



The Wawa Foundation Announces the Four Finalists for The Wawa Foundation “Hero Award”: Calls for Public Vote to Determine Hero Award Recipient

Four Greater Philadelphia Area Non-Profits Will Be Celebrated During Wawa Welcome America! Festivities, Which Include Emily’s Entourage, Operation Yellow Ribbon South Jersey, Lighthouse, and West Philadelphia Alliance for Children

Wawa, PA. (June 15, 2017) – After receiving more than 125 submissions, The Wawa Foundation Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit founded to support Wawa’s charitable giving and philanthropic activities, is thrilled to announce the finalists for its 2017 “Hero Award,” an honor that will be given to a non-profit organization serving the greater Philadelphia area that assists others, and builds stronger communities through preserving our independence, protecting our safety and mentoring and inspiring our youth.. **The four finalists are:**

- 1) [Emily’s Entourage](#)
- 2) [Operation Yellow Ribbon South Jersey](#)
- 3) [Lighthouse, Inc.](#)
- 4) [West Philadelphia Alliance for Children](#)

Vote from June 15 - 29 to Help Choose a Winner

The winner will be chosen by public vote on [The Wawa Foundation’s website](#) from June 15 - 29. The organization receiving the most votes will be presented to The Wawa Foundation Hero Award Panel for final approval.

The Hero Award and Wawa Welcome America!

Launched during Philadelphia’s *Wawa Welcome America!* festivities, The Wawa Foundation Hero Award will be presented as part of the Independence Day morning ceremony on July 4th in front of Independence Hall. The recipient of The Wawa Foundation Hero Award will receive a \$50,000 grant and the three runners up will each receive \$10,000 grants.

“All of us at Wawa were truly inspired to hear about the work that so many area non-profits are doing to help others and improve their communities,” said The Wawa Foundation President Jared Culotta. “We can’t wait to celebrate these four non-profits during the *Wawa Welcome America!* festivities as they tell their stories of what it means to be a hero. We invite all who applied to stay connected with The Wawa Foundation to find out more about the support The Wawa Foundation offers to non-profit organizations in Wawa’s operating area.”

About the Finalists

Emily’s Entourage

Faced with a rare form of the fatal lung disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Emily Kramer-Golinkoff has committed her life to fast-tracking research and drug development for nonsense mutations of Cystic Fibrosis (CF). Named a White House Champion of Change for Precision Medicine, Emily’s Entourage has raised over \$2.5 million dollars since 2011 to fund groundbreaking research and lead the worldwide charge for a cure for nonsense mutations of CF. The growth and success of Emily’s Entourage is a testament to the strength of communities, most specifically the greater Philadelphia community, which has rallied behind this quest. Anchored in Philadelphia, Emily’s Entourage now includes supporters and volunteers from around the globe who are working together to accelerate the development of

cutting-edge treatments that save the lives of Emily and others like her. Emily's Entourage is harnessing the power and passion of communities to give people like Emily and many others like her hope for a future that they so fiercely deserve. Find out more at <https://www.emilysentourage.org/>

Operation Yellow Ribbon South Jersey

Operation Yellow Ribbon of South Jersey is an organization dedicated to supporting United States Military Forces serving in the Middle East by sending donated supplies to troops overseas, as well as promoting, coordinating and facilitating welcoming home events for local veterans. Over the past two years, the organization has shipped more than 100,000 pounds of care package goodies to deployed U.S. military members, including snacks and hygiene products many Americans take for granted back at home. For many troops deployed across the globe, having access to basic necessities like shaving cream, tooth brushes and deodorant is a luxury. Since its founding, Operation Yellow Ribbon of South Jersey has been connecting the amazing men and women of our U.S. military with a piece of home and a warm welcome upon their return. Find out more at: <http://www.operationyellowribbonsouthjersey.org/>

Lighthouse, Inc.

Since its founding in 1893 as a settlement house, the Lighthouse has been providing educational, recreational and economic improvement programs to families and individuals across North Philadelphia communities. From starting the first Meals on Wheels program in the nation to address the issue of senior hunger in the community to providing fun, educational after-school programming for more than 100 young students each year, the Lighthouse offers a wide array of services designed to help improve quality of life and guide young people to become contributing members of society. But in the many less-than-ideal neighborhoods that stretch across North Philadelphia and beyond, ensuring every child receives the attention and educational programming they need can be a challenge. The Lighthouse is constantly working to find new ways to stretch their offering to help chart a different course of direction for those who come from the most difficult backgrounds. Find out more at: <http://lighthouse1893.org/>

West Philadelphia Alliance for Children

The vast majority of Philadelphia public schools lack a functioning library, and nearly 40% of our students will drop out before graduating. Knowing the link between reading progress and dropout rates, the West Philadelphia Alliance for Children (WePAC) promotes childhood literacy by engaging volunteers in Philadelphia public schools through re-opening and staffing libraries and offering academic mentoring to students in need. With its many dedicated volunteers and small staff, WePAC supports nearly 5,000 students each week by conducting read-alouds and helping children choose books that will engage them and keep them coming back for more. Through motivation and positive encouragement to learn and read, WePAC is helping to put students on the path to greater opportunity and prosperity. Find out more at: <http://wepac.org/about/>

About The Wawa Foundation "Hero Award" Submission Process

Non-profit organizations applied by submitting a video and/or a short story to The Wawa Foundation website that provided background on their organization's work with, and impact on, the community. The Wawa Foundation Grant Committee selected four compelling stories of organizations serving the Philadelphia community with the best fit to the award focus area and criteria. The four finalists will be put to a public vote, and the organization receiving the most votes will be presented to The Wawa Foundation Hero Award Panel for final approval and determination. The winning organization will receive a **\$50,000 grant** from The Wawa Foundation, and three runners-up will each receive **\$10,000 grants**.

For more information on The Wawa Foundation Hero Award and eligibility requirements, terms and conditions, please visit www.TheWawaFoundation.org. To be eligible to receive this award, non-profit organizations needed to meet the grant selection criteria of The Wawa Foundation for support of organizations providing assistance to causes representing everyday heroes.

About The Wawa Foundation

The Wawa Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded by Wawa, Inc. to support the company's charitable giving and philanthropic activities, and ultimately to help build stronger communities. The Wawa Foundation focuses its support on organizations committed to health, hunger and everyday heroes through local, state and national grants and / or in-store fundraising, such as, donation boxes and point-of-purchase scan materials.

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