

Koinonia Presents Annual Education Awards

STURBRIDGE, MA – The women’s group of the Sturbridge Federated Church, formally known as Koinonia, presented its annual education award to four outstanding area recipients on Sunday, June 20. The award, which includes a \$1,000 honorarium, is presented to candidates who best exemplify the qualities of character, merit, and service. Men and women, young and old, who are taking college courses and other classes are all eligible for the award. This year’s education award committee, comprised of Lucette Favreau, Nancy Castendyk, Susan Schwartz, and Barbara Stietzel, presented awards to the following recipients:

Mai Caslowitz, daughter of Susie Bonta of Sturbridge, and Carl Caslowitz of Canton, CT is a 2021 graduate of Tantasqua Regional High School who is headed to Rider College, Lawrenceville, NJ in the fall to pursue a bachelor of fine arts degree with a concentration in musical theatre. “Mai’s talent is only eclipsed by the sterling qualities that constitute her character,” said Ms. Schwartz. “She is what we call a ‘triple threat,’ superlatively gifted in musical voice, nimbly skilled in dance and movement, and blessed with comedic and dramatic acting abilities. These are enhanced by her empathy, wisdom, and gracious open nature. A deeply caring individual, Mai has volunteered in multiple, diverse service capacities since childhood, and likewise hopes to use her talents to benefit others.”

Olivia Olson, daughter of Tom and Kathy Olson of Sturbridge, is a 2021 graduate of Tantasqua Regional High School who will be entering the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the fall as a dance major. “Olivia has shown generosity, compassion, and a depth of dedication to our church and her school,” said Ms. Castendyk. “She has shared her time and talents as a volunteer leader of various Sunday School programs, Vacation Bible School, and several Christmas pageants. Her teachers expressed high praise for Olivia’s commitment to the school’s concert choir, theatre program, Maestros, and Encore, all of which proved her to be a skilled leader, actor, musician, dancer, and dance instructor.”

Jeremy Peters, son of Mark and Missy Peters of Southbridge, is a 2021 graduate of Southbridge High School where he was class president and valedictorian, National Honor Society president, varsity tennis captain, president of the International Thespian Society and a member of the school band. “Jeremy is a true Renaissance man,” said Ms. Favreau. “In addition to the leadership roles mentioned, he is an Eagle Scout, a member of Worcester County Bee Association, and the owner of a pork business!” Jeremy is headed to Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the fall where he will major in mechanical engineering.

Ryan Peters, son of Mark and Missy Peters of Southbridge, is a 2021 graduate of Worcester Polytechnic Institute



with honors with high distinction. “As an Eagle Scout, Ryan has been involved in multiple service projects, including one at Capen Hill Nature Sanctuary,” according to Ms. Stietzel. “At WPI, he volunteered many hours researching antibiotic resistance in a relative of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis, and worked hundreds of volunteer hours with the “Lens and Lights” group at WPI, managing lighting, sound, and projection services for the entire campus. His professors say that Ryan is a person who will always do the right thing for the right reason. He treats everyone fairly and with compassion. His positive attitude, determination, and kindness are prominent characteristics.” In the fall, Ryan will serve as a teaching assistant at Purdue University in Indiana, in a six-year program leading to a doctorate in biological sciences. In addition to the education award, the graduating seniors were presented with a custom handmade quilt, lovingly made by Shirley Hitlin, Ryan and Jeremy’s grandmother, who has been honoring graduates with quilts for the past five years. “They are made with the idea that they are stuffed with love from their church community,” Ms. Hitlin said. “When students are away

from home, they may be lonely, happy, or sad, but they can always wrap themselves in this quilt and know that God is with them.”

“Koinonia believes in rewarding those who have already distinguished themselves by their character, merit, and service, and who are continuing to better themselves through learning and education. We would like to thank everyone who applied for this year’s education awards or who wrote letters of reference for their candidates,” said

Ms. Favreau. “We appreciate your willingness to take the time to participate in this program, and we encourage other students to apply for future awards.”

Koinonia, a word that appears in several forms in the New Testament, most often refers to fellowship. This word of Greek origin suggests a sense of partnership, sharing, companionship, and philanthropic service. Koinonia meets monthly in Fellowship Hall. All members and friends of the Federated Church are welcome to attend.

QCC is a Vaccine Champion College

WORCESTER, MA— June 23, 2021— Quinsigamond Community College has joined President Biden’s COVID-19 College Vaccination Challenge. Colleges across the country are being asked to commit to taking actions that

will engage their college communities and encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Statistics show that a significant portion of the older population have been vaccinated; however, the younger generation is lagging behind. Colleges and universities offer a significant opportunity to reach that younger generation.

“We are committed to keeping our college community, our city, and the Commonwealth safe. The best way to do this is by getting vaccinated,” said QCC President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. “This is a challenge I hope all colleges and universities will stand behind so that we can put an end to this global health crisis.”

QCC has taken a visible role in COVID-19 community outreach. The College developed a comprehensive, COVID-19 vaccination webpage

offering vaccination information through public service videos in multiple languages, along with fact sheets in multiple languages, a link to vaccination locations and a link to the Massachusetts COVID-19 information website.

QCC has already hosted two Moderna Vaccine Clinics on its campus (670 West Boylston, Street, Worcester) for the QCC community, as well as faculty, staff and students from Assumption University, Anna Maria College and Becker College. Approximately 90 people were vaccinated at each clinic.

“Spreading the word about the importance of getting vaccinated has been a priority at QCC. Offering information that is easily accessible, in multiple languages, enables us to reach more in our community,” President Pedraja said. “By hosting

vaccine clinics, we are providing easier access for our students, their families, as well as QCC employees, which enables more in our community to be vaccinated.”

President’s Biden’s goal is to have 160 million Americans being fully vaccinated by July 4.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508.854.7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu

Quinsigamond Community College provides the community with high quality, affordable higher education in Worcester County. As a regional leader in education and workforce development, QCC serves the diverse educational needs of Central Massachusetts by providing affordable, accessible, and high quality programming leading to transfer, career, and lifelong learning.

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