



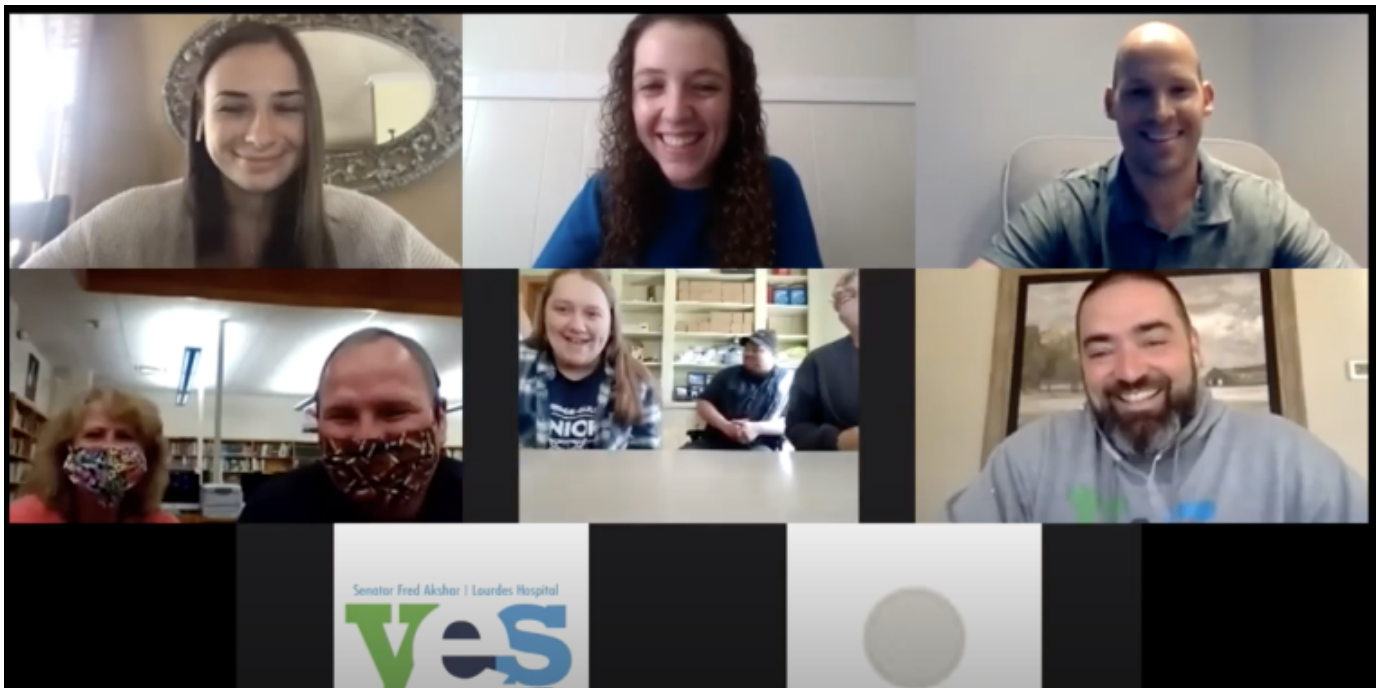
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Senator Fred Akshar, Lourdes and YES Safe Choices honor scholarship winners

FRED AKSHAR June 4, 2020

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Senator Fred Akshar and YES Safe Choices staff continued their annual tradition of awarding scholarships to three senior YES LEADers, who are part of the YES LEADS program.

YES LEADers are middle and high school students who visit classrooms and use hands-on activities to teach local elementary school students about the dangers of substance abuse, the importance of self-esteem and the value in making healthy choices as they grow up.

In the past, the winners of the Jill Kavanagh Memorial YES LEADS scholarships would have been announced at the annual YES LEADS reception that takes place at the McKinley in Endicott and is hosted by Senator Fred Askshar and Lourdes CEO Kathy Connerton. However, with the “New York State on Pause” closing schools and preventing large gatherings, Senator Akshar worked with the winners school districts and YES staff from Lourdes to use Zoom meetings to hold the celebration.

This year’s winners of the Jill Kanavnagh memorial YES LEADS scholarships are Courtney Gilbert of Bainbridge-Guilford High School, Dominick Lomonaco of Chenango Valley High School, and Lorenzo Carlini of Union-Endicott High School.

“In her 4 years with the program, Bainbridge-Guilford High School’s Courtney Gilbert went from a shy and quiet freshman to a shining example of the very best in leadership and character that the YES program has to offer,” said Senator Fred Akshar. “Her grit, hard work, kindness and dedication will serve her well as she goes on to pursue a nursing degree at SUNY Delhi, and we wish her all the best for the future and thank her for her service to our community’s students.”

“A 4 year member of YES LEADs and president of his group for both his Junior and Senior years, Chenango Valley High School’s Dominick Lomonaco has shown remarkable leadership throughout his time at YES, always being there to offer support and guidance to his fellow students,” said Senator Fre dAkshar. “In addition to several accolades and awards, Dom has earned the respect of his teachers, coaches, administrators and students alike and truly walks the walk of YES LEADs and YES Safe Choices.”

“Over the past 5 years, Union-Endicott’s Lorenzo Carlini has grown from someone who was nervous to speak in front of people into someone who thrives presenting educational

information and support,” said Senator Fred Akshar. “His peers and faculty say he brings his positive energy into every room he enters, lifting up those around him and he goes out of his way to make students feel welcome and comfortable.”

Courtney received a \$2000 scholarship, Dominick received \$1000 and Lorenzo received \$500. These three students were chosen based upon their contributions to their school’s YES LEADS program and commitment to a substance-free lifestyle.

“Courtney, Dominick and Lorenzo have dedicated considerable time, effort and energy illustrating that you don’t need to drink, do drugs or bully to have fun. They’re outstanding YES LEADers who should be proud of the lives they’ve touched,” said Lourdes President/CEO Kathy Connerton.

YES Safe Choices is a partnership between Senator Akshar and Lourdes Hospital. YES LEADS is represented in 14 different school districts and 17 schools overall. The YES LEADers are looking forward to a full school year next year in which they will make presentations to nearly 5,000 elementary school students.

“I’m always inspired by the passion our YES LEADers show when sharing this valuable information to our younger generation,” said Senator Akshar. “When we all move on to our rocking chairs, it’s a great feeling knowing that these are some of the young men and women who will be leading our communities into the future”

For more information about YES Safe Choices and YES LEADS, please visit [www.YesSafeChoices.org](http://www.YesSafeChoices.org).

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Video of Courtney Gilbert's scholarship recognition: <https://youtu.be/QCcFqJRjK58>

Video of Dominick Lomonaco's scholarship recognition: <https://youtu.be/vKy6Rm9GbCs>

Video of Lorenzo Carlini's scholarship recognition: <https://youtu.be/wuG1Xr2LUUY>