

# 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. Students must be 13 on or by start of program (July 1st). After registering for the Program, participants spend the year laying out and reaching personal goals. Suffolk County Legislature's Distinguished Youth Award Medal is earned by the participants through 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 Award in 2017 to encourage positive youth development and to recognize young people as they become well-rounded and more civically engaged individuals. The resolution was adopted with bi-

partisan support and charter approved on May 16, 2017.

*"As an elected official, I find it tremendously refreshing and motivating when youth take an active interest in bettering themselves and their community. In a time where we see so much negativity - be it on the news, on social media, and even in interpersonal communication, it is programs such as this Distinguished Youth Award and other good works that should be newsworthy. The youth who complete this award program are truly some of the brightest among us, able to repeatedly set and surpass personal goals across multiple disciplines. All who participate in the Distinguished Youth Award Program will surely find it to be a rewarding experience."*

*- Kevin McCaffrey,  
Presiding Officer (District 14)*

*"The Distinguished Youth Awards are about celebrating our next generation of leaders, encouraging them to stay on the path of helping others, and giving them more opportunities to get involved. I truly believe that providing young people with the tools they need to succeed and recognizing their achievements and character will go a long way to helping mold the future of Suffolk County. We hope to keep this program a tradition for many years to come."*

*- Jason Richberg, Minority Leader (District 15)*

# 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/DYA](http://www.scnylegislature.us/DYA) to find the Registration/Application form. You can complete and submit it electronically or print it, complete it and either mail it 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*, or can and e-mail it to [distinguishedyouthaward.legislature@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:distinguishedyouthaward.legislature@suffolkcountyny.gov). All applicants **must** include a signed waiver and a photo of the applicant with their registration/application.

Registration/Application forms must 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. Goals must be reached during the 12-month period of program year of your registration but applicants must be registered prior to recording hours need to fulfill their award. Optimally, you should register before the program year begins on July 1st and begin recording all activities completed towards achieving your goals using the Record Books July 1st forward. Please note that activities completed before registering for the program cannot be backdated. All of your activities must be validated by a validator or a coordinator in charge of the volunteer activity. Activities can be logged thru June 30th.

# Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

# Follow These Steps:

## 1. REGISTER FOR THE PROGRAM

- ◆ Anyone between the ages of 13 and 18 may register for the program during the open program period (July 1st—June 30th) for the program year.
- ◆ **You can register up until December 1st, but the programs year runs July 1st through June 30th.**

## 2. SELECT AND WORK WITH AN ADVISOR

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

## 3. SCHEDULE INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH YOUR SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR

- ◆ Contact your 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 must complete the activities that you outlined in your Distinguished Youth Award registration/application by June 30th.
- ◆ You must keep a record of your activities to show your Advisor. Records must be signed by Validators.
- ◆ Validators verify that you completed the activities logged in your record book at the time you complete the activity.
- ◆ After accomplishing your goals for the level that you are working towards, have your Advisor sign-off on the completed Record Book pages.

## 5. SCHEDULE FINAL MEETING WITH YOUR SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR

- ◆ Contact your Suffolk County Legislator to schedule a final 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 this final meeting requirement.

## 6. SUBMIT COMPLETED RECORD BOOK TO THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

- ◆ By June 15th, you will receive a unique link for our content management software *Box*.
- ◆ You will submit your validated and approved Record Book after accepting the invitation to collaborate on *Box*. Securely upload your Record Book and all of your supporting documents, videos, photos, audio files, etc. (If you prefer to mail a hard copy of it all, please send it 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 11788-0099.0)
- ◆ Record book **submission deadline is July 15th** each year.
- ◆ You will only receive notification of receipt of your submission if you request one.
- ◆ We can not return submissions, so DO NOT send anything that you would like returned.

## 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.
- ◆ If you add any hours or months of activity to your Record Book, you must have a validator sign off on the additions.
- ◆ If you do not address all the notes in your 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 will be included in your letter.

## 9. QUESTIONS?

- Submit questions or concerns to the Program Coordinator at:  
[DistiguishedYouthAward.Legislature@Suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:DistiguishedYouthAward.Legislature@Suffolkcountyny.gov)

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 your 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 you register 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 goals can be logged in you Record Book beginning on the date that you register for the program or July 1st which ever is later. *However, please note that activities completed before registering for the program cannot be backdated.*

If you register for a higher level award and are not able to complete the requirements for that level, you will 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

## VISUAL SUBMISSIONS

Registrants are required to submit videos or photos of themselves completing activities for each of the program categories. The Distinguished Youth Award's exploration program category requires that a visual diary of the visits to the Suffolk County parks and a few sentences about each park visit be submitted with the Record Book. Visuals can be submitted throughout the enrollment year. **Submission may be featured on our website and promotional materials.** Videos, photos or other visual or supporting documents should be submitted electronically through the content management software Box by using the unique link sent to registrants by e-mail.



## Advisors and Validators:

**A**dvisors 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 you 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 involve 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 can provide you with more than just sign-off on a Record Book. *Please note that all Advisors and Validators should be parent-approved.*

## 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 activities that you participated in to achieve category requirements.**

# Volunteer Service

## SAMPLE ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Animal Care Shelter Work
- Boys & Girls Clubs Volunteer
- Soup Kitchen Volunteer
- Helping an Elderly or Disabled Neighbor 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 can not 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* . 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. *Please note: only non-academic and unpaid activities are eligible. These hours will not be counted toward the award.*

# 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. *No school-based academic efforts count. If you are unsure what qualifies toward the award, please reach out to the DYA Program Coordinator ASAP.*

## 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, Middle Island
- Cedar Point Park, East Hampton
- Champlin Creek Nature Preserve, East Islip
- Cordwood 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 abounds in 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 for 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 exploring each park.

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. Your coach can be your validator and sign-off on your physical fitness activities.

## 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. *Please note that only non-academic and unpaid activities are eligible.*

Suffolk County Legislature's Award for Youth

# Setting Goals:

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

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 or find online tutorials to view once a week and 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 program goals can not also be academic requirements. You can not receive school credit or monetary compensation for any activities you want to use to fulfill award requirements.*

# 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 COMPENSATION

*The activities associated with your program goals can not also be academic requirements. You can not receive school credit or monetary compensation for any activities you want to use to fulfill award requirements. Activities 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 COMPENSATION

*The activities associated with your program goals can not also be academic requirements. You can not receive school credit or monetary compensation for any activities you want to use to fulfill award requirements. Activities 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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