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LOCAL SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS HONORED BY SADDLE RIVER VALLEY LIONS

Students, faculty, and building administrators from three area schools were recently honored by the Saddle River Valley Lions Club for their support of their school’s Leo Club and its extensive program of community service activities.

Leo Clubs are school-based service organizations modeled after and chartered by Lions International. Established in 1967, the Leo program now constitutes an international network of over 6,500 clubs in over 140 countries. The ‘LEO’ name is an acronym for its motto: Leadership, Equality and Opportunity. The Saddle River Valley Lions Club is the sponsor of three very active local Leo Clubs.

In his opening welcome at the recent awards event Saddle River Valley Lions immediate past president, Dr. David Verducci, told all of the Lions and guests present that they will be inspired by the example being set by the Leo Club leaders. “These are young people,” Verducci said, “who despite all of their other school-related responsibilities and activities, academic and otherwise, still manage to find an extended amount of time to work in service to others.”

The three students selected by their respective schools to be awarded the designation of Leo of the Year were Natalia Mancero, a junior at Northern Highlands Regional High School in Allendale, Matthew Reichert, a seventh grader at Cavallini Middle School in Upper Saddle River, and Jack F. Slaughter, a junior at Mahwah High School.

In making the award presentations newly installed Lions President Gene Baskayan explained that the three students have been recognized for their roles in organizing, implementing, and leading a wide variety of community service projects.” “these student Leos demonstrate what the spirit of Lionism is all about and this is reflected in the rapid growth of the student organizations. He said that “the number of students now actively participating in our Leo Club program is approaching 150 students and is continuing to climb,” emphasizing that “the commitment of our Lions Club to the Leo program is stronger than ever.”

Celebrating Our 62nd Year of Service to the Communities of the Saddle River Valley
Emphasizing the Lions’ belief that building such a successful program requires a teamwork approach, Verducci then said that this success would never have been possible without the support of the local schools, adding that “these three schools each possess one of the elements essential to a school’s success: building principals who demonstrate strong and effective leadership by placing the needs of their students above all else. These principals believe in the Leo program. And we believe in them.”

This sentiment was made tangible as the Lions then presented its 2019 Community Partner Award to Northern Highlands Principal Joseph Occhino, Cavallini Middle School Principal James McCusker, and Mahwah High School Principal John Pascale. The Community Partner Award is given to an organization, company, or group that goes over and above in helping this Lions Club achieve its goal of service to others. The award is the highest the club gives to non-Lions, is not given every year and, is made only by a vote of the full Lions’ membership.

The final award category was the 2019 President’s Award. Honored were the Leo Clubs’ faculty advisors for their efforts to continually model and inculcate the meaningful value of service to others in their Leos and, in fact, to all of their students. Citing their contagious enthusiasm for the Leo program the award was presented to Northern Highlands Leo advisor Kim Kender, Cavallini co-advisors Emily Viola and Alyssa Willner, and Mahwah High School advisor Stacy Mandel.

Also presented with a President’s Award was the Upper Saddle River Education Foundation for its continuing multi-year financial support of the Leo program. Accepting the award and the Lions’ sincere thanks were Karen Mueller, USREF President and Joy Wenberg, the USREF Vice President for Grants.

The atmosphere and general spirit of the evening seemed to be perfectly captured by Cavallini’s Leo of the Year Matthew Reichert. When asked his thoughts about the Leo program, the seventh grader responded without any hesitation. “I think the Leo Club is so important because it gives students an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their

To learn more about the Leo Club Program, please visit the Youth Programs section of the Lions website at www.lionsclubs.org. For information about the Saddle River Valley Lions Club, its programs, or membership opportunities, view its website at www.SRVLions.org.
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*N.B. The photos below are shown solely for identification purposes. High resolution JPEG are attached to the email that included this press release.*

PHOTO #1

Caption:  
Shown here are the 2019 Leos of the Year, their faculty advisors, and Lion sponsors.

PHOTO #2

Caption:  
Outgoing S.R.V. Lions President Dr. David Verducci (l.) presenting the 2019 Community Partner Award to Joseph Occhino, principal of Northern Highlands Regional High School (r.).

PHOTO #3

Caption:  
Outgoing S.R.V. Lions President Dr. David Verducci (l.) presenting the 2019 Community Partner Award to James McCusker, principal of the Cavallini Middle School (r.).

PHOTO #4

Caption:  
Outgoing S.R.V. Lions President Dr. David Verducci (l.) presenting the 2019 Community Partner Award to John Pascale, principal Mahwah High School (r.).