

# Student Advocacy to Host 27th Annual OTO Awards and Celebrate 40th Anniversary

*This year's event will honor the accomplishments of Westchester students who have overcome the odds and community members advocating for educational equity*

ELMSFORD , NEW YORK , UNITED STATES , April 29, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Student Advocacy will celebrate its 40th anniversary at the 27th Annual Overcoming the Odds (OTO) Awards on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at 6:30 pm, at the Brae Burn Country Club located in Purchase, NY. At this year's event, five tenacious and inspiring Westchester based students will be celebrated for overcoming significant obstacles to achieve success in school.

Student Advocacy will also be recognizing four community members who are lifelong advocates for educational equity. Dr. David and Mrs. Karen Blumenthal will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award for 30 years of dedication to Student Advocacy; Jill Bernstein, Board Chair, will be given the Excellence in Leadership Award; and Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Executive Director, Westchester County Youth Bureau, will receive the Community Partner Award for promoting and supporting the social, emotional, physical, and educational well-being of young people throughout Westchester County.

"We are excited to be celebrating as we continue to provide guidance and hope to young people who are at risk for academic failure or dropping out of school because of disability or other complex issues," said Diane Rosenthal, Executive Director, Student Advocacy. "We are proud to honor community members who believe in the power of education to transform lives and students who despite challenges, have persevered and made education their priority. Student Advocacy secures school-based resources and serves as a voice for children who are often overlooked in our community."

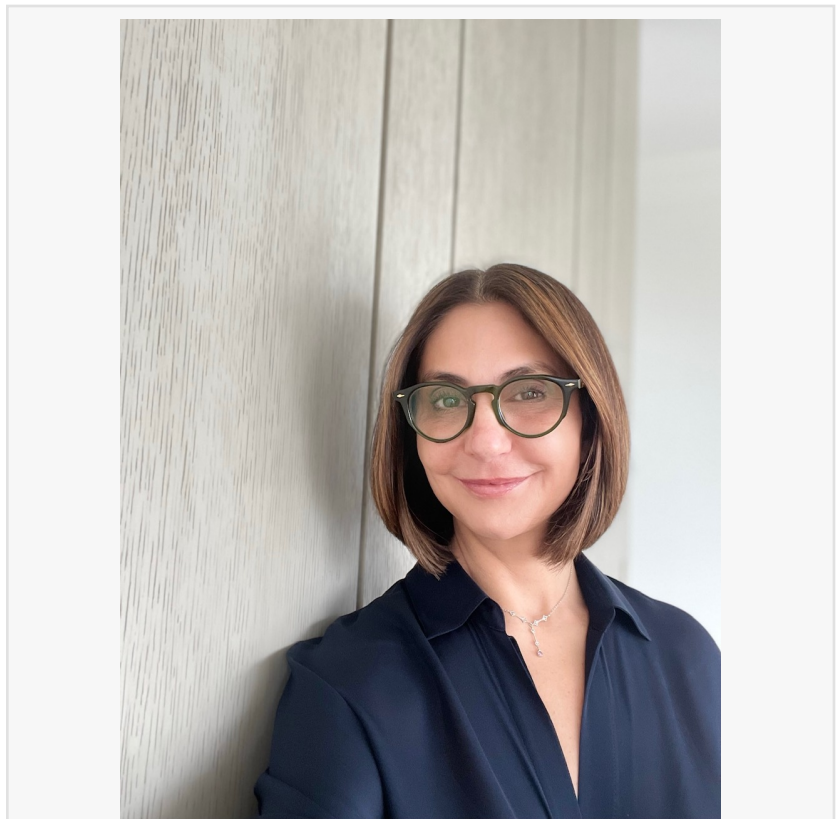
Karen Blumenthal joined the Student Advocacy staff in 1989 as the Director of the Homeless



Karen & David Blumenthal

Student Project and eventually became the Assistant Director. In 2004, Blumenthal transitioned to the Policy Advocate position and is most proud of her work on "Solutions not Suspensions" and "Attendance Matters." She joined the Student Advocacy Board of Directors in July 2019, serves on numerous committees, and is currently one of two Vice Chairman.

Dr. David Blumenthal is a board-certified specialist in Cardiovascular Disease and Internal Medicine, a Clinical Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College, an attending physician at the New York Presbyterian Hospital, and a senior member of a five person cardiology group in Manhattan. Dr. Blumenthal is the 2015 recipient of the Maurice R. Greenberg Distinguished Service Award at Weill Cornell Medical College and has been named by New York Magazine and Castle Connolly's America's Top Doctors for many years. Over the years, Dr. Blumenthal has been the strongest possible emotional and financial supporter for Student Advocacy, being the Honorary OTO Dinner Chair since 2003 and dedicating his time to introducing hundreds of eventual contributors to the organization.



Jill Bernstein



Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden

Jill Bernstein joined the Student Advocacy Board of Directors in 2013 and over the next several years, chaired several board committees, co-chaired the Overcoming the Odds Awards dinner, and assumed the roles of Secretary and Vice President, before becoming Board Chair in 2016. During her tenure, Bernstein has directed the board's expansion and evolution, with a focus on governance best practices and ensuring management continuity with the hiring of Diane Rosenthal as Executive Director. Today, Bernstein works closely with the Executive Director to ensure the ongoing health and prosperity of Student Advocacy.

Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden has spent more than two decades working at the intersections of government, education, business, and the non-profit sectors. Dr. Harris-Madden began her career in the private sector as a Human Resources Manager for Gap Inc., and later transitioned into the non-profit sector as an Assistant Director at the Urban League of Westchester, where she worked to address the disproportionality within the juvenile justice, educational, and child welfare systems for children and youth of color. In her current role as the Executive Director of the Westchester County Youth Bureau, she is responsible for deploying financial and technical resources to non-profit, private, and municipal agencies that support children, youth, and families. Dr. Harris-Madden was instrumental in the creation of three new Youth Bureaus, making Westchester the first county to develop Youth Bureaus in the last 25 years.

This year's student honorees are:

Melody A., Gorton High School, Grade 12, Yonkers Public Schools

Manuel H., Greenburgh Academy, Grade 12, Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District

Xavier H., The Hallen School, Grade 12, New Rochelle, NY

Ashley M., Rye Neck High School, Grade 12, Rye Neck Union Free School District

Desiree S., Homeschooled, Grade 7, Mount Vernon City School District

"All students are capable and can learn," said Jill Bernstein, Board Chair. "But because every child is unique, with a distinct life experience and combination of skills, challenges, interests, and fears, the educational environment that works for one does not necessarily work for another. That's where Student Advocacy comes in. Our small but mighty group of attorneys and advocates work on behalf of students to secure support tailored to their needs. By doing this, we turn challenges into opportunity, making success accessible and attainable for everyone."

This year in keeping everyone's health and safety in mind, Student Advocacy is requiring that all attendees must show proof of vaccination at entrance and wear a mask when not actively eating or drinking. The event will be held outdoors under a tent and is sold out for in person attendance. To purchase a virtual ticket or donate in support of Student Advocacy's mission, please visit [www.studentadvocacy.net/oto-event-2022/](http://www.studentadvocacy.net/oto-event-2022/). For additional information about Student Advocacy, please contact Diane Rosenthal at (914) 347-7039 ext. 101 or via email at [drosenthal@studentadvocacy.net](mailto:drosenthal@studentadvocacy.net).

About Student Advocacy Inc.: Student Advocacy, established in 1982, is a non-profit organization that provides legally based education advocacy services for students who face significant challenges and may be at risk for academic failure or dropping out of school. Located in

Elmsford, New York, Student Advocacy serves students and their families in over 40 school districts and Special Act school districts in Westchester and Putnam counties. Student Advocacy's staff of trained Advocates work to protect the educational rights of students, ages 3-21 years, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status, and to ensure they receive the school-based resources to which they are legally entitled. For more information about Student Advocacy, please visit [www.studentadvocacy.net](http://www.studentadvocacy.net).

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