



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Recognizes Community Leaders in Black History Month Commemoration

PETE HARCKHAM February 20, 2021

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Peekskill, NY – In recognition of Black History Month, New York State Senator Pete Harckham honored jazz artist / cultural advocate Ray Blue and 14 members of Mahopac for Racial Justice for their leadership and commitment to bettering their communities.

The special award ceremony was held virtually online; to see a video of the ceremony please visit Senator Harckham's Facebook page.

“These Black History Month honorees value the importance of strengthening our community, empowering residents and proudly celebrating their African American heritage,” said Harckham. “Ray has accomplished so much in this regard in the music world as a performer, composer, educator, mentor and organizer, while bringing people together to forge a level of respect and better understanding of each other. Also, the students in Mahopac for Racial Justice exemplify a profound awareness of our society and the spirit to make necessary changes to better everyone’s lives. All together, they deserve our gratitude and appreciation.”

A Peekskill native, Blue is an award-winning jazz saxophonist, composer and bandleader who has performed with jazz groups at concerts and festivals across the country and around the world. In 2005, he founded Cross-Cultural Connection, a non-profit organization that promotes jazz culture, performance and education. The organization hosts a workshop series, artist-in-residence programs, school and community programming, performances and a scholarship fund.

Dr. Richard Jones, executive dean at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, who first worked with Blue over 30 years ago, attended the virtual celebration and called the musical artist “a renaissance man” and “an inspiring individual for countless young students.”

Mahopac for Racial Justice is a group of nearly 30 young adults that advocates against racial discrimination and prejudice in their community. The group created a social media page where anonymous residents could share their personal experiences with racism. And in solidarity with the broader anti-racism movement, the group hosted the Rally and Protest against Racism that drew hundreds of residents.

Six main organizers of Mahopac for Racial Justice were awarded Senate proclamations for their work; they are Brianna Small, Andréa Jenkins, Jessica Caputo, Marisa Caputo, Alanis Nawrocki and Diana Kone. Receiving Senate certificates for their work were eight other

group members: Stephany Solis, Ronald Solis, Alexis Annabi, Kristen Annabi, Vincent Annabi, Isabel Perez, Edwin Meijia and Daniel Ehrenpreis.