

High school students win disability rights campaign contest

New York Assemblyman Al Stirpe, the Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, and Clear Channel Syracuse recognized local high school students for their winning communications campaigns for disability rights on December 1 at 10:00 AM.

The First Place winner of the Disability Rights 2009 Communications Contest is the We "R" Above team from Fayetteville-Manlius High School. The team is composed of eight students who designed and implemented the multimedia We R Above campaign to stop the use of the "R Word" ("retard"), consisting of a public service announcement, video interviews, a website, a Facebook page, Twitter microblog, and a YouTube channel. See www.werabove.com. Since its debut in October, the campaign has generated over 800 supporters. Brief biographies of the winners are attached. The team plans to use the prize money to start Friend-to-Friend chapters in other area schools and organize activities for all the chapters to interact. Friend-to-Friend is a student-run extracurricular organization that involves students with and without disabilities in fun activities together. The winning school will receive \$2,500 in prize money to use for purposes related to increasing understanding of disability among young people, as well as assistance in disseminating their campaigns.

The contest was sponsored by Assemblyman Stirpe and supported by Syracuse University's Burton Blatt Institute, the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, and Clear Channel Syracuse. Ten individuals and teams submitted entries from Cicero North Syracuse, Fayetteville-Manlius, Lafayette Junior-Senior High and Liverpool High Schools submitted campaigns designed to change perceptions of disability rights among young people.

All teams will receive awards recognizing their contributions.

For more information, visit <http://bbi.syr.edu/projects/disability-rights-campaign/> or contact Eve Hill, BBI Senior Vice President, at (202) 296-2044 or ehill@law.syr.edu.