



THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

HONORING OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE BY YOUNG AMERICANS

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**VERMONT'S TOP TWO YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SELECTED  
IN 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM**

**Killington and Underhill students earn \$1,000 awards,  
engraved medallions and trip to nation's capital**

MONTPELIER, Vt. – Colton Blackman, 18, of Killington and Alec Grab, 12, of Underhill today were named Vermont's top two youth volunteers for 2010 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. The awards program, now in its 15th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Colton was nominated by Woodstock Union High School in Woodstock, and Alec was nominated by Browns River Middle School in Jericho. As State Honorees, each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion, and an all-expense-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for several days of national recognition events. Ten of them will be named America's top youth volunteers for 2010 at that time.

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**Colton**, a senior at Woodstock Union High School, organized a “unified” snowshoe team to compete in Vermont’s Special Olympics, pairing students from his high school with special-needs individuals in the community. Two years ago, Colton discovered that his school did not participate in the Unified Sports Program of the Vermont Special Olympics (VSO), and that people from a nearby special-needs center, Zack’s Place, were planning to compete in the Special Olympics Winter Games. “I thought there was an opportunity to coordinate students at my school with community members from Zack’s,” he said.

Colton attended a VSO coordinator’s conference to learn the procedures for forming a unified team. He then worked closely with administrators at his school and Zack’s Place, sent letters to potential athletes, recruited traditional athletes to be partners, and managed weekly practices. Colton now serves as an assistant coach for the team, which has competed in the last two winter Olympics. “It is hard to describe the happiness the athletes convey at their accomplishment of finishing the race with the crowd cheering them on, and their pride in receiving their medals,” he said. Colton also raises money for VSO and Zack’s Place by participating in their annual fund-raisers.

**Alec**, a seventh-grader at Browns River Middle School, organized a six-week bike-a-thon last summer that raised \$3,400 for Special Olympics Vermont. Alec learned about Special Olympics through an annual fund-raiser at his school, which enabled him to see firsthand some of the people who benefit from the program. “I love sports and want others to be able to participate,” said Alec. He started by soliciting donations for every mile he traveled on his bicycle, and donating the proceeds to Special Olympics. He then decided to involve more people and began planning a community bike-a-thon.

Alec obtained approval from his town and the state for his fund-raiser, prepared forms and instructions for participants and sponsors, applied for insurance, and advertised in the town newspaper and in school and church newsletters. Twenty bicyclists signed up to collect donations for every mile they rode from June 1 to July 15, and then attended a three-mile “fun ride” on August 1 to celebrate their accomplishment and turn in their funds. For that day, Alec recruited more than a dozen volunteers to help with logistics, persuaded businesses to furnish prizes, and arranged for emergency vehicles to be on hand. In addition to planning and managing the bike-a-thon, Alec rode 658 miles during the event, personally raising more than \$1,500 for Special Olympics.

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In addition, the program judges recognized two other Vermont students as Distinguished Finalists for their impressive community service activities. Each will receive an engraved bronze medallion:

Hannah Cerasoli, 17, of White River Junction, a senior at Hartford High School, started a program that encourages elementary school students to read and learn about foreign cultures. Hannah visits classrooms at her former elementary school once a week to talk about a foreign country, and then distributes books and activities related to that country's culture.

Rachel Fifield, 17, of Underhill, a senior at Mount Mansfield Union High School in Jericho, helps lead a community service and youth literacy program at the Jericho Town Library, which offers summer activities for children and service projects for teens. In addition, Rachel tutors third- and fourth-graders in reading and writing.

"People as caring and committed as these young students are critical to the future of our neighborhoods, our cities and our nation," said John R. Strangfeld, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial. "By recognizing these honorees, we hope to encourage other young people – our future leaders – and all Americans to think more about the value and importance of volunteering in their communities."

"The young people recognized by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards demonstrate an enormous capacity for giving and reaching out to those in need," said Gerald N. Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "NASSP is proud to honor these student leaders because they are wonderful examples of the high caliber of young people in our nation's schools today."

All public and private middle level and high schools in the country, as well as all Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and affiliates of HandsOn Network, were eligible to select a student or member for a local Prudential Spirit of Community Award this past November. Nearly 5,000 Local Honorees were then reviewed by an independent judging panel, which selected State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists based on criteria such as personal initiative, creativity, effort, impact and personal growth.

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While in Washington, D.C., the 102 State Honorees will tour the capital's landmarks, attend a gala awards ceremony at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and visit their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. In addition, 10 of them – five middle level and five high school students – will be named National Honorees on May 3 by a prestigious national selection committee. These honorees will receive additional \$5,000 awards, gold medallions, crystal trophies, and \$5,000 grants from The Prudential Foundation for nonprofit, charitable organizations of their choice.

Serving on the national selection committee will be Strangfeld of Prudential; Steven Pophal, president of NASSP; Michelle Nunn, president and CEO of the Points of Light Institute & Hands On Network; Marguerite Kondracke, president and CEO of the America's Promise Alliance; Donald T. Floyd Jr., president and CEO of National 4-H Council; Pamela Farr, the American Red Cross' national chair of volunteers; Elson Nash, associate director for project management at the Corporation for National and Community Service; Michael Cohen, president and CEO of Achieve, Inc.; and two 2009 Prudential Spirit of Community National Honorees: Shardy Camargo of Orlando, Fla., and Colin Leslie of Rye, N.Y.

In addition to granting its own awards, The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program will distribute President's Volunteer Service Awards to more than 2,800 of its Local Honorees this year on behalf of President Obama. The President's Volunteer Service Award recognizes Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of their time to serve their communities and their country.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards represent the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteer service. Since the program began in 1995, more than 90,000 young volunteers nationwide have been honored at the local, state or national level. Many prominent public figures have assisted in saluting these honorees over the years, including President Jimmy Carter, Barbara Bush, Magic Johnson, John Glenn, Madeleine Albright, Rudy Giuliani, Whoopi Goldberg, Colin Powell, Peyton Manning, Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson and Laura Bush. The program also is conducted by Prudential subsidiaries in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Ireland.

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For information on all of this year's Prudential Spirit of Community State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists, visit [spirit.prudential.com](http://spirit.prudential.com).

In existence since 1916, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the preeminent organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the United States and more than 45 countries around the world. NASSP's mission is to promote excellence in school leadership. The National Honor Society®, National Junior Honor Society®, National Elementary Honor Society™, and National Association of Student Councils® are all NASSP programs. For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, Va., visit [www.principals.org](http://www.principals.org) or call 703-860-0200.

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*Editors: Graphics depicting the award program's logo and medallions may be downloaded from [spirit.prudential.com](http://spirit.prudential.com).*