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## Astoria Civic Association Awards \$26K In Scholarships

BY THOMAS COGAN

"This is our best meeting of the year," former City Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone said, highlighting the Astoria Civic Association's Judge Charles J. Vallone Scholarship Awards meeting in June. This year, awards amounting to \$26,000 went to 20 recent graduates of 17 area high schools. There were 14 awards of \$750 apiece; one of \$1,500 and one of \$2,000; two of \$2,500; and one each of \$3,000 and \$4,000. Vallone said that the total amount awarded since the scholarships were first presented more than 35 years ago is approaching \$500,000.

The awards were the leading topic of the June meeting, but not the only agenda item: eight local Girl Scout troops were presented with community service awards and a campaign to build a cardiac catheterization laboratory at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens was made manifest by postcards passed out for mailing to Richard Daines, M.D., commissioner of the New York State Department of Health, and a few words from Dr. Sergio Sokol, one of the cardiologists expected to make use of any such laboratory. Sokol said that a cardio-cath lab would allow Mt. Sinai Queens to work more efficiently with such affiliated Manhattan hospitals as Mt. Sinai and Lenox Hill.

The 14 winners of the \$750 award were Kristina Afrides of the Garden School; Ana Aguirre of St. Agnes H.S.; Jason Attard of Xavier H.S.; Jennifer Butt of St. Frances Prep; Daisy Calderon of Baccalaureate School for Global Education; Armelis D'Orville of John Bowne H.S.; Nina Han of Bryant H.S.; Joanna Katsigeorgis of St. Demetrios H.S.; Diana Otis of St. Vincent Ferrer H.S.; George Papadopoulos of Bryant H.S.; Antri Papanikolaou of Long Island City H.S.; Vincent Spevack of Monsignor McClancy H.S.; Crystal Turner of Francis Lewis H.S., and Natalia Yepes of Frank Sinatra H.S.

These winners were announced collectively; the other winners were hailed individually. The winner of \$1,500, Mary Noor of Long Island City H.S., was cited for achieving high marks,

being an editor of the school newspaper and volunteering as a hospital worker. She is headed for Fordham University. The \$2,000 winner, Jason Lee of Townsend Harris H.S., belonged to several scientific honor societies and achieved highest honors on a national Latin examination. He will be attending State University of New York at Buffalo. One of two \$2,500 winners, Angela Meloni of St. John's Prep, had a 95 average and was in the school drama society. She is going to Queens College. The other \$2,500 winner, Steven Rey, also of St. John's Prep, was said to be proficient in mathematics and interested in photography. He was a player on the soccer team and had a perfect attendance record for all four years. He is going to Fordham, planning to be a computer science major. The \$3,000 winner, Andrea Popovech of Dominican Academy, a native of Ukraine, speaks at least three languages proficiently and has great interest in ethnic dancing and athletics. Her academic destination is Johns Hopkins University, with a course of study in public health. The last of the scholarship winners was John Banasios of Aviation H.S., who was awarded \$4,000. He was cited for great leadership ability, particularly in managing a six-person robotics team that competed in science fairs on Long Island and in Georgia. He is choosing between City College and St. John's. Like the five others before him, he made a short acceptance speech; especially notable when, after thanking God, his parents and his girlfriend, he looked dazzled, shook his head, smiled and exclaimed, "I'm just happy!"

Seeing such high spirits, City Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. rounded out his father's opening description by calling the scholarship awards ceremony "our favorite night". Each year, several past winners are in attendance, and John Mark, a winner in 1996, recalled that his award paid for much of his first-year expenses at Manhattan College. He later studied at Oxford University in England and eventually got a law degree at St. John's. His advice to all the winners was: "Stay involved!"



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