

Student, faculty member honored for their 'Spirit of Service' in the Alfred community

2/20/15



Alfred University (AU) student Jasmine Ramón and Dr. Wesley Bentz, professor emeritus of chemistry, are the campus's 2015 Spirit of Service Award recipients, cited for their significant contributions to the greater Alfred community.

Award winners and nominees were recognized at the fifth annual Celebration of Service program last month at the Alfred Village Hall. Helen Evans, associate director for Ardent Solutions (formerly the Allegany/Western Steuben Rural Health Network), presented the keynote address on the importance and rewards of volunteer service in rural communities.

The annual Spirit of Service Awards are given to members of the Alfred community who best exemplify a strong commitment to serving their neighbors. Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the award was initiated to honor people whose actions best portray ideals of equality, social justice, community, and service.

Ramn and Bentz were joined by Alfred State College recipients student Ashley Ebel and ASC staff member Michael Murray, assistant director, retail operations, Auxiliary Campus Enterprises and Services.

Dr. Robyn Goodman, professor of communication studies at AU, nominated Ramn, a junior communication studies and English double-major from Newburgh, for her commitment to social justice. Ramn is an active member of AU's Institute for Cultural Unity and heads the Unity House Advisory Committee, a new initiative offering housing, programming, and support for students of color, indigenous students, LGBTQ+ students, and allies. Last semester, Ramn participated in a panel discussion at AU on the racial tension/events in Ferguson, MO; Ramn was the only student panelist.

Goodman wrote, "During my 20 years at Alfred University, I have rarely met a student as dedicated to both leadership and embracing diversity as Jasmine."

Bentz was nominated by Dr. Nancy Furlong, professor of psychology and a 2014 Spirit of Service Award nominee. In addition to teaching at AU, Bentz and Furlong are both dedicated members of the A. E. Crandall Hook & Ladder Co. Bentz is an ambulance and fire truck driver, a pump operator, and new-member trainer on driving emergency vehicles and how to run the pumps. He also serves as treasurer and was instrumental in securing the Company's charitable organization status.

In addition to this work, Bentz is an integral member of the Alfred-Almond Community Chest and United Way campaigns.

Furlong concluded, "Helping is what Wes does best ... I believe Wes Bentz is the embodiment of Dr. King's legacy and a worthy candidate for the Spirit of Service Award."

Two additional Alfred University students and two faculty/staff members also received nominations for the Spirit of Service Awards. The AU student nominees were: Thomas Beaudoin, a senior communication studies and political science double-major from Windham, Maine, for his work with Drawn to Diversity and WALF (student radio station), and Antonio Robles, a senior biology major from Rexville, for his contributions to the Wilderness Immersion and Leadership Discovery (WILD) class and splitting and stacking firewood for a local family.

The 2015 AU faculty and staff nominees were: Zachary Hamm, technical director for the Performing Arts Division, who was nominated for his exemplary service as the chief of the A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Co., and Dr. Becky Prophet, professor of theater and a 2013 Spirit of Service Award winner, for her volunteer work with A. E. Crandall Hook & Ladder Co., the Village of Alfred, the Allegany County Jail, and teaching in India.