

## Rising Stars of Queens honored

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At its Rising Stars event, The Courier honored young professionals who exemplify outstanding leadership skills, not only in their chosen fields, but also in their community.

The stars aligned last week when *The Queens Courier* honored 40 of the borough's budding young professionals. "It's awesome to be honored, and it's humbling to be among these people," said Eric Abrams, 26, digital media and membership associate for the Queens Chamber of Commerce. "I feel like I'm on my way up."

Abrams — recognized for his work for the Chamber, including his part in securing a \$100,000 grant to develop a mobile phone app for Queens tourism — shared the limelight with several other "Rising Stars" honored for exemplifying outstanding leadership skills in their chosen fields and communities.

Presented by Metropolitan Hospitality, the fifth annual "40 under 40" awards and networking event drew over 500 people and raised \$2,500 in charity raffle funds collected to benefit the Hank Auffarth Family Center of The Child Center of NY and Morgan Center, a pre-school for kids with cancer.

"This makes me proud of my staff, the company and proud to work in Queens," said Seth Taylor, 33, executive director at the 82nd Street Partnership. "It makes me think back to the work I've done and it reminds me of all the work to be done."

On January 31, at the Caesars Club in Citi Field, event attendees networked with top professionals and mingled with representatives from leading businesses in the area, including this year's event sponsors National Grid, TD Bank, Parker Jewish Institute for Health Care & Rehabilitation, Delta Airlines, Queens Library, Con Edison, Flushing Bank, Council for Airport Opportunity, Queens County Savings Bank, Time Warner Business Class, Samuel Field Y, Sandwire, Crystal Window & Door Systems, Investors Bank and Ehren Joseph Studios.

Danielle Monaro, a co-host on Z100's Elvis Duran & The Morning Show, received the "Star of Stars" award and was the night's honorary emcee.

"I went to St. John's University, so I feel like I grew up in Queens," she said. "It's just really nice to see how diverse the crowd is, how everybody comes together and supports each other. It really does mean a lot that I was chosen to be here. "

Monaro, a New Jersey resident, said she started her gig as a radio personality at St. John's, where she did theater and WSJU Radio before graduating in 1995.

She helped honor fellow award recipients, including "Mentor of the Year" Bud Harrelson, a 1969 New York Mets World Series champion.

Also honored this year for their community work were Joseph Amodeo, development director for Quality Services for the Autism Community; Eric D. Abrams Digital Media & Membership Associate Queens Chamber of Commerce; Gerdie Rene Gordon, member, Cambria Heights Development Corporation; Seth Taylor, Executive Director, 82nd Street Partnership; Anahit Azatyan, manager of OKG Jewelry; Anokye Blissett, attorney at Law Firm of Russo & Blissett; Ricky Brava, senior partner at Apollo Financial Group; Ricardi Calixte, director of neighborhood economic development for the Queens Economic Development Corporation; Jennifer Colletti-Membreño, assistant director of development at Samuel Field Y; Elizabeth Culp, assistant vice president and branch manager at Roslyn Savings Bank; Paisley Demby, business services director at Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses at LaGuardia Community College; Josh Fatoullah, president and founder of JR Wealth Advisors; Dr. Peter Feibish, orthodontist at Dynamic Dental; Christian Goode, CFO and SVP of Resorts World NY; Gerdie Rene Gordon, member of Cambria Heights Development Corporation; Tracie Hall, vice president of strategy and organizational development of library services at Queens Library; Matthew Jahrsdoerfer, audit principal at Grassi & Co; Isabella Leung, human resource manager at Crystal Window & Door Systems; Jennifer Matthews, NTC marketing and events for USTA National Tennis Center; Maria Messados, principal/insurance broker for Queens Medallion; Ann O'Connor, cultural collaborator at Zooscope Studio; Tony Rappaport, licensed sales associate at Greenthal Property Sales & Management; Michael Ratner, partner at Abrams, Fensterman; Jeffrey Reich-Hale, director of sales and marketing at Wyndham Garden LIC; June Reid, department manager at Delta Air Lines at JFK International Airport; Jeff Yanni, general manager at Delta Air Lines at LaGuardia Airport; Elias Roman, CEO and co-founder of Songza Media, Inc; Rick Rosa, executive vice president and managing director at Douglas Elliman; Frank T. Santoro, counsel at Farrell Fritz, P.C; Suzanne Shusteris, manager at TD Bank; Aravella Simotas, assemblymember of District 36; Kevin Skelly, assistant general manager at Clearview Golf Corp.; Silvia Tejeda, licensed real estate broker at Rapid Realty Astoria Inc.; Ebony Young, executive director of Long Island City YMCA; Jason Hilliard, executive director for Congressman Gregory Meeks; Frank Russo III,

manager of Russo's on the Bay; Abbi Leman, communications director at CUNY School of Law; Andrew Barnes, manager at National Grid; Wafa Abboud, founder and CEO of Human First, Inc.; Chris Lynch, director of operations of Parker's Medical Transportation Division for Lakeville Ambulette Transportation; and Jeffrey DeShields, mortgage development officer and team leader for Sovereign Bank. "I feel blessed. You can't ask for anything better," said DeShields, 39.

Creative Group, LLC and Delta Airlines provided the raffled-off Cancun trip, which included four nights and five days at the Ocean Spa Resort or the Laguna Suites and two round trip airfare tickets. Broadway tickets, an HD TV, two Nets tickets to the TGI Suite at the Barclays Center and many gift certificates were also given away by exhibitors.

Guests also snapped pictures in a free photo booth sponsored by Investors Bank and snacked on free Nathan's hotdogs and pretzels.