



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER
ABEYWARDENA ANNOUNCE NEW NYC JUNIOR AMBASSADORS PROGRAM
GRADUATES**

The program, in partnership with the United Nations, utilizes the Sustainable Development Goals to empower seventh-graders to tackle global challenges through local action

NEW YORK – Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs Penny Abeywardena today announced the graduation of the 2018-2019 class of NYC Junior Ambassadors. The program, operated in partnership with the United Nations (UN) and based in New York City, uses the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to empower local seventh-graders to take action on global issues such as global warming, migration and gender equality in their own communities.

“Building a fairer city starts with preparing our future generations to answer the call,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “The NYC Junior Ambassadors program prepares seventh graders from around the city to engage in their communities and to take local action to address pressing global challenges. It is with great pride that I congratulate this year’s graduating class, and thank their parents, teachers and partner organizations who do us all a service through their participation. Our city anxiously awaits to see what our graduating class does next.”

“The NYC Junior Ambassadors program empowers young people from communities on the frontlines of urgent global challenges to take local action using the lens of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals,” said **Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner of the NYC Mayor’s Office for International Affairs**. “New York City, the home of the United Nations, has pledged to advance the goals on the local level, and our engagement of youth and educators through this innovative program upholds that commitment. As we celebrate the conclusion of another successful program year and welcome hundreds of new alumni into our network, we thank our steadfast partners for their outstanding support of this initiative.”

More than 500 students joined by educators, families and UN and City officials celebrated the conclusion of the program on Monday, June 24, by sharing community projects at the Queens Museum, the original site of the UN headquarters in New York. Special guests included President of the UN General Assembly María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and UN Under-

Secretary-General for Global Communications Alison Smale.

“I would like to congratulate all of the graduates of the NYC Junior Ambassadors program, said **UN General Assembly President Espinosa Garcés**. “Through their actions and leadership they are empowering seventh-graders across this great city of New York to take action on global challenges, especially on climate change. The young will inherit a world not of their creation. Yet the Junior Ambassadors – as demonstrated by the youth climate activists across the globe - are showing us what we all need to do to tackle climate change and starting in their own neighborhoods. I also congratulate the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs for launching and continuing to grow this great program. It is vital because it is grounded in the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders in 2015 to uplift people, prosperity and planet by the year 2030. And where New Yorkers lead, especially young New Yorkers, others will surely follow!”

“We at the United Nations are so inspired by our New York City Junior Ambassadors,” said **UN Under-Secretary-General Smale**. “This program is successful because it benefits both of us – students learn about the work and the values of the UN, and we are enriched by the students’ passion and ideas for building a better world. By investing in young people, we are investing in our joint future. We thank our host city for being such a steadfast partner of the UN.”

The new NYC Junior Ambassadors graduates, who include seventh-grade students and their educators from all five boroughs, join more than 2,000 alumni since the program launch in 2015. During the program year, students were introduced to the work of the UN, received a specially curated tour of UN headquarters in Manhattan and an in-depth briefing from a UN expert on a global issue, and hosted a classroom visit from a senior UN diplomat.

While learning about global challenges through the lens of the SDGs adopted by world leaders at the UN in 2015, students became poised to take action beginning in their local neighborhoods. At today’s graduation ceremony, students and educators shared local projects addressing issues such as plastics pollution, the impact of climate change on local neighborhoods, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Mayor’s Office for International Affairs partners with the Department of Education, the Department of Youth and Community Development, the United Nations, and the United Nations Foundation to provide this unique opportunity to middle school students across the city. This year, 20 classrooms and after-school programs were chosen to become members of the 2018-2019 cohort of NYC Junior Ambassadors. Selected participants hail from all five boroughs and include students with disabilities and English as a New Language learners.

“The NYC Junior Ambassadors program gives our students an amazing opportunity to make their voices heard in our community and around the world,” said **Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza**. “Congratulations to this year’s Ambassadors on all you’ve accomplished. We can’t wait to see where the future takes you.”

“The NYC Junior Ambassadors program is an important investment in our young people that gives them an extraordinary opportunity to contribute to the future of our City and the world.

The initiative helps youth find their voice as global citizens by recognizing the importance of civic engagement and thinking critically about important international issues. I would like to congratulate the seventh graders who participated this year for a job well done as they prepare to become the next generation of world leaders,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**.

“The United Nations Foundation seeks to recognize cohort four of the NYC Jr. Ambassadors Program. Congratulations are in order to all the schools, teachers, parents and students who engaged in this year-long activity, learned about the United Nations, and developed significant projects in support of the Sustainable Development Goals,” said **Kathy Calvin, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation**. “We honor you today and thank you for your work in seeking global solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. Fantastic job!”

“Today's graduation ceremony celebrates the achievements of both students and educators enrolled in the program for 2018-2019 year,” said **Christie Saint-Vil, NYCJA Program Manager, Mayor’s Office for International Affairs**. “The NYC Junior Ambassadors program provides a powerful platform where students from all five boroughs can connect the Sustainable Development Goals to their own experiences, and work to build towards solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges. We work with our partners to create an extraordinary experience for all involved and play an important role in helping create global diplomats, locally.”

"The NYC Junior Ambassadors Program is built upon the philosophy of empowering students to actively address the most pressing issues and injustices facing their communities,” said **Lynn Shon, NYC Junior Ambassadors Program Educator from M.S. 88 Peter Rouget school in Brooklyn**. “The program recognizes the critical role students and teachers can play in creating a more sustainable world. By connecting my students directly with global initiatives and resources, such as making the UN Headquarters an active learning space, and hosting an honest conversation about climate action with world leaders, I have been empowered, as a teacher, to empower my students with understanding, voice, and the much-needed courage to take bold climate action in their own communities.”

"I have always wanted to be a judge to make sure justice prevails. Being in the NYC Junior Ambassadors program has shown me that justice can be served through other avenues and careers by caring, advocating and dedication,” said **NYC Junior Ambassador Maya Savary of Ichan Charter School 4 in the Bronx**.

To learn more about the NYC Junior Ambassadors program, please visit nyc.gov/nycja and follow the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

NYC Junior Ambassadors 2018-2019:

1. Icahn Charter School 4, The Bronx
2. Leaders of Tomorrow, The Bronx
3. St. Ignatius School, The Bronx
4. Mott Hall Charter School, The Bronx
5. Bronx Park Middle School, The Bronx
6. East Fordham Academy of the Arts, The Bronx

7. The Montauk (J.H.S. 223), Brooklyn
8. Peter Rouget (M.S. 88), Brooklyn
9. William Alexander (M.S. 51), Brooklyn
10. Anne Sullivan (P.S. 238), Brooklyn
11. Ronald Edmonds Learning Center II, Brooklyn
12. Brooklyn Science and Engineering Academy, Brooklyn
13. Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy I Middle School, Manhattan
14. Cornelia Connelly Center, Manhattan
15. Robert A. Van Wyck (J.H.S. 217), Queens
16. The Oliver Wendell Holmes School (I.S. 204), Queens
17. P.S./I.S. 78Q, Queens
18. Virgil I. Grissom (J.H.S. 226), Queens
19. Michael J. Petrides School, Staten Island
20. Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning School, Staten Island

NYC Junior Ambassadors Selection Committee Members:

1. Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner for the NYC Mayor's Office for International Affairs
2. Kathy Calvin, President & Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation
3. Bill Chong, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
4. Richard A. Carranza, Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education
5. Craig Kielburger, Founder, WE DAY
6. Valerie Rockefeller, Chair of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Board Member of the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
7. Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth for the United Nations

About the Mayor's Office for International Affairs: The New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs works to foster positive relations and encourage collaboration between the international community and New York City's agencies and local neighborhoods. The Office is focused on sharing New York City's policies and best practices globally, as well as responding to requests from foreign governments, the United Nations, and the U.S. Department of State. For more information on its New York City Junior Ambassadors program, please visit nyc.gov/nycja and follow the Mayor's Office for International Affairs on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Medium](#).

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