

# PRESS RELEASE

April 20, 2017

## ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HOST ITS ANNUAL “ESSEX COUNTY CELEBRATES YOUTH” EVENT



The Essex County Freeholders honored (from left to right, front row), Megan Hackett, Zani Jones Mbayise, Samantha E. Corredor (from left to right, back row) Justine Eli Rosa, Kayla Janae Wilson and Rafael Colton-Max and several other deserving youth during its annual “Essex County Celebrates Youth” Event. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its Annual “Essex County Celebrates Youth” Program on Wednesday, April 19, 2017, at the Hall of Records in Newark. This event is held each year to acknowledge and encourage outstanding young people throughout the County who have accomplished and contributed so much at a young age.

This event is held each year to acknowledge outstanding young people throughout the County who have accomplished and contributed so much at a young age and proven themselves to be role models for their peers. This year’s honorees were: **Kim Boerrigter** of Newark, Senior at Malcolm X Shabazz High School; **Megan Hackett** of West Orange, student at Mt. Pleasant Elementary; **Tyrese Fraser** of Irvington, Junior at Irvington High School; **Justine Eli Rosa** of Newark, Senior at Bloomfield Tech High; **Rafael Colton-Max** of South Orange, student at Golda Och Academy; **Zachary Colton-Max** of South Orange, Senior at Golda Och Academy; **Kayla Janae Wilson** of Orange, Senior at Saint Vincent Academy; **Samantha E. Corredor** of Montclair, Senior at Montclair High School; and **Zani Jones Mbayise** of East Orange, student at Philip’s Academy Charter School.

Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake began the program by stating, “The young people of Essex County are not the future; they are the now.” President Timberlake explained that the honorees represent the potential that exists in Essex and illustrate the future leaders that call Essex County their home. She also thanked the parents for their leadership in raising amazing children.



Freeholder Rolando Bobadilla (right) presents honoree Kim Boerrigter (left) with the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Kim Boerrigter** of Newark migrated to the United States from Germany in 2003 with her family. She is the Valedictorian of the Malcolm X Shabazz High School's Class of 2017 with a 4.075 grade point average. Kim has been accepted into 15 different colleges, most notably, Harvard University where she is the recipient of a full scholarship. In addition, she is a recipient of the Leon Cooperman Scholarship. She plans to become a scientist and is the daughter of Dorothea Boerrigter and sister to Michael.

**Megan Hackett** of West Orange is a 5th grade student in the honors program. She has received notoriety as a contestant on the reality television show *Chopped Junior* on the Food Network where she competed for a \$10,000 prize and title of "Chopped Junior Champion". Megan is also a singer, musician, actress, dancer, trained stand-up comedian, and star athlete. She has filmed numerous commercials, writes music, and plays several instruments. She is the daughter of proud parents Natalie Heard Hackett and Merlin Hackett. When not involved in her numerous hobbies, Megan can often be found reading or playing with her dog Muffin.



Freeholder Cynthia Toro (right) presents honoree Megan Hackett (left) with the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Tyrese Fraser** of Irvington is a very driven, mature, and well-spoken young man who attends Irvington High School. He consistently strives to challenge himself by adding more honor courses to his academic rigor. His overall grade point average is a 3.149, and his cumulative grade point average for the 2016-2017 academic year is 3.87. Outside of the classroom, Tyrese competes with the Bowling team and is an active member of Future Business Leaders of America. He works at a local shipping company for 10 hours each week and is planning to attend college in Pennsylvania to become a pharmacist in the future.



Freeholder Rufus I. Johnson (left) presents honoree Justin Eli Rosa (right) with the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Justin Eli Rosa** of Newark is a senior at Bloomfield Tech High School. He has a 3.4 grade point average and will graduate in the Summer of 2017. Justin plans to attend Essex County College and study Criminal Justice. He is interested in following in the footsteps of his father and brother by becoming a Police Officer. He has always wanted to go into law enforcement to make a positive impact and help others. Justin recently received a scholarship from The Hispanic Law Enforcement Society of Essex County and works part-time at McDonalds to save money for college.

**Rafael Colton-Max** of South Orange attends Golda Och Academy (GOA), in West Orange where he enjoys classes in science, math, and Judaic and Hebrew studies. He has trained at the Mark Murphy Music School in South Orange and also performed with his band as a solo artist. He plays the drums and serves as the lead vocalist in New York City, South Orange, and Maplewood. Most recently, he was selected as the sole drummer in the New Jersey Association for Jazz Education Region 1 Junior Jazz Ensemble. Rafael has also held leading roles in the GOA Middle School productions for the last two years. Although he was born with Mastocytosis, a disorder whereby an abnormal accumulation of mast cells in all of the organs produce a variety of symptoms that impact his daily life, he has not let this limit his love for life. He has embraced the rare disease and raised nearly \$1,000 by selling bracelets in support of this important cause. Rafael is the youngest son of Nomi and Harold and a proud brother to Zachary.



(from left to right), Nomi Colton-Max, Rafael Colton-Max, Freeholder Patricia Sebald, and Harold Colton-Max attend the "Essex County Celebrates Youth" event. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Zachary Colton-Max** of South Orange is a high school senior spending his last semester of high school living and learning in Jerusalem, Israel, with his school, Golda Och Academy (GOA). In February 2017, he attended the Grammys as a part of the Grammy choir along with 29 other high school students from across the country to participate in the Grammy Camp Jazz Session. The choir performed all over Los Angeles during the week of the Grammy Awards at events such as Grammy in the Schools, the Grammy Nominee Reception Gala and the official Grammy Jazz After Party. Zachary was elected by his classmates to give the Senior Send Off Address and has served as the School's Council President, coeditor-in-chief of the school's newspaper, and member of the school's New Jersey Model Congress club. When he is not traveling, he resides at home with his brother Rafi and his parents Nomi and Harold.

**Kayla Janae Wilson** of Orange attends Saint Vincent Academy in Newark where she was an active member of Immaculate Conception's Cheerleading Squad and United People of Color Dance Troop. She is also a part of the track and volleyball team where she received the "First Team All-Conference" Award for Girls Track and Field and "Second Team All-Conference" Award. She ended her senior year as Captain of the volleyball team leading her team in a 16-0 record and winning the "First Team All-



Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill (right), stands alongside (from left to right), Niles Wilson, LaTosha Wilson, and Kayla Janae Wilson as she receives the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Conference" Award for Women's Volleyball. She also received an award at Seton Hall University for National Women in Sports Day. She has a 3.3 grade point average and is an active member of the National Honor Society where she serves as the Assistant Secretary. She plans to attend Georgian Court University where she will major in Exercise Science with a minor in Coaching, while also being a member of Georgian Courts Women's Volleyball Team. Kayla is the daughter of Niles and LaTosha Wilson and the younger sister of Alyssa Wilson.

**Samantha E. Corredor** of Montclair is a first-generation American whose parents came to the United States from Peru and Colombia. She was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder in first grade. However, this has not stopped her from persevering. Samantha is a senior at Montclair High School and has participated in a range of community service activities, extracurricular activities, and part-time work at the local YMCA. She has been a member of the National Honor Society since her junior year and has taken on a full course load of High Honors and Advanced Placement courses. She currently works as a swim instructor teaching 3-year-olds to adulthood how to swim,



Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill (right), stands alongside honoree Samantha E. Corredor (center) and her mother Giovanna Lopez (left) as she receives the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

improve their endurance in the water, and swimming strokes. In her spare time, she likes to draw and paint. She aspires to be a creative director for a fashion advertisement agency and wants to establish a social platform to promote equality for women and Latinas through marketing and advertisements.



Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake (right), presents the Board's Commendation to honoree Zani Jones Mbayise (left), during the event. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Zani Jones Mbayise**, born Zanelanga, of East Orange is a 6-year-old who possesses a great joy for the performing arts. She comes from a musical home, for her parents, Phumzile Sojola and Andrea Jones-Sojola, are both Broadway singers. At the age of 4, she booked her first film playing Phoebe in the hit comedy, *How to Be Single* acting alongside veteran actors Damon Wayans, Jr., and Dakota Johnson. She has also starred in several commercials and Off-Broadway productions. At the age of 5, she shared the screen with stellar actors such as Taraji P. Henson and Octavia Spencer in the Oscar nominated film, *Hidden Figures* where she played Kathy, the youngest daughter of the brilliant mathematician, Katherine Johnson.

The audience also enjoyed performances by Al-Sheron Dennis, Monica Doliscat, Dejohnah Gutierrez, and Safa Ishmel-Muhammad, seniors from the Cicely Tyson Community School of Performing and Fine Arts who were led by Instructor Norma Hughes. Reverend David Jefferson, Jr., of Metropolitan Baptist Church also delivered the opening and closing prayers during the event.

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