


# Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award

The **Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award** is given annually by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) to the Rutgers-New Brunswick graduating senior who most embodies the spirit of Livingston College and its attributes of leadership and social action. 

All Rutgers University-New Brunswick undergraduate seniors with a minimum cumulative GPA of are eligible to apply for the award.

Riki E. Jacobs (1957-2009, pictured at right) was the director of the Hyacinth Foundation, an AIDS support organization, among many roles she fulfilled to assist vulnerable populations.

Jacobs (LC'80) also was one of LAA's first Livingston College Distinguished Alumni, honored in 2000.

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## **Recipients of the Livingston Pride Award** (renamed for Riki Jacobs in 2010)

Honorees from 1990 through 2010 graduated from Livingston College. Since 2011, honorees may be graduates of any undergraduate college at Rutgers University-New Brunswick/Piscataway.

The years in the list below link to the Livingston College yearbook page where each student is pictured. / \* Photo not available.

The names link to more information about each awardee, as available.

1990: Yantra E. Zavala *		2006: Keith A. Gottesman	
1991: Stephanie Heitman	1999: Irene Shenouda	2007: Zuleima Feliciano *	2014: Emilie Transue
1992: Daniel Malloie	2000: Geraldine Burgos	2008: Jacqui Whitfield *	2015: Amy Albert
1993: Harry R. Knabe	2001: Randall Gordon Stamm	2009: Rob Drucker *	2016: Victor A. Mensah
1994: Janel C. Patti	2002: Michael Lawrence Dimond	2010: Victoria Rowland *	2017: Maria Alba
1995: Ayana D. Gee	2003: Kazim A. Rizvi	2011: Matthew Cortland	2018: Lucy Anne Blevins
1996: Caren A. Tinney	2004: Gregory Ordun	2012: Amy Tran	2019: Eshan Kaul
1997: Connie Liauw	2005: Lisa M. Lattanzi	2013: Melanie Davila	2021: Janelle L. Taliaferro
1998: Ashwini Reddy			2021: Amanda Wells
			2022: Tara Krishna
			2022: Anthony Rivera-Rosario
			2023: Divon Pender
			2023: Sara Rubiano

Stephanie Heitman, LC'91	Daniel Malloie, LC'92	Harry R. Knabe, LC'93	Janel C. Patti, LC'94	Ayana D. Gee, LC'95
Caren A. Tinney, LC'96	Connie Liauw, LC'97	Ashwini Reddy, LC'98	Irene Shenouda, LC'99	Geraldine Burgos, LC'00
Randall Gordon Stamm, LC'01	Michael Lawrence Dimond, LC'02	Kazim A. Rizvi, LC'03	Gregory Ordun, LC'04	Lisa M. Lattanzi, LC'05
Keith A. Gottesman, LC'06	Matthew Cortland, SAS'11	Amy Tran, SAS'12	Melanie Davila, SAS'13	Emilie Transue, SAS'14
Amy Albert, SAS'15	Victor A. Mensah, SAS'16	Maria Alba, SAS'17	Lucy Anne Blevins, SAS'18	Eshan Kaul, SEBS'19
Janelle L. Taliaferro, RBS'21	Amanda Wells, SAS'21	Tara Krishna, SAS'22		
Anthony Rivera-Rosario, SAS'22	Divon Pender, SMLR'23	Sara Rubiano, SAS/EJB'23		

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## [Apply or Nominate for an LAA Award](#)

The LAA welcomes applications/nominations for the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award. This award is given annually to two undergraduate seniors (with a graduation date in the current calendar year, as defined in the application) on the New Brunswick/Piscataway campus. Two awards have been given each year since 2021. (Previously, one person received the award each year.) Applicants nominate themselves.

**Applications for 2024 are due Monday, April 15, 2024. Download the application.**

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The following awards are given at occasional celebrations.

- Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award
- Livingston Legacy Award (for faculty and staff members)

No date has been set for the next celebration. Nominations for those two awards are not open at this time.

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## Anthony Rivera-Rosario, 2022 Pride Award Honoree: Helping Others Is a Privilege

**Anthony D. Rivera-Rosario**, a 2022 graduate of Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), was raised with the value of making a difference by helping others. The Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University-New Brunswick has honored Rivera-Rosario as one of two recipients of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award for 2022. 

Rivera-Rosario, of Union City, New Jersey, majored in mathematics at Rutgers, and minored in statistics and philosophy. He is a first-generation Hispanic/Latino college student.

He worked as a research assistant at Rutgers' Proteomics Biochemical Laboratory throughout his college career. In the lab, he conducted protein synthetic and antibiotic experiments with graduate students, and programmed laboratory inventory and formatting protocols/material safety data sheets using the computer language Python.

He has worked as a financial analyst at Bank of America since June 2022, using his skills in computer programming, process improvement, and financial planning and modeling.

At Rutgers and in Union City, Rivera-Rosario has learned "the satisfaction of seeing how one's hard work can make a difference in someone's life" through multiple volunteer opportunities. He coordinated many of these events as an executive board member of the service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega.

In his Pride Award essay, Rivera-Rosario highlighted some of these volunteer efforts. They include:

- Spending the day with special-needs students at the Rutgers Special Friends Day event, making strong connections by playing board games and watching movies together.
- Volunteering with his family to clean, organize, and plant new flowers at a hospital.
- Serving meals at food pantries.
- Building homes with Habitat for Humanity.
- Creating personalized cards for hospital patients.

"Each member would be assigned a patient and get a quick summary of the patient's diagnosis and what their interests are," he said. "After taking a few hours to create the card, we would send them to the hospital to get distributed. In return, the patients would convey their gratitude to us for thinking of them. This is an example that allows me to put reality into perspective, every life is precious, and exchanging words of positivity with one another can make everyone feel cheerful."

Rivera-Rosario is a graduate of the Academy for Enrichment and Advancement (high school) in Union City, where he organized a Hudson County science fair, orchestrated events inspired by Italian culture, tutored students, and worked closely with the school's office staff.

While in college, Rivera-Rosario returned to his high school (now known as the José Martí STEM Academy) to mentor students, judge a science fair, and develop an alumni networking platform.

He has earned certificates in peer health education, digital marketing, and Google Analytics. He has been honored by the Hispanic Heritage Fund and the National Society of Leadership and Success, both in 2021.

"Bringing about a change to the world does not necessarily mean doing something universal," Rivera-Rosario wrote in his award essay. "Even helping out one person can change someone's well-being for the better. ... To this day I am passionate about serving the Rutgers community and the world. I would not be the person I am today without the help of others who came before me, and I wish to impart the same mentality to those I help so that the cycle of helping continues."

Riki E. Jacobs (1957-2009) was the director of the Hyacinth Foundation, an AIDS support organization, among many roles she fulfilled to assist vulnerable populations. She also was one of LAA's first Livingston College Distinguished Alumni, honored in 2000.

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## [Tara Krishna Works to Amplify Voices by Telling Individuals 'I See You' and 'You Matter'; Honored with 2022 Pride Award](#)

**Tara Krishna**, a 2022 graduate of Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences (SAS)



and the Rutgers Honors College, was raised with the value of making a difference by helping others.

The Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University-New Brunswick has honored Krishna as one of two recipients of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award for 2022.

Krishna, of Scotch Plains, New Jersey, is a student at Rutgers' New Jersey Medical School, where she is studying to be a medical doctor specializing in infectious diseases. At SAS, she majored in cell biology and neuroscience, and minored in psychology and in women's and gender studies.

She has been active in clinical and volunteer work in medicine. These experiences include:

- Serving as a volunteer emergency medical technician with the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad since 2016.
- Working as an intern in the infectious diseases department at Eric B. Chandler Health Center in New Brunswick, NJ, servicing patients with HIV.
- Developing content for an app and a podcast to promote the physical and mental health of mothers, at the Robert Wood Johnson Women's Health Institute in New Brunswick.

Krishna's extensive volunteer work includes:

- Activism with Amnesty International.
- Serving as an ambassador for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), facilitating skill-building workshops for undergraduate women and non-binary students.
- Mentoring Honors College students in research, volunteering, clinical, and academic opportunities on- and off-campus.
- Tutoring students in general chemistry and teaching chemistry lab.
- Helping refugees learn English.
- Working to promote cross-cultural competency in collaboration with students and staff at the Honors College.

She has researched sex differences in drug addiction and addiction recovery. She presented her research on *Finding Feminism in Addiction Recovery*, at the Rutgers Undergraduate Writing Center in 2022. She is a co-author of another study, in preparation, on the mechanisms of biological sex differences in cocaine addiction.

"Stigmatization's power to harm well-being is highly underestimated, yet meeting unique people with different life experiences defined outside a one-

dimensional label 'underserved' informed my ability to interact as an ally. I am happy to also educate others outside the realm of healthcare on HIV, too," Krishna wrote in her Pride Award essay. "Witnessing the stigmatization of substance abuse and gender identity affect patient quality of life and recovery efficiency, I resolved to investigate addiction humanely."

"Teaching conversational English to refugees of war in the Middle East, I realized I was still affected by implicit biases, and had a lot to learn from my own students. I had been avoiding possible traumas to ensure a safe environment for my Syrian students facing vast disruptions to their education. Yet, I was attempting to speak for my students without consulting their perspectives beforehand," she wrote.

Her students opened up, she said, when she stopped teaching English through discussions of food but instead talked about the real issues of stereotypes and personal bias. "My students who lived vastly different lives than I – some fled Syria, and some sought master's degrees, while others pursued dreams in the arts – taught me a lot about this clear need to learn from one another."

"Aligning oneself with a community is an honor when you truly learn from your neighbor; it is a service done to genuinely forge connections to improve lives, amplify voices, and recognize an individual by giving them the grace to simply say 'I see you' when institutions do not."


One of Krishna's "proudest achievements" at Rutgers was her work within the True Inclusion program at Rutgers' Honors College.

"... I soon learned how many underrepresented students within my Honors College community felt their voices went unheard; I also learned more about microaggressions and traumas that other marginalized identities faced," she wrote. "I constantly educated myself on microaggressions while pitching to executive deans every other week about the importance of requiring cultural competency within each school to better promote hundreds of self-aware, culturally competent young professionals. This encourages the recognition of inequities to promote student engagement in overlooked communities and beyond. Unlike my activism and direct aid in underfunded school systems aiding a handful, saying 'You matter' when institutions forgo doing so, here I actively changed structures to ensure the institution itself listened to all who needed it."

Riki E. Jacobs (1957-2009) was the director of the Hyacinth Foundation, an AIDS support organization, among many roles she fulfilled to assist vulnerable populations. She also was one of LAA's first Livingston College Distinguished Alumni, honored in 2000.

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# Janelle L. Taliaferro Founded Black Business Association at Rutgers; Honored with 2021 Livingston Pride Award

Janelle L. Taliaferro, a 2021 graduate of Rutgers Business School, has worked to amplify Black voices at the university and to educate students on hunger awareness. The Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University-New Brunswick has honored Taliaferro as one of two recipients of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award for 2021. 

Taliaferro, from Lake Wylie, South Carolina, majored in supply chain management and marketing science, with a concentration in global business. As a student, she affiliated with both the Honors College and the Douglass Women's College at Rutgers in New Brunswick.

Establishing the Black Business Association (BBA) is Taliaferro's proudest accomplishment as a Rutgers student. "Having a platform for minority students to share their ideas, discuss their plights, and continuously learn in every academic area, is a necessity in education," she said. "It is specifically important when preparing for a career in corporate America or entrepreneurship. ... BBA is the only student organization on Rutgers' New Brunswick campus catering to Black students interested in business careers, and the first in many years."

In her work with the Rutgers chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Taliaferro helped to organize the first rally against racism and for Black solidarity in four years on campus, demanding equal treatment across all student demographics

Taliaferro also served as co-president of Student -Organized Rutgers Against Hunger (SO RAH), working with local farms, food banks, and soup kitchens, to feed the community and to educate students on food insecurity. In her Pride Award application, Taliaferro noted that 30 percent of college students are food insecure.

For 18 months, Taliaferro served as a career prep fellow in the Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) program, traveling to Dallas and Minneapolis in 2019, before the pandemic hit.

"At each of our conferences we had the ability to demonstrate our analytical skills through case studies, our leadership through small and large group roundtables, and most importantly, become a family while having representatives from the top companies in the world interacting and leading our sessions," she

said. "The deeper meaning, I see, behind supporting and fueling students of color is building up an army full of diversity of thought. Throughout my time in MLT, I was the only fellow on behalf of Rutgers New Brunswick in my cohort."


As a student, Taliaferro completed internships at GlaxoSmithKline, Corning Inc., and United Parcel Service. Some of her non-business interests include being a "world traveler (17+ countries traveled), avid concert goer, and passionate New York City foodie."

Since August 2021 Taliaferro has worked as an associate product manager at Visa Inc. in the San Francisco area.

"I have always been passionate about creating healthy communities throughout my life and college career, championing inclusion efforts, and giving back," she wrote in her Pride Award essay. "I would love to bring my activism efforts into corporate America to leverage the social responsibility of large institutions."

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## [Amanda Wells, 2021 Pride Award Honoree: Social Change Starts With Your Community and Neighbors](#)

Amanda Wells, a 2021 graduate of Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences, believes that individual action is a critical form of social change. The Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University-New Brunswick has honored Wells as one of two recipients of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award for 2021. 

Wells, of Willoughby, Ohio, is earning her Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate so that she can more effectively mentor and communicate with English as a second language (ESL) speakers. Since graduation, she has been teaching English classes to refugees as an Americorps member with the International Rescue Committee of Atlanta. She plans to attend law school starting in fall 2022, studying immigration and child law.

"My experiences with community service, whether I have been a person in need or a person able to help, have become cornerstones of my development and have created a deep desire to enact social change within me," she wrote in her Pride Award essay. "My career interests are a reflection of this, and I am excited to continue to repay my community and to extend social change throughout my education, career, and personal life."



Wells' family struggled to keep the lights on and put food on the table when she was growing up. Family, friends, and food banks were key resources to help the family get by. Neighbors provided child care to Wells and her siblings and a place to "camp out" when they lost their home heating.

Wells has enacted individual change as a volunteer with Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America (FORA). Within FORA, she tutored a recently arrived 15-year-old refugee student to improve his literacy and English communication skills, including slang that he can use with his friends.

"My childhood community was a critical cornerstone of my identity, and it was often the way that my family managed to make it through our day," Wells said. "Because of these experiences, I believe that social change extends past formal roles and organizations, and is critically shaped by the way that we interact with our community and neighbors on a daily basis. ... Small, direct change is often overlooked, but because I have witnessed its resonant effects in my own life, I will always think of individual contact as one of the most critical forms of social change."

"(The student) and I often bond over our younger sisters, and I have found that he is particularly good at remembering new vocabulary words that he can use to tease her. Our work together has been incredibly valuable to me, as I have been able to watch him grow directly as a student. I see him every day, and every day I notice as he grows more comfortable speaking in English, confident in communicating with his friends, and willing to share his thoughts with me."

In March 2020, when much of society shut down, Wells joined the Cleveland (Ohio) Pandemic Response as a lead coordinating volunteer and a founding member. "As a mutual-aid organization, we worked to respond to direct economic and legal hardships in the Cleveland area by connecting community members in need with community members available to help. ... I am particularly proud of our ability to respond to the educational needs of low-income families with young children, as we provided over 100 laptops to families in need. We also helped to connect these families to books, learning kits, and free childcare for essential workers unable to be at home during the day."

Wells majored in English, Spanish, and Political Science as a Rutgers student.

As an intern in Cusco, Peru, with the National Office of the Public Prosecutor (Ministerio Público Fiscalía de la Nación), she assisted full-time governmental workers to understand barriers to education for adolescents, visiting schools and homes to talk with students and parents.

"I believe that a person within a community will always know the best ways to aid that community, and my work in Cusco responded directly to the needs of local people," she said. "This form of community involvement was critical, as it taught me how to support other communities as they drive their own social changes in accordance with their experiences."

At Rutgers, Wells was a lead tutor with the Plangere Writing Center for three years. While students were home during the pandemic, Wells found herself helping her peers not only with writing, but in coping with isolation, adapting to online courses, and living at home.

She also served as president of the Rutgers Veg Society, a group for vegan, vegetarian, and veg-curious students. The Veg Society has advocated for expanded food options in Rutgers dining halls as well as more accessible food labels for students with allergies and dietary needs. While students were home, the Veg Society held online parties, cooking nights, and trivia games, and encouraged students to share vegan statistics in their hometowns. The Veg Society is compiling a cookbook to benefit the Happy Animal Sanctuary in Howell, New Jersey.

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## Eshan Kaul, Aspiring Medical Doctor, Co-Founded Tutoring Program for Elementary School Students; Honored with 2019 Livingston Pride Award

**Eshan Kaul** (SEBS'19), an aspiring medical doctor from Green Brook, New Jersey, has been named as the 2019 recipient of the **Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award**, given by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University-New Brunswick.



Kaul earned a Bachelor of Arts from Rutgers' School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) in May 2019, as an Honors College scholar, with a major in Biological Sciences and a minor in Psychology. At the same time, he completed his first year of study at Rutgers' Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJMS), under a seven-year Rutgers-RWJMS BA/MD program. He plans to earn a master's degree in Public Health at Rutgers, before graduating as a medical doctor in 2022.

While Kaul has excelled in academics at Rutgers, he has also served as a role model for his fellow students and for elementary school students in New Brunswick. In 2016 he was one of the co-founders of Access to Education (A2E), a Rutgers-led tutoring program for pupils in first, second, and third grades at New Brunswick's Roosevelt Elementary School.

In his award essay, Kaul writes that the odds were stacked against him and his colleagues founding A2E, with officials from Rutgers, the city, and the school

district saying that he was too idealistic.


"To our surprise and joy A2E was a smooth success, and we received lots of positive feedback from the kids, teachers, and volunteers alike," Kaul wrote. "Personally though, I took the most pride in connecting with one of the "troublemaker" students Joshua. He was quite the rascal, but I never did stop laughing when I was around him. By the end of the semester, Joshua would start his homework without being told, could read the descriptions on all his Pokémon cards, and even picked up other people's trash. That is my pride: by not giving up, Joshua and I were able to become friends, and both of us are better people because of the other."

The A2E tutoring program is a program of Rutgers' Youth Empowerment Club (YEC), which partners with the New Brunswick-based nonprofit organization Youth Empowerment Services (YES). YES was founded in 2003 and provides after-school activities, summer camps, and mentoring programs for at-risk youth in New Brunswick. Kaul previously served as YEC's President, and currently serves on the board of YES.

During his undergraduate career, Kaul traveled to several locations to gain a better understanding of important global issues: food insecurity and educational inequality in Tulsa, Oklahoma; health, well-being, culture and social inclusion in Thailand; and the impact of immigration on education and American society in Boston.

At home, he co-founded a Rutgers group called Knights Table, as a means to improve civil discourse, and helped draft legislation to remove health-risking philosophical and religious exemptions for vaccines in New Jersey.

His medical research includes studying the effects of medical student volunteering on nonprofit organizations, and cancer immunotherapy physiology in T cell receptor cross reactivity using antigenic peptides under Dr. Andy Zloza.

 Kaul writes that he has "a lot of Rutgers pride – perhaps a little too much – and I'm not afraid to wear it on my sleeve. For example, I can tell you important dates in Rutgers history and my email signature is 'In Rutgers Spirit.' "

With this Rutgers pride comes a commitment: "When you walk down George Street, you'll hit the beautifully designed Honors College, the immensely green quad and flower beds of Voorhees Mall, until suddenly you hit the train station, with its ever-present wet walls and crumbly staircases.

"With this in mind, it's important to remind ourselves of the fact that Rutgers is a land grant institution, and how it is part of our mission to perform public service in support of the needs of the citizens of the state. But I would argue it's more than that: we are members of the Rutgers community, nay the greater New Brunswick community, and it is our duty to be active citizens who want to support our neighbors as best we can."


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*Bottom photo: Eshan Kaul (right) talks with NJTV correspondent Michael Hill in 2017, about Kaul's work with Youth Empowerment Services.*

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## [Pride Award Winner Lucy Blevins \(SAS'18\) Will Pursue a Master's Degree in Public Affairs and Social Work, with a Focus on Prison Reform](#)

Lucy Blevins with Jeffrey Armus, Chairman of the Pride Award Committee and Vice President of the LAA. Photo by Qiumei Wang, Rutgers Business School Alumni Association. 

**Lucy Anne Blevins** (SAS'18), an aspiring social worker from Maplewood, New Jersey, has been named as the 2018 recipient of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award, given by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University.


Blevins will graduate from Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences (New Brunswick) in May 2018. Starting in summer 2018 she will pursue a dual master's degree in Public Affairs and Social Work, with a focus on prison reform policy, at the University of Texas at Austin.

In her award application essay, Blevins noted that social work ties together several of the courses she took in other subjects at Rutgers.

"Through these classes, I realized that there was a theme to all my papers and projects: in psychology, I was interested in the effect of oppression on the soul; in art history, I focused on representations of struggle and creativity as an antidote to depression; in sociology, I was drawn to inequalities based on race and gender; and my favorite writing class explored non-western feminist authors throughout history.

"This seeming patchwork seemed something of a mess, until I took my first course in social work. Then they all fit together. I immediately saw that what I wanted was an education that would allow me to advocate for social justice, equal treatment, humane conditions, and basic human rights for all. I began to seek out opportunities that would allow me to have an impact on the community around me."

Blevins is a member of Omega Phi Alpha, the national service sorority. During her college career she has undertaken several community service initiatives, including: serving in local soup kitchens; advocating for mental health awareness on campus and global women's rights initiatives; and participating in the Rutgers Dance Marathon to raise funds for and to build meaningful relationships with the families of children who have cancer and blood disorders.

 Lucy Blevins, center, with her mother, Juliette Blevins, and her sister, Rebecca Blevins. Photo by Qiumei Wang, Rutgers Business School Alumni Association.

In her junior and senior years of college, Blevins has served along with several other Rutgers students as a tutor for inmates at New Jersey's Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, as part of their work with the Petey Greene Program.

Blevins has tutored the inmates in math, science, history, and writing. "More important than any educational skill that I have, I am able to help the inmates by listening to their thoughts and concerns as well as simply providing empowerment in the form of re-validation," she wrote in her Pride Award essay. "I have faith in the students that I tutor and believe that they are capable beyond their own ability to see. While they may be physically incarcerated, their minds and spirits are free and flourish with attention and compassion. ... One memory that always makes me smile is of working with a student and explaining to him how to read a Punnett square. 'This comes up on every GED practice exam, and I never understood it. Now I get it. Thank you, Lucy.' "

During her undergraduate career, Blevins earned several academic scholarships, and affiliated with the Douglass Residential College, a women's college within Rutgers.


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## **Maria Alba (SAS'17), 2017 Pride Award Recipient: 'Be a Positive, Active Bystander'**

Maria Alba (SAS'17), an aspiring clinical psychologist from Cranford, New Jersey, has been named as the 2017 recipient of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award, given by the Livingston Alumni Association of Rutgers University. She will begin studies toward a Doctor of Psychology degree at Rutgers' Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in fall 2017. 

In 2013, the summer before she entered Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences, Alba attended an orientation program about campus sexual assault and bystander intervention. Around the same time, a friend confided that she had been the victim of sexual and domestic violence. "I wanted to fight for justice for her, and for every other individual whose voice has not been heard," Alba wrote in her essay for the award.

"The message was clear: If you see something wrong, say or do something. Be a positive, active bystander no matter how big or small your intervention."

These two events helped Alba realize that Rutgers' SCREAM Theater, a violence prevention program, was her calling.

As a member of the SCREAM Theater staff, Alba traveled throughout New Jersey and across the country to educate people about sexual and domestic/dating violence through improv theater. She also created a video called "I Am Part of the Revolution," showcasing other student leaders who spoke about why they choose to take a stand.

In her undergraduate research, Alba studied the effect of stress on health

issues such as smoking and obesity, especially among minorities and women who identify as lesbian or bisexual. She also conducted research on psychotherapy and counseling as it related to the gay liberation movement at Rutgers from the 1950s to the 1980s. In fall 2016 she taught an introductory seminar on psychology to first-year students.

Alba has garnered numerous awards for her academic performance, and for her work on women's and gender studies, women's rights, and violence prevention and victim assistance.


"I believe a successful leader knows when to lead and when to listen," she said. "I have carried this lesson with me throughout my life as an activist, student leader, and an aspiring clinical psychologist."

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## **Victor Mensah Founded Peer Mentoring Program at Rutgers; Honored with 2016 Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award**


Victor A. Mensah (pictured at right) has been honored as the recipient of the 2016 Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award, given by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University. 

Mensah, a first-generation college student, is a May 2016 graduate of the School of Arts and Sciences-New Brunswick at Rutgers University, where he has majored in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Urban Health. He's continuing his studies at Rutgers in fall 2016, entering Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's Class of 2020, seeking a Medical Doctorate degree.

During his first year at Rutgers, Mensah's path was not so certain, as he was

struggling and at risk of losing his scholarship. A friend took Mensah under his wings and helped him manage his time better and build relationships with professors and student clubs. Soon thereafter, Mensah was on the Dean's List.

Mensah's work with a mentor gave him the idea to create a peer-mentoring program to pair first-year, first-generation college students with upperclass students. In three years, the Student Support Services Peer Mentoring program has grown from 13 students to 120 students projected for fall of 2016.

 Mensah also has volunteered as a mentor to high school students interested in a career in medicine, as a high school track and field coach, and a math and science tutor at New Brunswick High School.

Mensah wrote in his award application essay: "As a tutor of all grades from high school freshmen to seniors, one thing is apparent, the older the students get, the less interested they become in the sciences." He feels strongly that there is a lack of minority representation in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) fields. This drove Mensah to seek propose and seek grants for a summer math and science camp to show inner-city youths that science and engineering can be fun and interactive.

Mensah's previous awards include:

- 2015 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity scholarship award winner
- 2015 Mozelle Henry Fordham Legacy of Love Scholarship
- 2014 Spirit of New Brunswick Award for community involvement
- 2012 James Dickson Carr Scholar at Rutgers

The LAA presented the Pride Award to Mensah at a Theater Night reception on Sunday, April 24, 2016.



Since 1990, the LAA has given the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award to the Rutgers-New Brunswick graduating senior who most embodies the spirit of Livingston College and its attributes of leadership and social action. The award is named after Riki Jacobs (1957-2009), a guiding light in the fight against HIV/AIDS in New Jersey for more than 25 years. At the time of her passing, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine called Jacobs "an articulate and compassionate voice who was highly respected for her efforts to ensure health care access for those living with, infected with, and affected by HIV."

*Center photo: LAA's Vice President/Secretary Jeffrey Armus (left) and President Eric Schwarz (right) present the Pride Award to Mensah. Bottom: Mensah (holding award certificate) celebrates his achievement with family and friends. Photos taken on April 24, 2016.*



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## Riki Jacobs, LC'80, Provided Support to Vulnerable Populations; Honored as a Livingston Distinguished Alumna in 2000

**Riki E. Jacobs**, a 1980 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University, served as executive director of Hyacinth AIDS Foundation from 1993 until her death in 2009.



In 2000, Jacobs was named one of the first four Distinguished Alumni by the Livingston Alumni Association of Rutgers University (LAA).

In 2010, the LAA renamed its award for an outstanding graduating undergraduate senior, to the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award.

Hyacinth AIDS Foundation was a “mess” and “about ready to go under” when Jacobs joined, said Jerry McCathern, Hyacinth’s senior director of development at the time of Jacobs’ death. “Riki could have been a hero or the agency could have failed,” McCathern said. “It would have failed under most people, but she took it from there to present, in that we have become the ‘premier AIDS service agency in the state.’”

Under Jacobs’ direction, Hyacinth became the only organization in New Jersey with a public policy and community organizing staff dedicated to protecting the rights and benefits of people living with HIV/AIDS in New Jersey. During her tenure at Hyacinth, Jacobs served as a fellow of Leadership New Jersey 1995.

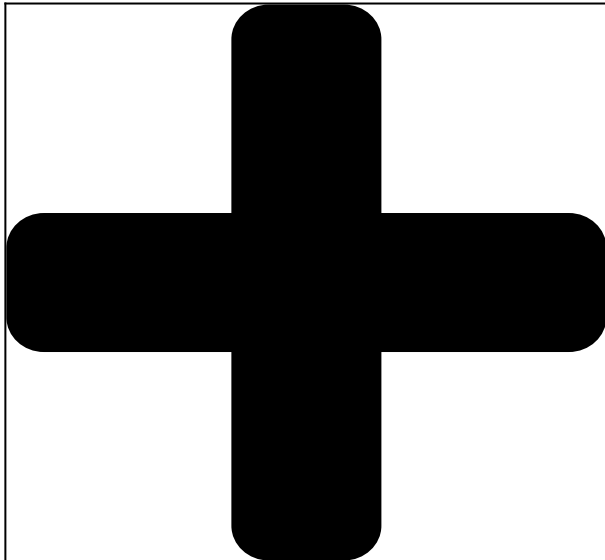
At the time of Jacobs’ death, New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine called her “a guiding light in the fight against HIV/AIDS in New Jersey for more than 25 years. She was an articulate and compassionate voice who was highly respected for her efforts to ensure health care access for those living with, infected with, and affected by HIV. Riki’s vision and unwavering commitment will be greatly missed.”

Prior to her service with Hyacinth, Jacobs served as a staff attorney and the assistant director for New Jersey’s Commission on Sex Discrimination in the Statutes, where she advocated for laws impacting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. From 1982 to 1992 Jacobs was the director of development at the New Jersey Association on Correction (NJAC) where, among other responsibilities, she provided AIDS education to inmates in county jails. In the late 1980s she realized the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the association’s clients. As a result, she developed one of the first pre-release programs in the country targeting offenders living with HIV/AIDS and also

created an HIV/AIDS prevention and education program at the Mercer and Middlesex County correctional facilities.

She had been involved since 1986 with organizing local and statewide coalitions. She co-founded the New Jersey Women & AIDS Network (NJWAN), an organization devoted to address the impact of AIDS on women in New Jersey. She was also responsible for the development of NJAC's first domestic violence shelter in Passaic County.

Jacobs was strongly committed to the work of the non-profit community. She served on the boards of the Center for Non-Profits and the New Jersey chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She also served on the advisory board of the New Jersey AIDS Partnership. Since the administration of Governor Jim Florio, Jacobs had served as a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on HIV and other blood-borne pathogens.



Jacobs received numerous awards and recognition for her work, including: honors in 1998 from NJWAN, the AIDS Benefit Committee of NJ (Humanitarian Award) and the Middlesex County Commission on the Status of Women (Women of Excellence Award for her work in the AIDS field); the Public Policy Leadership Award from the New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute in 2003; and the Humanitarian Award from the Health Care Foundation of New Jersey in 2007.

Jacobs, born on November 12, 1957, and raised in Union, New Jersey, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Livingston College in 1980, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) degree from Rutgers University School of Law (Newark) in 1989.

Jacobs, who died March 14, 2009, was survived by her husband of 22 years, Angel M. Perez; children, William, Eli and Kara; her sister, Ellen; her brother, Robert; and her parents, Harold and Betty.

*Bottom photo: New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine with Riki Jacobs in 2007.*