recognition of their exceptional achievements.

Acknowledgments
Olga Zaferatos Karras
Executor, Linakis Leaders Scholarship Fund
James Muyskens
President, Queens College
James Stellar
Provost, Queens College

Review Panel
Emanuel Avila, Student Affairs
Denise Cetin, Office of the Provost
Eva Fernández, Center for Teaching & Learning
Yasemin Jones, Office of the Provost
Ross Wheeler, Macaulay Honors College

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“My personal idea of leadership is that real leaders serve and empower those around them. I have learned that investing time in loving, empowering and serving people is a catalyst for them to do the same. Such a chain reaction can foster hope in a world where the trials of life challenge our ability to care for one another. Service grants the opportunity to say that ‘now’ is always the best time to make a difference.”
(William Leverett)
Meet the 2012 Linakis Leaders

Arline Edmond
(Psychology; Biology; Chemistry) Arline is the current president of the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students. Her community service efforts include participating in multiple New York Cares events and volunteering for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans. Arline was part of a 28-student team of health profession majors who recently traveled to Honduras with the national organization Global Brigades, to bring medical assistance to 1200 Honduran citizens of the rural town of Aqua Caliente. Locally, Arline coordinates pre-professional workshops for freshmen interested in pursuing health-related professions.

Carmelo Freda
(Political Science; History, Business and Liberal Arts) Carmelo has supported his community through NYPIRG by organizing numerous events to educate the public about government and finances. He has worked with the Queens College Small Claims Court Action Center, where as Head Counselor he assisted individuals with processes in Small Claims Court. A current intern at the office of State Senator José Peralta, Carmelo works to serve underdeveloped communities overcome obstacles.

Esta Sue Goldin
/Library and Information Studies) A second year graduate student, Esta Sue’s commitment to service connects to her professional goal of public librarianship and to promoting libraries as beacons of knowledge. She conceived and currently leads a literacy program, Kids Read to Dogs, at the Bay Shore Brightwaters Public Library. Through the program, Esta Sue has reached 600 early readers from diverse communities.

Citalic Jeffers Peña
(Communication Sciences & Disorders; Linguistics) An energetic and outspoken indigenous Afro-Xicana, Citalic coordinates a community supported agriculture program in the Lower East Side. She is a research assistant in the Queens College Bilingual Early Language and Literacy Acquisition lab, a parent training program that promotes the use of home-language and the development of early literacy. She is a member of the Community Farmworker Alliance and has organized with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in their Campaign for Fair Food.

William Leverett
(Political Science, Urban Studies) William has been a mentor in the Project ExCEL (Excellence in Community Education and Leadership) program, has co-coordinated a multi-college fundraiser for Haiti, and has volunteered renovating homes in New Orleans. William co-founded the Progressive Black Student Association and works as a resident assistant at the Summit. Currently William volunteers with teenagers and has developed an arts organization, the Urban Soul Collective, which uses art to connect people to social issues.

Meher Mohsin
(English Literature, Political Science; Journalism, History) Meher came to Queens College in pursuit of her passion for English literature and writing, and found a complementary passion in activism and community service. Meher was co-founder of the CERRU (Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding) Volunteer Corps. She has recently organized a leadership conference about faith-based activism and is planning a teach-in on NYPD surveillance of Muslim communities. This May Meher will assume the role of Editor in Chief at the Queens College student newspaper, The Knight News.

Nicole Nowbahar
(English, Classics; Honors in the Humanities) A current Mellon Mays fellowship recipient, Nicole has a diverse range of volunteering experiences which include a collaboration with Channel 13 and volunteering at a summer camp program within a homeless shelter. Currently, Nicole coordinates for the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding’s Volunteer Corps program, and mentors and teaches crafts at a homeless shelter in Queens via a program organized through the MET Council.

Angelica Penagos
(Communication Sciences & Disorders; Psychology) Angelica describes leadership as helping people reach their true potential, enabling them to break barriers and empowering them to become leaders. Among the many activities that distinguish Angelica are her contributions as mentor in Project ExCEL (Excellence in Community Education and Leadership); as member of the Queens College and national chapters of the National Student Speech-Language and Hearing Association; as participant in New York Cares, UNICEF, and CircleK International.

Lara Porter
(Economics) Lara is a Macaulay Honors student who is active as a dialogue facilitator in the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding. Last year, she co-founded the Center’s Volunteer Corps, a way for students to build community through service. The Corps connects significant numbers of students to community organizations and their needs for volunteers on particular projects. Lara also interviews authors who are part of the Evening Reading Series for the Queens College newspaper.

Yassmin Simmonds
(Psychology; Philosophy) Yassmin’s significant accomplishments include her membership and future presidency of the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students and her mentorship of freshmen through the Freshman Year Initiative program. Yassmin organized the Health Equity and Advocacy tour, to raise awareness about education as a social determinant of health. Yassmin volunteers in a program to motivate East Harlem families to lead healthy life styles. As Vice-President of the Queens College Global Brigades, Yassmin directed, coordinated, and raised funds for a program that sent 28 students to a rural Honduran community, to provide basic medical care.

Veronica Sommer
(Family and Consumer Science; Business and Liberal Arts) As a nutrition student, Veronica has focused her community service in areas related to health and nutrition, as well as sustainability. She volunteers at Long Island Jewish Hospital. She also offers nutrition seminars to middle school female athletes at Row New York, and has started a compost initiative at Queens College, having received her certification as Master Composter from the Queens Botanical Garden. Veronica is the recipient of a highly competitive dietetic internship after which she will become a registered dietician.

Toni Totten
(Sociology, Political Science) Toni is a non-traditional student who returned to college after a decade-long absence. She volunteers for the 28th District of Queens canvassing and connecting the community to city agencies. She has worked for Councilmember Ruben Wills’ campaign and is an active volunteer for NYPD’s 113th Precinct’s National Night Out, which runs anti-crime rallies with local business and civic organizations. Toni has also coordinated neighborhood forums on community issues and provides free notary services for senior citizens.

Andrea Veras
(Urban Affairs) Andrea has organized members of the 107th Precinct to stand united and speak out against crime in her community. She has brought community residents together to address safety and sanitation issues, and has worked with local officials to increase neighborhood patrols. Community service has impacted Andrea’s personal conception of leadership, motivating her to study community organization.

Qi Zhu
(Graphic Design, Studio Art) Inspired by the support he received as a new immigrant, Qi strives to give back to his community through acts that benefit others, using his talent in the use of visual language. Qi has volunteered for the College’s student newspaper The Knight News, and supports the Art Department designing posters for exhibits and helping faculty with technology. Qi has worked for a non-profit organization that supports new community businesses and has also volunteered at the Queens Museum of Art.

Rebecca Zimilover
(English; Anthropology) Rebecca’s volunteer work is community based and includes food delivery, peer tutoring and peer mentoring for several community organizations. She collaborates with local social workers in working with special needs children and in assisting with bereavement groups. Her professional aspiration is to effect positive change through social work.