



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Celebrates LGBTQQ Pride Month with Award Presentations at Pace University

PETE HARCKHAM June 29, 2020

| ISSUE: **LGBTQ PRIDE, LGBTQ COMMUNITY, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; LGBTQIA; PRIDE MONTH, PACE UNIVERSITY**



Pleasantville, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham, in celebration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQQ) Pride Month, presented New York State Commendation 2020 awards today to Rachel Simon and James Hyer during a special ceremony at Pace University.

“It is my great privilege to honor two remarkable individuals, Rachel Simon and Jim Hyer, for their outstanding work in the LGBTQQ community,” said Harckham. “The world is a better place when we open our hearts with acceptance and respect to each other, in full acknowledgement that the rich diversity of human life is a strength that benefits us all. As part of a passionate and transformative movement, Rachel and Jim have succeeded in making a difference in countless lives—in letting people know they are safe and that they are welcomed as equals. Their courage and the sum of their endeavors in this regard are truly inspiring.”

Simon is Pace University’s Associate Director of Multicultural Affairs & Diversity Programs and Coordinator of Pace’s LGBTQQ Center. Hyer, a graduate of the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, is Administrative Law Judge for the Westchester Human Rights Commission and former board member of The Loft: LGBT Community Services Center in White Plains, NY.

Pace University President Marvin Krislov attended the event, and said, “Pace University celebrates all its people, all its communities, and, especially during Pride Month, its LGBTQQ students, faculty, and staff. We're pleased to join Senator Pete Harckham in honoring those who work to support the LGBTQQ community in Westchester, and we're especially pleased that Pace’s own Rachel Simon is being recognized for her work. Happy Pride, and congratulations, Rachel.”

Other notable guests included Tejash Sanchala, director of the Westchester Human Rights Commission; and Anthony Nicodemo, president of Stonewall Democrats.

Simon is also board vice president of PrideWorks for Youth, a non-profit that holds an annual conference in Westchester for LGBTQQ youth; and she serves on the Westchester County LGBT Advisory Board to County Executive George Latimer.

At the Westchester Human Rights Commission, Hyer presides over key matters pertaining to human rights and fair housing law. He is also a member of the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York. In November 2019, Hyer was a participant in a Hate in the Age of Multiculturalism panel discussion that Harckham organized in Mahopac.

Harckham also noted in his remarks that, besides the coronavirus pandemic crisis, the nation is the midst of a crisis of racism, homophobia and intolerance. But the nation is standing up now “with one voice,” he said, against such “unacceptable” thinking. Appropriately enough, the recent marches against systemic racism across the country have been taking place during Pride Month, added Harckham, which shows “the moral impetus between both of these movements is intertwined,” as is the “recommitting to human rights, social justice and racial justice for all Americans.”

This is Harckham’s second year in a row of honoring individuals during a special Pride Month awards celebration. Last year’s honorees were Kristen Browde of Westchester County and Laurette Giardino of Dutchess County.

The award ceremony was broadcast live on Senator Harckham's Facebook page, where it is now also archived for viewing.