

PRESS RELEASE

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ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR SOUTH ORANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL'S GRAMMY-NOMINATED CHORAL DIRECTOR JACOB EZZO



Essex County District 3 Freeholder Janine G. Bauer of South Orange (left) and Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold of Livingston (right) present the Board's Commendation to Jacob Ezzo (center) at the South Orange Performing Arts Center (SOPAC). Photo by Glen Frieson

(Newark, NJ) – On March 14, 2018, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored South Orange Middle School Choral Director Jacob Ezzo for winning the New Jersey Arts Ed Now Ambassadors competition. Jacob scored 1st place in the State of New Jersey for the elementary/middle school category in the competition.

Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold of Livingston and District 3 Freeholder and South Orange native Janine G. Bauer presented a Commendation to Jacob Ezzo for his creative teaching skills and leadership.

Jacob grew up in Syracuse, New York, and attended Westminster Choir College, where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Music and a Master's degree in the Arts of Teaching. The Carnegie Hall performer began working at South Orange Middle School to help rebuild the choir program. He quickly grew the sixth to eighth grade choir of eleven to 130 students in the first year. Under his leadership, the choir later grew to 370 members.

In the 2017-2018 school year, Jacob sought to expand the choral program by adding a social-awareness aspect to his teaching. He introduced a choral curriculum infused with project-based learning and coding/robotics. In addition to the curricular applications, he also started an after-school Robotics club that focuses on engaging underrepresented populations in the science, technology, and engineering world.

Aside from teaching, he has been a contributing author to *Inside the Choral Rehearsal*, a GIA publication that discusses Laban movement and embodied rhythm theory and its application to the Music Learning Theory of Edwin Gordon.

He has recorded three Naxos-label recordings, one of which is entitled *Annelies*, the first major choral setting of the Diary of Anne Frank, which was nominated for a Grammy. In 2016, he was a quarter-finalist in the Music Educator Grammy award program, and out of 4,500 initial nominees, he made it to the top 213.

In October 2017, he also used his musical talents to give back to the community. He collaborated with Vanessa Pollock and the Keller Williams Red Relief to create a multi-town benefit concert to raise funds for hurricane and wildfire victims. The event brought together school performances from both middle school and high school, as well as local musicians from West Orange, Maplewood, South Orange, Central Jersey, and New York City. The benefit raised nearly \$1,500 for victims.

**For Additional Information:
Medinah E. Muhammad, Public Information Officer
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
465 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Newark, New Jersey, 07102
(973)-621-4452
mmuhammad@freeholders.essexcountynj.org**