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Cambridge Nonprofits, Young Professionals Named Finalists for Nonprofit Excellence Award

Nonprofit Excellence Awards highlight the important contributions of the Massachusetts nonprofit sector

BOSTON, MA (May 6, 2019) The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network (MNN) announced today that two Cambridge-based nonprofits, Cambridge School Volunteers and Y2Y Network, have been selected as finalists for the 2019 Nonprofit Excellence Awards. Cambridge School Volunteers is a finalist for the award in the Collaboration category, and Y2Y Network is a finalist for the award in the Innovation category.

In addition, Katharine Pong and Amelia Thelen, Operations Associates at Cambridge-based On The Rise, Inc., have been selected as finalists for the award in the Young Professional category.

The winners of the Nonprofit Excellence Awards will be announced at MNN’s annual event, Nonprofit Awareness Day: A Celebration of Nonprofit Excellence presented by Citizens Bank on June 3 at the Massachusetts State House.

"We are honored to recognize the important contributions of Cambridge School Volunteers, Y2Y Network, and the 25 other Nonprofit Excellence Award finalists, and look forward to recognizing excellence in the state’s robust and diverse nonprofit sector on Nonprofit Awareness Day," said Jim Klocke, CEO of MNN.

Cambridge School Volunteers
The Excellence Award in Collaboration recognizes an organization which has partnered with another entity to address a compelling problem that could not have been solved as effectively by any one organization on its own. Cambridge Schools Volunteers was selected as a finalist for its NetPals program, a collaboration with 3 Cambridge public middle schools and 13 corporate partners. The program engages 260 volunteers annually to mentor seventh graders on careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The program’s corporate partners are Audible, the Broad Institute, Cambridge Systematics, GCP Applied Technologies, Google, IBM, MIT Chemical Engineering, Neon Therapeutics, Novartis, Oracle, Philips, Vecna Technologies, and the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center.

"Cambridge School Volunteers is proud to be among the finalists for the Excellence Award in Collaboration," said Jennifer Fries, Executive Director of Cambridge School Volunteers. “Our NetPals program could not exist without our volunteers and our collaborators at the Cambridge Public Schools and our corporate partners. We share this moment with them, and with our students. Our NetPals each help one seventh-grader to dream a little bigger. What could be more rewarding?"
**Y2Y Network, Inc.**
The Excellence Award in Innovation recognizes a nonprofit organization that has utilized new models or strategies to solve long-standing problems or to adapt to a changing environment. Y2Y Network opened Y2Y Harvard Square, the nation’s first student-run shelter for young adults ages 18 to 24 who are experiencing homelessness. Y2Y employs this youth-to-youth model to provide a safe and affirming environment for shelter guests, giving them opportunities to collaborate with service providers, other youth experiencing homelessness, and student volunteers to create sustainable pathways out of homelessness and develop skills for long-term success. Y2Y now operates 27 of the area’s 39 youth-specific shelter beds, and last year it served 185 young adults.

"We are so honored to be named as a finalist for the Excellence Award in Innovation. We thank the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network for celebrating the nonprofit sector and everything it does to strengthen our communities," said Sam Greenberg, Co-Founder of Y2Y Network.

**Katharine Pong and Amelia Thelen**
The Young Professional Excellence Award recognizes emerging nonprofit professionals who have made a significant contribution to their organization through their vision, innovation, interpersonal skills, and hard work. Pong and Thelen work at On The Rise, a nonprofit offering day programming for homeless and formerly-homeless women focused on building dependable relationships to catalyze healing and transformation. Pong and Thelen are being recognized for their excellent work in serving On The Rise’s clients, particularly for their remarkable level of teamwork and coordination that produces better outcomes for their clients than if they worked independently from each other.

“We are delighted to see our distinguished Operations Associates, Katharine Pong and Amelia Thelen, getting this recognition for their work! No one deserves it more,” said Martha Sandler, Executive Director of On The Rise. “Their passion and dedication is truly outstanding, and their work lifts us up, staff and program participants alike, in countless ways.”

Nonprofit Awareness Day highlights the work of the nonprofit sector and raises awareness of important causes throughout Massachusetts. During the ceremony, the Nonprofit Excellence Awards will be presented to one finalist in each of the following six categories: Advocacy, Collaboration, Innovation, Leadership, Small Nonprofit, and Young Professional.

This year, an independent panel of judges reviewed over 100 nominations for the Nonprofit Excellence Awards. The 27 finalists range from large education providers to small human rights organizations and represent every region of Massachusetts.

In the weeks leading up to Nonprofit Awareness Day, nonprofits across the state are engaging in a social media campaign with the hashtag #MAkingadifference to raise public awareness of nonprofits’ important contributions to Massachusetts.