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BREAKING & LOCAL NEWS AT silive.com

Wagner College honors eight distinguished educators

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Earlier this week we noted Wagner College's annual Distinguished Educator Awards program honoring teachers and academic leaders who embody education excellence on Staten Island.

Nominees were either Wagner College graduates, or educators living or working on Staten Island. In our column we highlighted the achievements of **Dr. Jennifer Lauria**.

However, in addition to Dr. Lauria, a Wagner College professor who has twice been honored at Wagner with faculty excellence awards, for teaching and service — and current adviser to the college's Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development Chapter — other honorees included:

Lauren Rinaldi-Grimaldi, a College of Staten Island graduate who earned her master's degree in special education from Wagner College, has taught at the Eden II School for Autistic Children since 1998. She was one of the "20 under 40" recognized in 2012 by the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation, and in 2015 was given the Community Service Award from the Staten Island Not-For-Profit Association.

Helen Decker is a poet and English teacher who has taught at Susan Wagner High School since 1998 and edits the school's literary magazine. She earned her doctorate from the CUNY Graduate Center for her research on poets **Sylvia Plath** and **Ted Hughes** and has won the NYC Poetry Teacher of the Year Award; the Teacher Award from the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Teacher of Excellence award from the United Federation of Teachers.

Jeffrey Benjamin has been a part of the



Wagner College Distinguished Educator Award winners are, from left, **James Hickey**, **Helen Decker**, **John-Charles Kiernan**, **Lauren Rinaldi-Grimaldi**, **Carin Guarasci**, **New Educators program director**, **Paul Martuccio**, **Louis DeLuca**, **Jeffrey Benjamin** and **Jennifer Lauria**.

New Dorp High School family for more than 20 years, coaching the boys' cross-country and track and field program and teaching social studies. He also works at Tottenville High School's Young Adult Borough Center, helping at-risk students earn their high school diplomas. A supporter for many years of youth running programs, Mr. Benjamin was named an "Unsung Hero" by the Staten Island Sports Hall of Fame. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the College of Staten Island.

John-Charles Kiernan is a Wagner College graduate who earned his master's degree in school building leadership from St. John's University, Grymes Hill. He began his education career as an English teacher at Monsignor Farrell High School, Oakwood, where he still coaches the hockey team. He served as assistant principal of St. Adalbert's School, Elm Park, before being named principal of St. Charles School in Oakwood in 2013.

James Hickey earned his bachelor's degree and his master's in education from Wagner College, and his Ph.D. in educational leadership from Fordham University, the Bronx. He began his career in education at St. Joseph by-the-Sea High School, Huguenot, followed by a stint as a public school principal in Old Bridge, N.J., where he was named New Jersey Principal of the Year. He is currently headmaster of Austin Preparatory School, Reading, Mass. Hickey was previously honored by Wagner College with an Alumni Leadership Award.

Paul Martuccio was recognized with the **Hank Murphy** Award for a Distinguished Educational Leader. As soon as Martuccio earned his bachelor's degree in marketing from Regis University, Denver, Colo., he began work on his master's degree in education at Wagner College, followed by a master's degree in school building leadership from Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. He

was a teacher before becoming assistant principal of PS 21. Since 2009, MMartuccio has been principal of PS 13, Rosebank, where his efforts to help the school close achievement gaps won it the National Distinguished Title I School Award. Martuccio has been honored with the St. John's University Outstanding Administrator Award and the **Louis P. DeSario** Educator of the Year Award, given by United Activities Unlimited.

Louis DeLuca, a Compass Award winner, has been the CEO of United Activities Unlimited, a multipurpose non-profit human services organization, for more than a quarter century. His three degrees — a bachelor's from Wagner College, a master's degree from New York University and a California Coast University doctorate — prepared him to be a powerful advocate for education. His career, combined with far too many community activities to list, has won DeLuca numerous honors, including two awards from the Wagner College Alumni Association and an Educator of the Year award from Wagner's DaVinci Society.

CELEBRATIONS: JULY 14

Happy 99th birthday Thursday to **Joseph**

Sciacca, the former deputy commissioner of the New York State Athletic Commission, boxing division,

and former vice chairman of the Republican Party Committee; **Lorraine LaPorta**, **Carol Ann Trezza**, **Robert Travis**, **Ann Marie Joseph**, **Charlie Sexton**, and **Matthew Tyler Micho** of Great Kills, who turns 12 and attends St. Clare's School.



CELEBRITY BIRTHDAY: **Joseph Sciacca**