



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Congratulations To The Students of YMCA Youth & Government Group

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 29, 2010

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**



On Saturday, March 27th Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins presented certificates of achievement to participants of the YMCA Youth and Government Group, at a reception held at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Last year, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins secured funding through a legislative grant to create the Youth and Government Group, comprised of students from Pleasantville High School and the Yonkers YMCA.

On March 12th, the students traveled to Albany, joining New York State YMCA Youth and Government participants from across the State for an annual conference. In preparation for the conference, students drafted and submitted mock legislation to be debated and voted on in the mock Senate. While first year Youth and Government groups are rarely able to even attend this conference, legislation drafted by the Pleasantville-Yonkers group was actually passed in a mock Senate vote. The mock legislation prohibits the banning of books in public institutions.

“The Westchester County YMCA Youth and Government Group’s achievements have exceeded expectations and made all of us so proud,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “I applaud the hard work and dedication that these students have shown and look forward to hearing about their many successes in the future.”

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, in partnership with Yonkers YMCA, Pleasantville High School and Mercy College developed the program to bring students from diverse backgrounds and life experiences together on a college campus in a constructive and enlightening learning environment. Mercy College provided classroom space for the group to meet twice a month, and also provided accommodations for the awards reception on Saturday. “It was a pleasure to partner with the Yonkers YMCA, Mercy College and Pleasantville High School to make this such a success, and I am grateful to all of those who helped mentor our students in the legislative process, especially Mr. Archie Dinzey and Mr. Bill Roache,” the Senator commented.

"The state-sponsored Youth in Government program has provided our students with an exciting and authentic experience in the workings of the legislative branch of our State government. Feedback from participating students has been very positive, especially regarding their collaboration with students from other communities. We thank New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins for facilitating this relevant educational outreach and

Mercy College for its generosity in making its facilities available," said Dr. Donald Antonecchia, Superintendent of the Pleasantville Union Free School District.

"The Yonkers YMCA is grateful to Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins for underwriting and supporting the YMCA in launching our Youth and Government Program," said Shawyn Howard, Executive Director of the Yonkers YMCA. "Due to funding and coordination from Senator Stewart Cousins the Yonkers Family YMCA brought together students from Yonkers and Pleasantville Middle and High Schools on the campus of Mercy College to learn about civics, the legislative process and leadership development."

"Mercy College is delighted to partner with the YMCA Youth & Government Group's program that provides practical learning experiences to high school students in our community. We congratulate the students on this wonderful achievement," said Mercy College President, Dr. Kimberly R. Cline.

Andrew Santos, a student from the Yonkers YMCA Youth and Government Group, was recognized as an outstanding participant at the conference and has been asked to participate in this year's Spring Conference in Albany. Santos and the other Spring Conference participants have been asked to meet with their State representatives and share their experiences. Santos has a meeting scheduled with Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins in April.

Established in 1936, the New York State YMCA Youth & Government Program has served thousands of young people over its history. The YMCA Youth & Government Program provides teens with the opportunity to learn about the legislative process as well as provide information on ways to participate in and to petition the government.

"I also would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Yonkers YMCA, Pleasantville High School and Mercy College for their integral roles in making the Westchester County YMCA

Youth and Government Group a reality,” concluded Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

###