



*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.*

360 Delaware Avenue, Suite 106 • Buffalo, New York 14202 • Phone: (716) 853-9596 • [www.nfjcwny.org](http://www.nfjcwny.org)

Vol. 6, No. 1, 2012

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND THE NFJC CHAIRPERSON



**A Message from  
 Lana D. Benatovich  
 President**

The NFJC is known to many as a leader in education, meaningful dialogue, and advocacy, and as one of the strongest connectors of people in Western New York.

With our diverse Board, committed staff and community partners, our mission is to reach people of varying ages, religions, races, and cultures to build allies and become agents of change.

This year, you may have read or heard about several of our programs on anti-bullying and on the protection of the civil rights of all students and adults.

At our Community Leader Awards Luncheon we recognized 35 outstanding honorees who made contributions on behalf of others and who made a difference in our region. Among those honored was the 2011 National Preservation Conference, for its impact and the ways it highlighted our region. The conference's 2,500 visitors praised not only our architecture, but also our culture, community, and people.

Can we now, in 2012, continue this positive attitude and respect to those of different political views? At the NFJC, we call on our political leaders, the media, and public figures to voice their opinions with dignity, respect, and thoughtfulness.

The NFJC believes in honest and productive dialogue that leads to action, and we believe that people from all sectors can be role models for leadership and inclusion. This will continue to be a focus of our work with you, our partners, as we embrace the challenges and opportunities in this defining election year.



**A Message from  
 Christopher T. Greene, Esq.  
 NFJC Chairperson**

The NFJC is dedicated to enhancing diversity, respect, understanding, and inclusion in our community. Through its many education programs, advocacy, and special events, our volunteers, Board, and staff work tirelessly in support of this mission.

Our Issues Committee confronts some of the most pressing social issues of today, which this year included a session on bullying in the

workplace, schools, neighborhoods, and on the Internet; civil discourse in the political and public area; and the effect of U.S. Government boarding schools for Native American youth. Our program staff this past year conducted over 25 programmatic offerings — many targeted to our youth — that directly or indirectly impact over 5,000 people.

For over 30 years, the NFJC First Time/Last Time Program has provided a highly effective alternative to incarceration, by successfully guiding youths ages 16-21 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 by this excellent program.

Involvement in our community has been a key to NFJC's success. It starts with our dynamic President, Lana Benatovich, who sets the tone with her positive attitude and dedication to inclusion. We encourage you to become a member of our organization if you have not already. You will help us enhance our mission through work that can be personally rewarding, as we together gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the richness of diversity of our community.

## FIRST TIME/LAST TIME

### A LIFE JOURNEY

The NFJC's First Time/Last Time Program has experienced countless positive and defining moments in its thirty-one year history. One such moment occurred in 1982, when a young man named Jim, age 17, found himself immersed in the criminal justice system for the first time following an arrest.

Facing an array of serious charges, Jim was placed in the Erie County Holding Center awaiting court appearances. During his time in the Holding Center Jim was seen by a First Time/Last Time Program Counselor

and it was at that pivotal time that intervention began in his life. Jim was a young man struggling with numerous issues including depression, family dysfunction, and alcohol.

Through on-going counseling and steadfast involvement with First Time/Last Time, and successful inpatient treatment for his battle with alcohol, Jim was able to find his voice, his identity, his sense of self. It was the first time in his life that someone was present to listen, to intervene, and successfully assist in the critically important process of re-routing his current lifestyle.

Flash forward thirty years. This once troubled, young first offender is now proudly a contributing member of our community gainfully employed in the field of Building Maintenance. The fabric of this client/counselor relationship grounded in trust, dedicated hard work, and overcoming personal challenges is the true goal of the First Time/Last Time Program.

To see and hear more of Jim's story click on [www.nfjcwny.org](http://www.nfjcwny.org)

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Spring 2012:

March 21, 2012  
Citation Banquet  
March 29, 2012

Interfaith Community  
Passover Seder

### April 20 - 22, 2012

Middle School Diversity and  
Leadership Retreat

### May 2012

Day-Long Youth Leadership  
Conferences for area schools

### Summer 2012:

August 6 - 10th  
2012 Sheriff/Youth "Live-In"  
Camp

### Fall 2012:

October 14, 2012  
Walk for CommUNITY  
November 20, 2012  
Multi-Faith Thanksgiving  
Service  
December 5, 2012  
Annual Meeting



This annual event is a very important program for the NFJC. The goal is to bring people from all over WNY for an afternoon of family fun and activities. The 2011 Walk sponsored by NewEra was a great success as we visited the beautiful Waterfront/West Side District of Buffalo. Look for more information about this exciting community event later in 2012!

## STAFF OF THE NFJC OF WNY INC.

### President

Lana D. Benatovich

### Executive Assistant

Lyn Leopold

### Events/Development Coordinator

Rene Petties-Jones

### Youth Program Director

Marc Rummenie

### Youth Program Specialist

Merritt Weisenburger

### First Time/Last Time Director

Susan Croglia

### First Time/Last Time Counselor

John Jackson

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### 2012 NFJC COMMUNITY LEADERS AWARDS LUNCHEON



### Awards Luncheon Co-Chairs



Gretchen R. Geitter



Glenn S. Jackson

Thank you to BlueCross BlueShield of WNY, and M&T Bank, our 2012 Luncheon Sponsors.

Congratulations to all of this year's award honorees!

## THE NFJC CELEBRATES THE 2012 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.

### Citation Banquet Co-Chairs



Gary D. Quenneville



Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.

This year's worthy honorees are: Frank L. Ciminelli, CEO of Ciminelli Properties LLC, and Rosalie G. Ciminelli, Community Leader; Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, President of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo; and David M. Zebro, Principal with Strategic Investments & Holdings, Inc., and Susan M. Zebro, Community Leader. Special Awards in Education honorees are: Yvonne Hargrave, Retired; former Principal, Administrator, and Interim Superintendent at Buffalo Public Schools; and Yvonne S. Minor-Ragan, Ph.D., Director, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood; former Principal of Westminster Community Charter School.



Board of Directors picture taken at the 2011 Annual Board meeting in December.

## NFJC OF WNY LEADERSHIP

### President

Lana D. Benatovich

### Chairperson

Christopher T. Greene, Esq.

### Vice Chairpersons

Daryl E. Rasuli  
Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.  
Sylvia M. Tokasz

### Treasurer

Rosemarie C. Steeb

### Secretary

Daniel G. Kantor

### Foundation Consultant

Catherine F. Schweitzer

### Legal Counsel

James W. Smyton, Esq.

### Immediate Past Chair

Mary H. Gresham, Ph.D.

### Board of Directors

Carlton N. Brock, Jr.  
Julie Coppola Cox  
Jay Dellavecchia  
Leslie G. Garrity  
Gretchen R. Geitter  
H. McCarthy Gipson

John G. Horn, Esq.  
Glenn S. Jackson  
Michael Kimelberg  
Christopher H. Koch  
Bharat Kohli, M.D., MBA  
Rev. Dr. Geri Lyon  
Dana M. Marciniak  
Michael N. Martin  
Tod D. Martin  
Donna M. Mostiller  
Consul General Marta Moszczenska  
Rabbi Gary E. Pokras

Gary D. Quenneville  
Noma L. Roberson, Ph.D.  
Timothy L. Rodemeyer  
Danielle E. Shainbrown, Esq.  
Natalie J. Sherman  
Surjit Singh, Ph.D.  
Bernard A. Tolbert  
Brian Townson  
Toni L. Vazquez, MBA  
Peter A. Vukelic  
Laura M. Weinstein  
Laura A. Zaepfel

### Student Members

Brandon Cruz  
Reggie Nealy  
Lyndsay Raymond

### Emeritus Members

Joan K. Bozer  
Anthony J. Colucci, Jr., Esq.  
Kenneth P. Friedman, Esq.  
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D.  
Amy J. Habib  
Tamar P. Halpern, Esq.  
C. Douglas Hartmayer  
Muriel A. Howard, Ph.D.  
Richard M. Kamats  
Laurence A. Levite  
Donald A. Ogilvie  
Alphonso O'Neil-White  
Linda D. Pollack  
Hon. Hugh B. Scott  
Ruth Kahn Stovroff  
Pamela Jacobs Vogt  
John N. Walsh, III

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS



## COMMUNITY BUILDERS

The NFJC's Community Builders youth leadership program is a unique and innovative endeavor that seeks to prepare this region's next generation of change agents. Funded by the Peter C. Cornell Trust, and created through a partnership with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Community Builders brings together a diverse group of high school students from across WNY to both examine the issues that affect this region and complete meaningful community service projects in and around the City of Buffalo.

The Community Builders group meets once a month in space generously donated by the Community Foundation. All members have attended at least one of our other youth programs

(e.g., our Sheriff/Youth "Live-In" Camp, "commUnity build" retreats, Youth Leadership Conferences, etc.) and they bring with them a passion for these issues and a desire to do the difficult work needed to build a more just and inclusive Western New York.

Now in its 4th year, Community Builders has partnered with many local agencies to help improve the lives and conditions here in WNY. Last spring, as part of our annual Youth Leadership Conference Series and in cooperation with Medaille College, this incredible group of young leaders produced this region's first ever For Youth/By Youth anti-bullying days. These events brought together over 150 middle and high school youth and teachers for the purpose of devising school-based solutions to the epidemic of bullying. Featuring media presentations, small group dialogue sessions, a creative exercise, and intensive action planning, these conferences helped empower their participants to stand as allies and advocates for those being bullied in their schools.

For further information or to schedule a session, call 853-9596.

## COMMUNITY TRAINING WORKSHOPS ON DIVERSITY

The NFJC expanded its community education initiative and ran numerous diversity training sessions for government agencies, businesses, community groups, and organizations in 2011. Based on our model for a Building Awareness Workshop, these programs are fully customizable and are tailored to meet the needs of our clients. We provide strategies for identifying and resolving cross-cultural conflicts, creating an atmosphere that permits open discussion and problem-solving, and developing a new understanding of the motivations and experiences that influence individual styles and decisions in the workplace.

Our motto is "A just community begins with me." and that philosophy of individual responsibility

and empowerment drives our work. The success of our workshops lies in the power of human interaction, and participants speak of the comfortable and enjoyable nature of our programs. We create and maintain a safe environment in which to examine these issues, and use honest and open dialogue between participants to examine the nature and impact of diversity on the WNY community. Our goal is to enhance the relationships between our participants by fostering a spirit of empathy, concern, and mutuality, and client surveys prove the power, effectiveness, and impact of our Building Awareness Workshops.

For information on how to bring the NFJC to your workplace, call 853-9596.

## ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS IN OUR COMMUNITY

The NFJC worked closely with this area's dedicated and compassionate teachers in 2011. We partnered with urban, suburban, and rural faculty from the region's Charter Schools, Parochial Schools, and Public Schools; all of whom are dedicated to creating a healthier and more inclusive learning environment for their students. Teachers understand the impact diversity has on the classroom, and they have engaged with us on ways to alleviate possible tensions, build understanding, and increase cooperation amongst their students.

We have also worked closely with schools on the issues related to bullying. For us, this is a form of

discrimination, and we have focused our efforts on ways in which administrators, teachers, students, and families can work to end this epidemic in our schools and communities. Bullying can be a difficult topic to address; it calls for introspection, constant awareness, and decisive action. Our approach works, however, and the faculty we've partnered with have spoken about how our programs are empowering them to make a difference for their students and our community.

For further information or to schedule a session, call 853-9596.

## NFJC COLLABORATES



NFJC and the Network of Religious Communities co-sponsor a Multi-Faith Thanksgiving Service. Hosted by Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church, this event brought different faith traditions together to celebrate Thanksgiving.



The NFJC partners annually with UB to co-sponsor their MLK Commemoration Event now in its 36th year. The event took place this year at Kleinhans Music Hall, 45 years after Dr. King spoke there for his last time a mere 5 months before his untimely death. Pictured with NFJC Board members is the Distinguished Series Speaker and CNN Anchor Soledad O'Brien, who stopped to talk with them before delivering her engaging speech.



School Walk Challenge winners from Pinnacle Charter School enjoy an assembly and pep rally to celebrate their participation in the 2011 Walk for CommUNITY.



Collaborations with Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and UB allowed the NFJC to support and be involved with the commemoration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.