

PRESS RELEASE

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ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS RECOGNIZE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF ESSEX COUNTY FIRST TEE PARTICIPANTS



Young golfers participating in The First Tee of Essex County program at Weequahic Park Golf Course were honored by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for taking the golf and life skills taught them to heart, and for being named to the A/B Honor Rolls at their respective schools. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Newark, NJ) – As their proud parents looked on, 24 young golfers participating in the Essex County First Tee program at Weequahic Park Golf Course in Newark were recognized by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for their academic achievements during its Wednesday, August 1st, meeting held at the Hall of Records. Each student was honored for having been named to the A/B Honor Roll at his/her school during the 2011-2012 school year.

The student-golfers honored were: Mujahid Nadeem Ali (St. Peter's Prep), Nia Berrian (North Star Academy), Erica Bramwell (Our Lady of Sorrows), Jeremy Dees (Edison Middle School), Brionna Freeman (Maple Avenue School), Jaylin Freeman (Maple Avenue School), Jeremy Garriga (County Prep Academy of Technology & Design), Elijah Haynes (Hoboken Charter School), Tafari Lemma (Mt. Vernon Elementary School), Natasha Malonza (Millburn Middle School), Jared Martinez (Martin Luther King Elementary School), Janeyce McCray (Wardlaw Hartridge School), Brandon Miller (Maplewood Middle School), Autom Paden (Kawamech Middle School), Tzaddi Phipps (home school), Zayin Phipps (home school), Harold Ross, Jr. (Redwood Elementary School), Deja S. Rudolph (Benedictine Academy), Jewell Strickland (Pingry School), Kathleen Sullivan (Hoboken Charter School), Lauren Sullivan (McNair

Academic High School), Isaiah Whitaker (St. Benedict's Prep), Ashley White (Science Park High School) and Hadiyah Wilson (North 13th Street School).

The ceremony was sponsored by Freeholder President Blonnie Watson of Newark, who was joined by the other members of the Board who are also enthusiastic supporters of the First Tee program: Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold of Livingston and Freeholders Carol Y. Clark of East Orange, D. Bilal Beasley of Irvington, Rufus I. Johnson, Donald M. Payne, Jr., and Rolando Bobadilla of Newark, Brendan W. Gill of Montclair and Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell.

Also participating in the ceremony were: Chaz Moses (Program Director) and Daryl Strickland (Team Coordinator) of the Essex County First Tee, Jackie Bazan-Ross (President) and Douglas Freeman of the Parents Group, and program advocate Ed Wadood.

During her remarks, Freeholder President Watson applauded the young people for learning not only the game of golf, "but also the game of life". She also expressed that she was delighted to honor the participants for "being the great young people they are, and especially because they've demonstrated that they take school (one of the First Tee's 'Healthy Habits') seriously, having been named to their respective schools' A/B Honor Rolls."

Freeholder Carol Clark, who served as Mistress of Ceremonies, introduced Freeholder Rufus Johnson who congratulated the students, thanked the First Tee staff, and applauded the parents who, "despite their busy schedules and the difficult economy, have made sure their children have had an opportunity to participate in this program and to grow as golfers and citizens." Freeholder Clark also emphasized the tireless efforts of Ed Wadood to convince the County to establish a First Tee program in Essex County in the first place, saying, "but for him, I don't know that we would be standing here tonight acknowledging so many young people both for their scholastic achievement and for their participation in the First Tee program." Speaking on behalf of The First Tee of Essex County and Executive Director Barry McLoughlin, Chaz Moses thanked the Board for commending the students "for their commitment and drive for academic excellence."

The program also included words of appreciation from students Harold Ross, Jr., and Hadiyah Wilson, and from parent Douglas Freeman, who credited the First Tee for also being a catalyst that has brought so many other improvements and youth sports programs to Weequahic Park and the community.

Closing out the program, Freeholder Clark said, "This is a real special day, because this is a game that you will play the rest of your lives... a game that may also carry you into some boardrooms, country clubs and into some phenomenal experiences. It is also my prayer that it will carry you through college." She went on to say, "I can't tell you the pride I feel standing here with you today. It makes my heart simply explode, because you are so beautiful, so talented, so smart, and because you are ours...products of our Essex County First Tee program."

The First Tee of Essex County was formed in August of 2006 through a partnership between the Metropolitan Golf Association, New Jersey PGA and New Jersey State Golf Association. Located at Weequahic Park, the program offers a beautiful Junior Learning Facility to serve the youth of Essex County consistent with the program's mission, "To impact the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character, instill life-enhancing values and promote healthy choices through the game of golf". The facility is a versatile practice area that can be used for short game instruction, a limited flight driving range and a 3-hole short course to introduce youth to the game and its positive values.

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