



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senator Martins Honors NYS Youth of the Year From Hicksville

JACK M. MARTINS May 23, 2013

| ISSUE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, YOUTH**

| COMMITTEE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



### *Harneet Gulati Touts Hicksville Boys & Girls Club For Encouragement*

New York State Senator Jack M. Martins congratulated the New York State Youth of the Year Harneet Gulati for her work in the community and for her positive impact on its young people.

“Harneet is a shining example of the leadership our young people show in giving of their time and talents to improve the lives of others. Her perseverance and the encourage of the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club says a lot of our community. Congratulations to Harneet and thank you to the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club,” Senator Martins said.

Harneet penned an essay about how she got involved with the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club and her volunteer work. It is published below:

Before my encounter with the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club, I was once a quiet, diffident girl. Whether it be to borrow my homework or sign in their names at the after school activities, my peers constantly pressured me to aid them in their selfish motives. I was often judged on my appearance as well from what I wore to how I looked. I may not have been on top with the latest fashions, but I knew that I was content with my simple lifestyle.

As a Sikh individual born in America, I have always considered it my duty to make sure the coming Sikh-American generation does not forget their values and beliefs while attempting to assimilate into the American culture. For me, it was quite hard to stay different when everyone around me looked the same. I was always tempted to change myself to feel acknowledged by others because apparently, I didn’t “fit the mold.” Because of how I was, there were several instances at school where I was verbally harassed and all I could really do in my power was ignore the taunts. However, I soon learned that pleasing others wasn’t the right solution in solving anything. All I really needed was a positive environment that accepted me for my personality and my natural self.

At the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club, no one ever judged anyone. No one. The moment I stepped into that club, I knew it was a keeper. It didn’t matter what skin color you were, how athletic or talented you were, or how you dressed, ate, talked, and looked. None of that mattered because all they were concerned about was the person within.

For the past three years, I have been an active member and volunteer at the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club (HBGC). I joined the Tutoring Program early March of my sophomore year in Hicksville and have served a total of 618 hours of community service upon membership. I am currently finishing up my third year of tutoring service to the club. Aside from tutoring kids in Math, English, and Science every week, I am also President of the HBGC Torch Club.

Torch Clubs are known to be small groups that help members attain leadership qualities by providing service to not only their club but also their community, and we started our Torch Club Chapter of the HBGC in 2011. I started out as Torch Club Secretary, but my hard work and dedication to the club led the club members to nominate me as the 2012 President of our Torch Club, the club that has made me an active member of my community till today. From Walks to Fundraisers, we did it all but my very own effort was a car wash for the A.M.T. Children of Hope Foundation that helps abandoned babies find their safe haven. This year, I have tried to find more innovative ideas to keep my club members intact with their community.

In addition to contributing my service at the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club, I have also participated in community service efforts held by the Kiwanish Education Youth Club. I joined Key Club in my freshman year of high school and as an active member, I ran for an officer position for the first time at school. In my sophomore year, I was voted as Key Club Secretary and during my junior year, I progressed to Vice President. This year, I once again hold the title as Key Club Vice President. Key Club is an international club and by working hand on hand with the members of the Kiwanis organization, we simply provide service with the goal of helping others. Our Hicksville Key Club has held most of its events mainly at the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, contributing our service at events such as the Pancake Breakfast, Three Kings Night, Pasta Night, the Luck of the Irish Drawings. Some of the more school related events to which we have contributed our service to have been the Christmas in July Food Drive, the Breast Cancer Walk, Thanksgiving Wrapping Party, and the Annual

Wellness Fair at Hicksville High School.

I take great pride in my academics. As a freshman in High School, I was President of the Class of 2013. I soon became eligible to become a member of the National Honor Society as well as the Math Honor Society. The highlight of my school career has been the Poetry Out Loud Competition because not only did I become a finalist at the school-wide competition, but I also became a Regional Finalist. This year, I feel proud to be acknowledged as a Scholar for ranking in the top twenty percent of the Class. Aside from academics, I have also been involved in several clubs at school, but the one club I love the most is the Helping Hands Club. It's exactly what it sounds like – we always give out a helping hand to both local charities and our school through creative fundraising events.

Like Student Government, we also get involved in numerous events, but we are specifically known for holding our annual Teacher Jams through which students have the opportunity to watch their teachers rock on stage simply by donating \$5 to our cause. We normally donate the money earned to the Embrace Global Foundation. However, this year we decided to raise money for our local PTSA scholarships instead since our school is already working to help Embrace. Our Teacher Jam fundraiser is always a huge success since we end up earning around \$1000 each time! As treasurer this year, I am in charge of counting the money after each event, making sure the calculation is proportional to the amount of tickets sold to catch fraud, and then signing the receipts at the end. I am proud that Helping Hands was the first club to introduce the Embrace Global Foundation because we caused other clubs to help out for this foundation as well and it eventually became a school-wide effort. One event that also fundraised for the Embrace Global Foundation was the International Fashion Show Event at our School which was sponsored by Model UN.

After taking various science classes in high school, I definitely know I want to major in the health related field because of my fascination with the human body. I want to dedicate my

time improving the quality of others' lives by aiding those who are mentally ill, injured, disabled, or simply weak. Overall, I just want to help people. I have always enjoyed making everyone feel relaxed and relieved because not only am I a great listener, but I am also easy to approach and work with. Every individual has a different story and each one can be quite inspiring. I know my parents have struggled over twenty years in this country, taking on any job they could to provide for their three children; it depresses me every time to see them exhausted and feeble, and yet still working just provide for our futures. My mother has arthritis and my father is her main support, but sometimes I too wish I could ease her pain. Thus, I look forward to becoming a physical therapist and obtaining my doctorate degree in physiotherapy so that I can not only look after my parents but also many others like them.

The love, guidance, and encouragement I have received from the Hicksville Boys and Girls Club were truly a blessing.