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**Standing Rear Row (left to right):** Laura Zaepfel, Rosemarie Steeb, Amy Habib, Glenn Jackson, Mary Grehsam, Ph.D., Noma Roberson, Ph.D., Gretchen Geitter, Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld, H. McCarthy Gipson, Amy Habib Rittling, Esq., Michael Martin, Daniel Kantor, Gary Quenneville, Donna Mostiller

**Board Members Not Pictured:** Rev. Jeff Carter Jr., Julie Coppola Cox, Leslie Garrity, Kevin Hansen, John Horn, Esq., Christopher Koch, Dana Marciniak, Tod Martin, Consul General Marta Moszczenska, Surjit Singh, Ph.D., James Smyton, Esq., Sylvia Tokasz, Brian Townson, Kayla Van Cleave, Peter Vukelic, Laura Weinstein

Special thanks also goes to Flynn & Friends Advertising, Grover Cleveland Press, and xpedx for contributing to this newsletter.

**YES, I WANT TO  
HELP THE NFJC IN ITS  
COMMUNITY WORK**



**"A Just Community  
Begins With Me"**

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**NATIONAL FEDERATION  
FOR JUST COMMUNITIES™**



The NFJC of Western New York, Inc.

*The National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York (NFJC) is a human relations organization dedicated to overcoming racism, bias, and discrimination by building understanding, respect, and trust through education, advocacy, and community involvement.*

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Vol. 5, No. 1, 2011

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



Christopher T. Greene, Esq.  
 NFJC Chairperson

On Thursday, January 20, 2011, the NFJC of WNY, Inc. recognized over 21 community leaders and 12 youth for special achievements in community and professional life, in the promotion of goodwill and understanding. Approximately 600 people were in attendance at the Buffalo

alternative to incarceration, by successfully guiding youths ages 16 to 21 who have become involved with the criminal justice system for the first time, toward positive educational, professional, and personal goals. Thousands of youth have been served in this excellent program.

The NFJC Program Department works with hundreds of young people each year through three residential programs, four youth conferences, and ongoing diversity and leadership development programs and collaborations with schools, school districts, youth organizations, and local government initiatives. The NFJC's program staff also works with professionals and businesses from all sectors to encourage and support diversity and inclusion. The organization connects people from all walks of life, bridging traditional divides and celebrating the richness of Western New York's most valuable asset — its people.

The NFJC of WNY, Inc. has a long tradition of promoting positive intercultural relationships between those who differ. This year our concern again is with the declining level of

civil discourse within our nation and our community, as reflected in the language and behavior of political, social, and media leaders. How can we begin to address and correct this issue? We can start by creating forums where we confront and address our differences. We invited the Erie County Chairmen of the Democratic and Republican parties to our Board Meeting in February to begin this discourse. We also are planning a process for creating various media events where we can continue to work, step by step, on affirming values on which we all agree — respect, inclusion, community, and tolerance.

We are constantly reminded of the challenges to the funding of our programs. We thank you for your continued support of our Community Leader Luncheon, our Citation Banquet, and our Walk for CommUNITY which is scheduled for September 17th 2011. Without your support, these programs and activities of the NFJC would not be possible. We look forward to another active, meaningful year of activities and services in support of our mission.

Convention Center. The event, organized superbly by co-chairs Gretchen Geitter and Donna Mostiller with assistance from our able President, Lana Benatovich and the Selection Committee, set the tone for the upcoming year. Our organization is dedicated to overcoming racism, bias, and discrimination by building understanding, respect, and trust through education, advocacy, and community involvement. We practice this every day, in so many ways.

For 30 years, the NFJC First Time/Last Time program has provided a highly effective

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN BUFFALO NEW YORK



Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Mohamed and FBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Richard Kollmar await to speak following Dr. Mary Gresham's introduction.



NFJC delegates gathered from all over the country in Buffalo.

Walk for  
 COMMUNITY  
 Unity  
 EXERCISE THE POWER OF COMMUNITY!

Save the Date  
 Saturday  
 September 17, 2011



Nick Langworthy, Len Lenihan, and NFJC Board Chair sign a Civility Agreement.



Civility Agreement.

## NFJC STAFF



### President

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### First Time/Last Time Counselor

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### First Time/Last Time Counselor

Peter Blake  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT — LANA D. BENATOVICH

### NFJC MAKES A DIFFERENCE...

After sixty-one years, we are often asked, "What does the NFJC of WNY do on daily basis as an organization that impacts families and the various sectors of people in Western New York?" This of course, is a valid question with both simple and complex answers.

The simple answer is "a lot." The work is vibrant and relevant. There are ongoing, dynamic programs and activities, dealing with inclusion, equity, and diversity issues and celebrations. Each year we are called on to do more, and each time we respond as a community partner and as an advocate for our region and its people. You can read about our many programs, collaborations and activities in the following pages of the newsletter.

In 2010, we particularly realized the need to face the challenges of eradicating bullying in our schools and made it a priority to address this troubling topic in our Youth Conferences, programs, and collaborations. The effectiveness of our programs is measured by changed attitudes and behavior; the change becomes obvious when it is demonstrated in active involvement and enhanced leadership by students in their schools and neighborhoods, by adults in their workplaces, places of worship, and in the community. Our goal is to build a Western New York region that is welcoming, respectful, economically successful,

and known as a place where people want to visit, live, and raise a family.

To this end, this past fall we invited and then hosted twelve NFJC affiliates from across the country at the Annual National Conference in Buffalo. Speakers included WNY Community leaders Paul Hogan, Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, Catherine Schweitzer, and Michael Weiner who shared their thoughts on fundraising in challenging times.

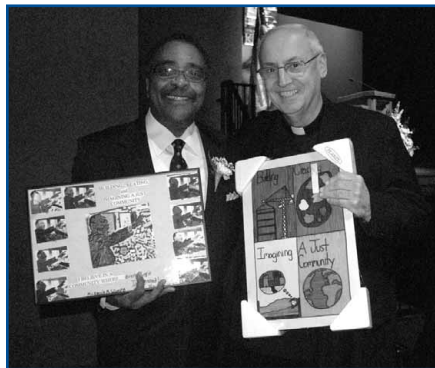
Issues, ideas and visions were shared at this three-day conference. In addition, there was the opportunity to enjoy the culture and beauty of our region. People came to WNY with preconceived notions of a snowy, hard city, and left with a whole new appreciation of Buffalo. All enjoyed our peak autumn season, our architecture and breathtaking landscape, and our rich relationship with our neighbors in Canada. They also listened to beautiful music by the Buffalo Philharmonic at an event hosted by BlueCross BlueShield of WNY.

This is a prime example of how first-hand experience breaks a stereotype of a region and its people. That is our mission. From each new partnership we establish, and each new initiative we develop or support, we reach out, we communicate, and we help to create a stronger, healthier Western New York.

## NFJC CO-SPONSORS MLK EVENTS

Niagara Falls again was treated to an evening of inspiration and song as young and old of all backgrounds came together at Niagara Falls High School in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Judge Hugh B. Scott, NFJC Emeritus Board Chair, was the keynote speaker who spoke to the past, present, and future of Dr. King's legacy. Owen Steed, a single father and the Civil Rights Achievement recipient motivated the audience in his acceptance speech "make the day TODAY not someday..." he exclaimed.

The NFJC was also a partner in the Annual MLK event held at Kleinhans Music Hall in Buffalo chaired by Bessie Patterson. Newly appointed Prime Minister of Somalia Mohamed Mohamed, whose family still calls WNY home and was recently featured at the NFJC National Conference in Buffalo, made a special appearance. Among many honorees were Dr. Bruce and Gail Johnstone, and Florence Baugh. The program was a fitting tribute to Dr. King, a leader who continues to lead us in our fight for freedom, equality, and justice for all!



Longtime friends Hon. Hugh B. Scott and Father Levesque admire the artwork presented to them at the MLK Service in Niagara Falls.



Prime Minister Mohamed Mohamed and family from WNY are greeted at the MLK Buffalo event by Lana Benatovich and Mayor Byron Brown.



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Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

## 2011 Community Leaders Awards Sponsors

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## Special Thanks

We thank our State, County, and City officials, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, Erie County Youth Bureau, and the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo for their support of our mission and work.

*These Partnership gifts were received as of February 20th, 2011.*

## CO-CHAIRS OF AWARDS LUNCHEON

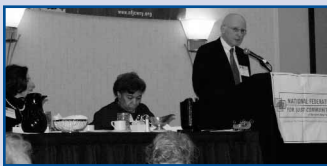


Board Members Gretchen Geitter, Vice President of Community Relations for the Buffalo Bills, and Donna Mostiller, Human Resource Professional and Community Volunteer, served as this year's Co-Chairs of the NFJC Annual Community Leader Awards Luncheon.

Both women serve as NFJC Board members in various capacities and are active community leaders. As Co-Chairs, they presented this year's slate of honorees receiving the distinguished Community Leaders Award in January 2011. Yessica Amezcuita, the Joseph Manch Scholarship recipient, spoke on behalf of the honorees. Yessica attends International Prep at Grover High School in Buffalo.

Over 600 people from across the WNY community enjoyed lunch and inspiring presentations at the Buffalo Convention Center. Look for this outstanding community event next January 19, 2012!

## THE NFJC ANNUAL MEETING



NFJC Chair Christopher T. Greene, Esq. addresses our Board and guests.



Michael Martin with NFJC Friends.



Outgoing Chair Dr. Mary H. Gresham receives a gift from incoming Chair Christopher Greene, Esq.

# SPECIAL EVENTS

## 2011 NFJC COMMUNITY LEADERS AWARDS LUNCHEON



**Thank you to BlueCross BlueShield of WNY and M&T Bank - our 2011 Awards Luncheon Sponsors!**

The Community Leader Awards Luncheon recognizes those in Western New York who have promoted goodwill and understanding, and who have through special achievements in their volunteer endeavors and/or in their professions, made significant contributions to our diverse community.

**Front Row (L to R):** NFJC Youth Artists: Ava Horn, Sydney Tokasz, Brooke Horn **Second Row (L to R):** Scott Gehl, Danis Gehl, Kathy Jamil, Joan Yang, Agnes Williams, Thomas Herrera-Mishler, Hon. Lisa Bloch Rodwin, Nester Hernandez, Sophia Veffer, Karen Lee Spaulding, Ariel Manney, Dr. Marilyn Fleckenstein, **Third Row (L to R):** Rev. Jeff Carter, Jr., Gretchen Geitter, Ted Pietrzak, William Collins, Michele Brown, Danielle Gianquinto, Emerald Wielbon, Twiggs Seymore, Jr., Dolores Battle, Ph.D., Edwin Clausen, Ph.D., Clement Arrison, Karen Arrison, Donna Mostiller **Fourth Row (L to R):** Christopher Greene, Esq., Lana Benatovich, Superintendent John Chella, Rev. Jacob Ledwon, Gary Quenneville, Spencer Gates, David Dunkelman, J.D., M.S., Yessica Amezcuita, Margaret O'Neill, Kayla Van Cleave, Christine Bond, Emilyrose Conforti, Brittney Bhayana, Christopher Chiles

**Not Pictured:** Laurie Branch and NFJC Youth Artists: Dawit Martin, Samara Middlebrooks, Ryan Tokasz

## THE NFJC CELEBRATES THE 2011 CITATION BANQUET

The NFJC of WNY's Citation Awards give public recognition and honor to those whose achievements contribute to the betterment of our Western New York community. These contributions have advanced the NFJC's objectives and mission, and are based on devotion to the spirit of human relations.

Honorees demonstrate a deep respect and care for others, are open-minded, and are diligent and industrious in their service to others. They demonstrate responsible citizenship through their actions regarding humanitarian concerns, and they contribute to cultural, civic, and business organizations in Western New York.

John G. Horn, Esq. and Amy Habib Rittling, Esq. are serving as the chairs of the 2011 Citation Banquet.

This year's worthy honorees are: Gary M. Brost, Chairman of Strategic Investments & Holdings, Inc. and Willow R. Brost, Community Leader; Wesley L. Hicks, Jr., M.D., FACS, Professor of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery /Neurosurgery and Bioengineering, University at Buffalo, Attending Surgeon, Roswell Park Cancer Institute; and Michael L. Joseph, President of Clover Management, Inc. and Roberta S. Joseph, Community Leader. The Special Family Recipient is the Montante Family.

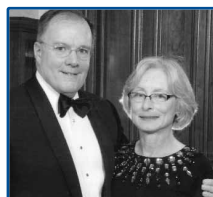
### Citation Banquet Co-Chairs



John G. Horn, Esq.



Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.



Gary M. Brost & Willow R. Brost



Wesley L. Hicks, Jr., M.D., FACS



Michael L. Joseph & Roberta S. Joseph



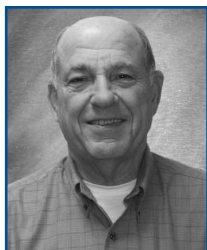
The Montante Family

# FIRST TIME/LAST TIME

## A CELEBRATION OF SERVICE



Peter Blake



John Jackson

Decades of committed service to youth will reach a pinnacle moment upon the December 2011 retirement of the dynamic First Time/Last Time Program counselors Peter Blake and John Jackson. The lives of thousands of young people have been positively and successfully transformed thanks to the dedicated service delivery of these outstanding individuals. The far reaching effects of Peter and John's work with young first offenders have been realized at every level and in every court throughout the County of Erie. Their names and solid reputations are synonymous with First Time/Last Time, one of Western New York's premier youth service programs.

Over the past thirty-two years, the First Time/Last Time Program has worked to reduce the rate of recidivism among the 16-21 year old first-time offender population by obtaining a 90% success rate in preventing program participants from re-entering the Criminal Justice System. The program continues to proudly serve our Western

New York community as an effective alternative to incarceration, by addressing the myriad problem/need areas that so often accompany and factor into a young person being arrested, which could lead to incarceration.

A continuous theme of gratitude is echoed by the young people whose lives have been impacted through the direct counseling provided by Peter Blake and John Jackson. This gratitude is often times expressed in writing by our clients and their families:

"I know I have told you before, but it truly was with the help of people like yourself that I am able to strive to be all that I can be. Today, I am two classes away from completing an Associate's Degree in substance abuse counseling and plan on going for a Bachelor's in Education." - Former Client

"You take the time and put forth the effort to not only address the legal issues, but the appropriate "life skills" as well. You have displayed dedication, perseverance, a sense of humor, patience, respect, and the ability to overcome." - Former Client

"Thank you so much for all your time, effort, caring, patience, advice, thoughtfulness; the list goes on and on..." - Parent

Peter and John ~ your NFJC family salutes you both for your tremendous commitment and life lasting impact in providing quality service to young people in need. We wish you the very best as you embrace this next exciting chapter in your lives!

## NFJC OF WNY LEADERSHIP

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## NFJC WALK FOR COMMUNITY...

We would like to thank Gary Quenneville, Regional President of KeyBank and the many sponsors and supporters for making the 2010 Walk for CommUNITY a great success! Hundreds of people from throughout WNY enjoyed an afternoon together as they walked through Historic Elmwood Avenue District.



## NFJC CELEBRATES THANKSGIVING



NFJC Vice Chair Daryl Rasuli reaching out at the Multi Faith Thanksgiving Service.

The Multi-Faith Thanksgiving Service was hosted by Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church on Buffalo's West Side. Speakers from many faith traditions presented passages representing the theme of the evening "Thanksgiving in the Hope for Peace." Presenters shared what peace means, and how each of us can help to promote the feeling of peace. Also on hand this year, were representatives from Upstate New York Transplant Services (UNYTS) and our NFJC Board member Rev. Jeff Carter Jr., who talked about the "gift of life." Rev. Carter shared a very personal and touching story of how UNYTS and the "gift of life" affected his family through trials and triumphs.

## NFJC FACILITATORS

WELCOME

SHEILA-ZOHARA ZAMOR



Sheila-Zohara Zamor

The NFJC would like to welcome and thank Sheila Zamor, a valuable and important NFJC workshop facilitator. Born to Haitian parents, Sheila grew up in Brooklyn, NY, and now calls WNY home. Growing up in Brooklyn, her experiences led her to pursue her interest in other cultures; she majored in French at NYU and spent two years studying in France, where she also developed a love of theater.

Upon returning to New York, Sheila began working for an international marketing firm which promoted conference centers in Paris, Barcelona, Copenhagen, and Vienna. Following the death of her mother, she changed gears and began teaching history and religion at her Alma Mater, Catherine McAuley High School in Brooklyn. There, in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in 1992, she facilitated a group called Young People for Racial Harmony where students from area Catholic Schools came together to work on diversity issues in the schools and throughout the city.

After a brief time working in finance in Philadelphia and then in Buffalo, Sheila followed her calling to educate. She has taught French and coached volleyball at Nichols for the past nine years and is involved with Multicultural Affairs there as well. Sheila dreams of a world where we welcome the differences each of us bring to the table, and where we can celebrate and enjoy sharing these differences with others. For these and many other reasons, Sheila has become a highly valued member of the NFJC facilitation team over the last year. We are thrilled to have her as part of the NFJC family!

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SERIES



Over 200 student leaders attended the NFJC Conferences on Bullying.

allowed students to connect with each other and share stories of their experiences with bullying, as well as exchange ideas and tactics on how to become allies for victims. The NFJC was very fortunate to partner with Vanita Evans, Community Outreach Specialist for the FBI and Eve Everett, Buffalo State College Theater Department alum, both of whom contributed experiential learning and dialogue components to the day. As the day-long conference came to a close, students were left with a greater understanding of how bullying affects others, action plans for helping those in need and best of all, new friendships.

In January, the NFJC program staff partnered with the City of Buffalo's Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations as part of the "It's Unacceptable — Bullying Stops With Me" program. Held at D'Youville College, this successful youth program brought together over 200 student ambassadors from Buffalo high schools to examine the issue of bullying and devise solutions to this persistent problem.

At Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo, the NFJC presented two significant youth conferences on Bullying Prevention while partnering with local experts. Attended by middle and high school students from public, private, and charter schools across the region, these conferences opened the dialogue between students from varying backgrounds about the serious effects of bullying. These day-long sessions

## COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Community Builders, now in its third successful year, is a unique program in WNY that both educates its members on important diversity topics and empowers them to become advocates and allies for change in our community. The 22-30 youth who regularly participate, represent approximately 15 schools and communities from across WNY and are characteristic of the racial, socio-economic, and cultural diversity of this region. All of the participants have taken part in other NFJC youth programs (e.g., Youth Conferences, Leadership Retreats, Camp Program, etc.), and they are committed to both continuing their exploration of diversity topics and to doing the hands-on work needed to affect long-term social change. Since the programs' inception three years ago, this group of young leaders has designed and completed six community outreach/service projects, one each semester. In the near future, the group hopes to plan, organize, and present two youth diversity conferences for middle and high school students, clearly their most ambitious project yet! We wish to gratefully acknowledge the support and partnership of our sponsor for the Community Builders program, The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

## commUnity build RETREAT

**commUnity build: Institute for Inclusion.**



Hosted by St. Bonaventure University in Olean, NY, this weekend-long, residential diversity and leadership retreat program invites nearly 30 middle school students in the spring, and 30 high school students in the fall to the University's campus in Olean, NY. At the Institute, students explore diversity/inclusion issues related to the questions: "What values are central to a thriving community?"

and "How do we put those values to work for the betterment of us all?" The retreat is fully staffed and supervised by trained NFJC facilitators, and is attended by youth "delegates" who are nominated as leaders by their schools and selected to reflect the rich diversity of the WNY region.



commUnity build students.

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## SHERIFF/YOUTH "LIVE-IN" CAMP: THANK YOU DELAWARE NORTH!

We want to thank the Delaware North Companies for their sponsorship of the NFJC's Sheriff/Youth "Live-In" Camp. For 18 years they provided the funding for this program, and because of their long-standing commitment to equality and justice, hundreds of youth have had the opportunity to take part in this program since 1992. This is a life-changing, eye-opening experience for all who participate, and we want to sincerely thank Delaware North for allowing us the opportunity to work with so many, and to affect long lasting positive change here in WNY.

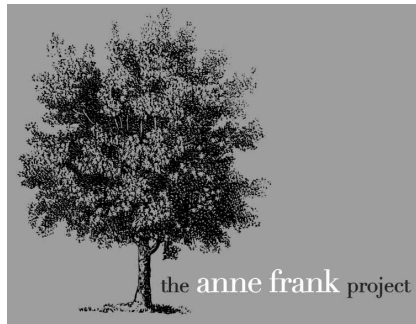
The Sheriff/Youth "Live-In" Camp is held at the beautiful Camp Centerland in Elma, NY, and brings together 20-30 young leaders from across WNY for a weeklong, residential camp experience. This powerful program works at bridging the traditional divide between youth and law enforcement, and its success is due in a large part to the openness and support of the Erie County Sheriff's Deputies who serve as the camp's counselors.

This year's camp will be held in August, and more information on this program will soon be available on our website ([www.nfjcwny.org](http://www.nfjcwny.org)).



Chair Chris Greene connects with the delegates at camp.

## ANNE FRANK PROJECT



*The Diary of Anne Frank* first was produced in the fall of 2006 by the Buffalo State College Theater Department. In an attempt to refresh this classic, they wove into Anne's story the horrors of the Rwanda genocide by casting two "Annes": one Jewish, hiding from Nazis, the other Tutsi, hiding from Hutu extremists — both speaking Anne's words. From this production, the Anne Frank Project was born.

Led by its founder, Drew Kahn, Chair of the College's Theater Department, and widely supported by the College as well as the Holocaust Resource Center, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, The Anne Frank Center (NYC) and many others,

AFP was created to use Anne's wisdom as a starting point for an intense examination of genocide, intolerance, bigotry, and racism. As newer members of the AFP planning committee, the NFJC looks forward to being a part of this important collaboration and to the third incarnation of the conference on the College's campus in September, 2011.

The Anne Frank Project is a meaningful and ambitious initiative that looks at diversity issues openly and honestly, always with an eye on Anne's famous quote, "how wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." We are pleased and proud to have recognized The Anne Frank Project with a Special Award for our 2011 Community Leader Luncheon.

## NFJC COLLABORATES

The NFJC continues its efforts to partner with other agencies and organizations to help make WNY a more vibrant and welcoming community. Past partners have been PUSH Buffalo, Buffalo ReUse, Just Buffalo, Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, the Network of Religious Communities, Native American Community Services, St. Bonaventure University, Medaille College, and Daemen College, among many others, and we continue to support them in their work to improve the lives of those who they serve.

This year the NFJC is partnering with the Environmental Leadership Summit program and the Diocese of Buffalo to incorporate diversity and inclusion education into their important programs. Diversity education goes hand in hand with environmental work because we must all work together, despite differences, on ecological issues. In our work with the Diocese, we will facilitate a workshop on bullying prevention and empathy building as part of their annual Youth Convention.

We are strongest when we work together, and the NFJC is committed to the spirit of collaboration. If you have an idea or need for collaboration, please contact us at our offices to discuss a joint endeavor.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Spring 2011

March 11-13, 2011

Middle School commUnity build Retreat

May 21, 2011

Community Builders Presents: Diversity Conferences for Students by Students

### Summer 2011

August 8-12, 2011

Sheriff/Youth Live-in Camp

### Fall Winter 2011-2012

September 17, 2011

Walk for CommUNITY

October 2011

Community Builders commences

November 2011

Multi-Faith Thanksgiving Service

November 2011

High School commUnity build Retreat

December 7, 2011

NFJC Annual Meeting

January 19, 2012

Community Leaders Luncheon

January 23, 2012

MLK Program in Niagara Falls

*commUnity builders meets once a month during the school year from October to May.*

*For more calendar information, please click on our website: [www.nfjcwny.org](http://www.nfjcwny.org).*

## AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

The NFJC partners with organizations to provide tailor-made programs to meet their specific needs. These workshops are designed specifically to meet the needs of each partner, and are offered as part of the "fee for service" component of the Program Department. During the last year, we have worked with several groups including Leadership Niagara, The Park School of Buffalo, Nichols School and the Upward Bound program at Buffalo State College. To find out how we can serve the needs of your company, school group, or organization, please contact Marc Rummenie and Merritt Weisenburger in the Program Department at 853-9596.