

The Spirit of Anne Frank Awards 1998 winners

1998 Outstanding Youth Award

ANNA GEKKER and KSENIYA IVNITSKAY, 13 years old, writer and poet respectively. Students of the David A. Boody Intermediate School in Brooklyn, N.Y., both serve as Executive Board members of the school's Council for Unity program. They conceived and created a monthly school newspaper focusing on the issues of intolerance and hate.

1998 Outstanding Youth Award

ROLANDO RIVERA, JR., has been active in his community since the 5th grade, organizing a group of students to talk to neighborhood gang members about eliminating youth violence, and the need for tolerance and understanding. He is an active volunteer for Foodcare Inc., as well as working with neighborhood senior citizens. He is currently a student of the High School of Economics and Finance, Brooklyn, NY.

1998 Outstanding Youth Award

JOHNATHAN TORRES has been committed to helping others to understand the true meaning of tolerance and respect. He is a certified NYC Board of Education Peer Mediation Specialist. He trained at the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) A World of Difference Institute for three years, and has conducted workshops throughout the tri-state area and Europe. He was selected by the ADL to speak before a Congressional Committee, to discuss anti-bias education. He is a graduate of the Susan Wagner High School, Staten Island, NY.

1998 Outstanding Educator Award

ELLEN FETTNER has been described as "a sower of goodness of the world." A retired teacher, Ellen Fettner is an educational consultant who still works closely with students to stress human values and the importance of cross-cultural relationships. She directs workshops, locally and nationally, on the history of the Holocaust, as well as educational programs that stress the need for tolerance. She organized "Hands Across the Campus," was the Project Coordinator of the May 22–June 24, 1995 Anne Frank In The World 1929–1945 exhibit, and this past summer, she led a group of 45 educators and their families to Europe, to learn more about the Holocaust.

THE FRANK AND EMILY ULLMAN

1998 Outstanding Educator Award

ENID HAWTHORNE created one of the first peer mediation programs in New York State to deal with resolution and conflicts. She is a Social Studies Teacher at Freeport High School, Freeport, NY, the largest high school in Nassau County. Ms. Hawthorne established a Human Relations Program at the school, and created a Human Relations course curriculum approved by the NY State Board of Regents. A Human Relations Day has grown out of this program, which galvanizes the entire community with speakers who discuss social and ethnic issues.

1998 Outstanding Citizen Award

ARNETTE CROCKER is one of the most active members of the "Season for Nonviolence" Task Force. She helped organize "A Celebration of the Life of Dr. Martin King", bringing together children from every borough of the city to focus on non-violent resolutions and conflicts. Ms. Crocker started the Peer Educators Mediators' Advisory Council (PEMAC) which has taken on a number of "Summits for Peace". She is currently the Conflict Resolution Coordinator at the Office of the Superintendent, Bronx High School, Bronx, NY.

1998 Outstanding Citizen Award

JENNIFER FILPO at 17 helped to create the musical I Make A Promise, written by children who have AIDS or lost a parent to AIDS. After each performance at Second Stage Theater in NYC, Ms. Filpo fielded questions from the audience about living with AIDS, and coping with discrimination and intolerance. The play went to Washington, D.C., for a one time performance and tour of the White House. She is currently training to be a peer educator and hopes to become a nurse.

1998 Humanitarian Award

STANLEY LITOW has worked for over 20 years in education in New York, appointed by Governor Cuomo to the state's Industrial Cooperation Council, the NYC Job Training Partnership and the state's School of Business Alliance. He also headed the Educational Priorities Panel, an advocacy group that pushed for reform of the New York school system. In 1995, Litow co-authored, with CEO Louis Gerstner, Jr. IBM Foundation's most prominent endeavor, Reinventing Education. The 25 million dollar, three year program aims to bring the technology acumen of the business world to schools.

1998 Lifetime Achievement Award

JACK POLAK is the Chairman Emeritus of the Anne Frank Center USA. Born in Amsterdam, Mr. Polak was deported first to Westerbork during World War II, then to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Liberated by the Russian Army on April 23, 1945, Mr. Polak returned to Amsterdam where he renewed his relationship with a young woman he met in the camps, Catharina Soep, whom he married in January, 1946. In 1951, they emigrated to the United States where they raised their three children. Mr. Polak speaks regularly about his war-time experiences throughout the U.S. for organizations, churches, and schools. He is a member of the New York State Holocaust Commission, and the Chairman Emeritus of the Anne Frank Center USA. He is a Trustee of the Shaarei Tikvah Conservative Synagogue, and has been honored by the United Jewish Appeal, Israel Bond Drive, B'nai B'rith, and Emunah for his continuous efforts on behalf of those organizations. On his 80th birthday, Mr. Polak was knighted by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands for his work as the President of the Anne Frank Center USA and for speaking at universities and organizations on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands. On November 14, 1997, Mr. Polak received the Louis E. Yavner Citizen Award from the regents of the University of the State of New York.