



Acquista Receives NYS Senate Youth Leadership Award

Natalie Acquista, who will be a senior at Newark High School in the fall, was recently recognized as one of 14 high school students from the Finger Lakes region to receive a New York State Senate Youth Leadership Recognition Award.

Presented to her by New York State Senator Pam Helming (R-54) at a June 1st ceremony at the Macedon Town Hall, the award recognizes students for their outstanding leadership and achievement in four categories _ academics, athletics, arts and community service.

Danielle McGavisk, Director of Guidance at NHS, nominated Acquista for the award in April. In her nominating letter, she noted that during Acquista's three years at NHS she has made "an impact in her desire to help create a better community and culture."

"She has been an integral part of our Student Advisory Cabinet," she wrote. "This group has attended leadership seminars and created initiatives in our building that help create a positive culture of kindness which includes student voice. This year Natalie introduced a new extracurricular club called PLANT (Putting Little Acts of Niceness Together.)"

"Natalie is also an outstanding student who has a cumulative GPA of 93.64 and challenges herself academically with advanced placement courses and FLCC/Gemini college level courses. She is interested in chemistry with the potential to continue in that field of study after high school."

"As well as her school involvement, Natalie is very involved in her church and youth group. She has a strong moral compass and is respectful of herself and others. She has a supportive and loving family which has been there to assist her in whatever path she takes. Natalie is an outstanding dancer and has followed her passion of dancing, especially ballet throughout her childhood."

"While managing her academics and extracurricular activities in and out of school, Natalie is also a pharmacy technician at Wegmans. She is not afraid of hard work and has been able to balance it all very well."

"I am confident that Natalie will continue to make a significant impact in her community and this is an appropriate recognition of her leadership among her peers. I highly recommend Natalie Acquista for the NYS Senate Leadership Recognition Award."

In an essay that accompanied McGavisk's nominating letter, Acquista wrote:

"Looking back upon this year it fills my heart with an extraordinary amount of happiness to see how one small, improbable idea can really make an extensive difference."

"Last year, during my sophomore year I was an active member of my school's Student Advisory Cabinet. I participated in various leadership conferences, trying to communicate with others to see how I could generate a transformation at my school. One person that really was memorable and gave me a breakthrough was Houston Kraft."

"He was a speaker at a youth leadership conference and his presentation's concentration was on kindness. Kindness and community service have consistently been a major role in my life. I have always had a very strong love for special education and community service. The night I came home from that leadership conference, I knew how I wanted to create a change."

"With the help from my principal and so many other staff members I started a new club this junior year called PLANT. Our focus is on kindness through community service. So far this year, I have spoken in front of the



school and so many kids have become actively involved in this group. I spoke in front of all the administrative staff for all our school district to inform them of the club.

“Last fall our club painted pumpkins and gave them to all the teachers. This past winter our group did a Santa's Little Workshop, where the children from the elementary schools wrote letters to us and we wrote letters back to them. To have parents come up to me for months and tell me how I made their child's Christmas was so appreciated.

“This group has changed my life and has really made me aware of my love for my small community and the people in it. We, as young adults, are the future and I am determined to make sure that our future for this world is bright. Even if I do live in a small town, small actions have a major impact on people. Anyone who knows me knows that I am a strong and independent young woman.

“I have so many goals that I aspire to in life. I am an active member in my community, like my church's youth group. I'm also active in several clubs such as National Honor Society, French Honor Society, Student Advisory Cabinet, Link Crew, Drama Club, Vocal Jazz, Interact, Chamber Choir and I am Varsity Club secretary.

“Additionally I was in my school's musical, I am a ballerina and was involved in cheerleading . . . I work at Newark Wegmans Pharmacy. It is safe to say I have absolutely no free time, but I am completely okay with that because I have hopes and dreams that I want to accomplish, and it is never too early to start going for them.”