Savino Hosts Island's 1st Juneteenth Celebration of African American Freedom

DIANE J. SAVINO   June 21, 2011

St. George- State Senator Diane J. Savino (D-I-WF Staten Island) held a Juneteenth celebration at the new Carter Community Center in Stapleton. Juneteenth is a celebration of African American freedom, culture and achievement.

This is the first Juneteenth celebration on Staten Island as an elected official sponsored event. Juneteenth is a celebration commemorating the day many slaves first heard the Emancipation Proclamation for the first time and realized their freedom.

June nineteenth of 1863, slaves in Galveston, Texas were read the emancipation proclamation and word spread rather quickly, plantation to plantation, that they were no longer slaves but free men and women.

Today, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. A time marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. At Senator Savino's event Stapleton UAME Church Choir sang, a Salathia Richburg play "Trust" was performed by Wagner HS Students, in addition, the Universal Temple for the Arts Jazz Ensemble played.

"Juneteenth is a time to celebrate our freedom and respect for the contributions and culture of the African-American people," Senator Savino continued. "It is my pleasure to bring a Juneteenth celebration to our shores."

State Senator Diane J. Savino presented the Elizabeth Stanton Community Leadership Award to

Michael Cox, NYCHA Staten Island Borough Administrator, the Community Service Award was presented to local activist Jackie O. Modig, and the essay scholarship award was presented to Maurice Ray, a Hungerford High School Student. The Juneteenth Celebration was free to the public and the first in the new Gerard Carter Center in Stapleton.