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YMCA OF GREATER MONMOUTH COUNTY

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YMCA OF GREATER MONMOUTH COUNTY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER



HERSHEY LODGE, HERSHEY, PA

## STUDENTS EXCEL AT YMCA MODEL UN CONFERENCE

### MUN WAS FUN!

Over 1,200 students gathered at the Hershey Lodge, in Hershey, PA from January 6-8, 2023. There were heated debates, public speaking and intense UN resolution-writing as each student represented a UN country. But most of all, the youth had fun, learned about world issues, and made new lifelong friends. Model UN is a real life simulation of the United Nations. Each student represented a country and they immersed themselves in research in preparation for their roles as Ambassadors who are tagged with trying to solve some of the world's most pressing issues. Students travelled from as far as Maryland to participate in this life changing event. The YMCA of Greater Monmouth County Delegation included students from Holmdel High School, Satz Middle School, Red Bank Regional High School, Markham Place Middle School, Biotechnology High School and Red Bank Catholic High School.



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### ENJOY THIS ISSUE?

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who you think may find it useful.

### QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS?

Contact Stacy Harris the editor at [sharris@ymcanj.org](mailto:sharris@ymcanj.org)





# SAMVI SLAYS THE DEBATES

2023 Youth and Government (YAG) Outstanding Statesperson



Samvi Raj, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader from Satz Middle School in Holmdel, was honored as the *Outstanding Statesperson* for the YAG Junior Legislature. Samvi is a member of numerous clubs including math and robotics clubs as well as being a very talented artist. Samvi embodies all the core values of the YMCA and was recognized not only by his peers for his superior debating skills, but he was also recognized by the NJ YAG leadership. During the closing ceremony, Mike Gallagher, NJ YMCA YAG Program Director, singled Samvi out amongst the 325 delegates by saying, ***"I have been involved with YAG for 25 years and I am so happy today because Samvi gives me hope for the future of YAG."***

## Comments about Samvi at Conference



## YAG GOVERNOR

Alexa Kiernan  
Red Bank Catholic High School

The YAG conference was presided over by the YMCA of Greater Monmouth County's, Alexa Kiernan, from Red Bank Catholic High School. She was elected by her peers as Youth Governor, the highest-ranking position at conference. She was introduced to civic engagement by the YMCA as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Markham Place Middle School in Little Silver and has continued to excel ever since. Alexa will also represent the YMCA at CONA, the National YMCA Civic Engagement conference.

***"I had a wonderful time at Model UN and YAG this year! I love the program because it is about people that's what makes it special. Take every opportunity to appreciate the journey you never know what could happen, it could be your last one."***

Alexa Kiernan  
YAG Youth Governor



***"IT WAS THE BEST CONFERENCE EVER! I DID NOT WANT TO GO HOME"***

**SATZ STUDENT**





## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Attending a 3-day conference, being away from your parents for the first time and having to speak in front of hundreds of people can be intimidating, especially if you are in Middle School. Students start out shy and are sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of debating. But in the end, they become more engaged, they become better public speakers and most of all, they build up their confidence in themselves. It is not about how many accolades you receive but about how each student develops as a person and how they work together as a team. Building your confidence is the essence of civic engagement.

## 1ST YEAR STUDENTS SHINE

**Elena Chu**, Holmdel HS  
*Premier Diplomat - MUN*  
**Julia McCauley**, Holmdel HS  
*Outstanding Country - MUN*  
**Ben Lenza**, Markham Place MS  
*YMCA Core Values Award- MUN*  
**Samvi Raj**, Satz MS  
*Premier Diplomat - MUN*  
**Giovanna Geisert**, Markham  
*Premier Diplomat- MUN*  
**Samvi Raj**, Satz MS  
*Outstanding Statesperson- YAG*



## MEET THE STUDENT OFFICERS

Congratulations to Alexia Zambino (left), Holmdel High School, and Anna Feher (right), Red Bank Regional High School. Alexia is our new 2023—2024 YMCA of Greater Monmouth County Civic Engagement President and Anna has been elected as our new Civic Engagement Vice President. They exemplify the five core YMCA values and are outstanding students.



## FIND YOUR VOICE

**LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF \* LISTEN \* ENGAGE \* UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**

Finding your voice can be difficult for teenagers. Students learn to find their voice first by writing it down and then over time they begin to speak up and realize that they can reach new levels with their unique voice. Finding your voice is a critical part of the YMCA Civic Engagement program whereas students are able to discover new techniques as they improve their public presentation skills and become more confident in their overall speaking abilities. Your voice has power and can influence others which is why our students love Model UN and Youth and Government. As each student finds their voice they become more comfortable and are able to reach many other young people.



# 2023 OUTSTANDING DELEGATION



## YMCA Honored at 84th Annual Youth and Government Conference

### WESTIN AT FORREST VILLAGE, PRINCETON, NJ

The YMCA of Greater Monmouth County was honored as an Outstanding Delegation at the 84<sup>th</sup> Annual New Jersey YMCA Youth and Government conference which was held from April 14-16, 2023, at the Westin in Princeton. The prestigious event was attended by 325 High School and Middle School students from across New Jersey.

The students wrote bills and amendments and debated everything from equal access to healthcare to cyber bullying. Students role-played as Senators, Assembly people, lawyers representing the state and even the press. The amazing weekend included a Saturday night dance which is a favorite among the youth.

This student run conference allows young people to find their passion and team up with others with the same passion as they gain more confidence, became aware of NJ issues and improve their public speaking skills. But most of all, they had fun and met new friends they will have for a lifetime.



*"I am grateful to you (JoAnn and Stacy/YMCA staff) for introducing Model UN to our school and for giving us the opportunity to excel in debate and public speaking."*

MARKHAM MS STUDENT

## YMCA CORE VALUES AWARD

Ben Lenza (pictured below, right) a 7<sup>th</sup> Grader at Markham Place Middle School in Little Silver, received the prestigious YMCA Core Values Award at the 2023 Model UN conference in Hershey, PA. This single award is given annually to the student who best displays the five core values of the YMCA.

- Honesty
- Caring
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Inclusion



## WHAT'S NEXT?

**Model UN (MUN)** begins in September and ends in January with our conference in Hershey, PA. This four-month program teaches students public speaking, debating skills, research and most importantly how to work as a team. Please contact us if you or your child wish to participate.

**Date: September 2023—January 2024**

### For more information contact:

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**Make a donation** to support our Civic Engagement students and future leaders who are making a difference!  
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