



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## **Senator Martins Honors Youth Leaders With Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards**

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State Senator Jack M. Martins hosted his Dr. Martin Luther King Awards for Elmont youth this past week in a standing room only ceremony at the First Church of God in Elmont. The awards presentation highlighted area youth from Elmont and North Valley Stream for their leadership, commitment to social justice, volunteerism, scholarship and community service. The awards presentation hosted nearly two hundred members of the community made up of family and friends of the honorees.

“These awards were developed to honor outstanding young people who have made a difference in our community and are our next generation of leaders,” said Senator Jack Martins adding, “I’m very proud of each and every one of them. They follow a rich tradition of award winners who are outstanding young people who continue to inspire and motivate their peers.”

State Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said, “The young men and women that Senator Martins and I had the privilege to pass this resolution for are some of the most talented young people I have had the privilege to meet and work with. I join their families in congratulating them and thank Senator Martins for hosting this ceremony and providing the opportunity for us to honor them.”

Previous award winners of Senator Jack Martins’ “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards” include: Dillon Williams, Brian Wint, Kevin Johnson, Marvin Lee, Goldie Harrison, Qusarn Caldwell and Tyrone St. Louis.

The awards presentation began with Pastor Cecil Mathew offering words of inspiration to all gathered. MC Sandra Smith thanked award winners for their work and leadership in the community. “The honorees we salute display strong character traits, leadership, a sense of community, respect, social justice and scholarship in their everyday lives.”

Qusarn Caldwell, an Elmont Fire Department Explorer, led attendees in the salute to the flag. Caldwell was a 2011 award winner and was recently named an all-county football star for his achievement on the Elmont Spartan Varsity football squad.

Donald Pierre Louis and Goldie Harrison read passages from Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream Speech,” and commented on the power of his words and meaning that it has to young and old today. Harrison said, “Dr. Martin Luther King was a driving force in the push for racial equality. His “I Have a Dream Speech,” is credited with mobilizing supporters of desegregation and prompted the 1964 Civil Right Act.”

Senator Martins offered remarks and personal reflections on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and how his vision continues to grow in our young people through their work in our communities and academic excellence. “Today is a day where we salute you. Each and every one of these honorees fulfills the dream and lives it through their actions and what they stand for in their lives,” Martins said.

Honorees were presented with New York State Senate Resolutions sponsored by Senator Martins that highlighted their achievement. The resolution was passed on the floor of the Senate in early January.

As honorees came forward to accept their awards with their families, biographies of award winners were read by Bobby King. Honorees were: Greg Calvaire, Thomas Brown, Kyla Ridley, Calveti "Menelik" Nyabingi, Bria Duhaney, Jeffrey Cadet, Grace Cho, Christopher Rothwell, Kyle Johnson, Jasmine Williams, Jonathan Toussaint, Daniel Alexander, Michael Braun, Patrick LaRoque, Cameron Goulbourne, Brianna St. Louis, Taylor Palmer, Bria Fisher, Elijah Ross, Dyani Dawes, Dylan Richards, Rashaan Evans and Shebin Thomas were presented with honors.

As the awards were presented, honorees were given the opportunity to say a few words and thank those who inspired them. Kyle Johnson credited his parents for always being there for him and pushing him to do better. Patrick LaRoque thanked his mother for believing in him. Cameron Goulbourne thanked his family and God for inspiring him and supporting him each and every day.

Greg Calvaire said, "this award is truly a great honor. It continues to motivate and inspire me and I want to thank Senator Martins for recognizing all of us tonight with our families and close friends in a ceremony we will always remember."

Thomas Brown, a senior at Sewanhaka High School, touched upon his work with children who are victims of child abuse and neglect. He credited his mother for inspiring him to work with those less fortunate and to have an understanding heart.

At the conclusion of the awards, honorees and audience members were entertained by the inspirational musical arrangement of "YGB" or "Young, Gifted and Black." The lead for the group is a graduate of Elmont Memorial High School Leonard Corley that led a trio with a musical arrangement that had spoken word, passages of R&B and solos.