

Excellence Awards Go to Leake & Watts, Row New York, and Graham Windham

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Yesterday, three New York City nonprofits -- Leake & Watts, Row New York, and Graham Windham -- won the 8th annual New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards, which recognize outstanding management practices of nonprofits in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester.

The three winning organizations were selected for their use of excellent management practices to turn around a failing organization, to strategically manage growth of a young organization, and to review and improve an organization's ability to realize its mission, respectively. The winners were selected by a panel of 30 nonprofit management experts.

Leake & Watts won the Gold Prize for Overall Management Excellence, Row New York and Graham Windham won the Silver Prize and Bronze Prize for Management Excellence, respectively. The winners were announced at a Best Practices Workshop, Awards Presentation, and reception held at Citi's auditorium in Manhattan.

"We're thrilled to present these three incredible organizations with this year's Award," said Michael Clark, President of the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, which manages the Awards program along with The Trust and Philanthropy New York. "These exemplary nonprofits have really invested enormous resources and time into honing their management practices, which translate to results that fulfill their missions."

All three winners serve New York City's at-risk youth, the first time in the program's eight year history that all three winners serve a similar population, although with different services and goals. The organizations range in size, budget and age. Row New York is the smallest and youngest with a budget of \$1.8 million, and 24 full time staff members. It was founded in 2002. Graham Windham, founded in 1806, is the oldest. Leake & Watts has the largest budget, at nearly \$75 million. A total of 77 organizations applied for this year's Awards, up 25 percent from 2013.

"We're glad to show that nonprofits can teach each other ways to be effective, even as their lessons help businesses as well," said Lorie Slutsky, President of The New York Community Trust.

Leake & Watts was founded as an orphanage in 1831 and continues to provide support today to thousands of children, adults and families each day so they can achieve success tomorrow through a wide variety of early childhood, child welfare, developmental disabilities, special education, and juvenile justice programs. Five years ago, this organization was operating with a multi-million dollar deficit and 80 percent of its programs were in Corrective Action, as identified by the Administration of Children's Services. Today, it operates with a surplus, has had clean audits for the past two years, and is routinely cited for its excellent program practices and outcomes.

Row New York, based in Queens and Manhattan, empowers youth from under-resourced communities to build strength, gain confidence, and pursue excellence through the competitive sport of rowing, paired with academic support. Row New York is the first Queens-based nonprofit to win this Award. This organization has seen tremendous growth in the last few years, but its expansion has been thoughtful, analytic, and strategic. It has also included having the organization say "no" when the opportunity for growth threatened their strength and sustainability. Today it not only serves more teens, but also has stronger outcomes thanks to its commitment to and culture of continuous learning, focus on results, and use of strategic partnerships.

Graham Windham, founded in 1806, has been a vital force in providing innovative child welfare, educational, vocational, youth development and other social service programs that help New York City children and families achieve life-changing outcomes. In 2009, the board and senior management of this nearly 220-year-old organization began a re-visioning process informed by its deep ongoing review of the organization's performance, impact and outcomes. As a result of this process, Graham Windham refreshed its mission, clarifying its fundamental aspirations and commitments to children who have experienced childhood neglect and trauma and their families. To advance this mission, Graham Windham phased out programs that were deemed off-mission, assessed the effectiveness of each of its core approaches, integrated its work across programs, and implemented a series of major practice advancements.

The winners received cash awards of \$30,000, \$20,000, and \$10,000, respectively, as well as scholarships for Columbia Business School Executive Education Programs in Social Enterprise.

"Every year I talk to funders at the Nonprofit Excellent Awards program who say they come away inspired by the innovation and integrity of the amazing nominees," said Ronna Brown, President of Philanthropy New York. "The management practices that are the core of this program are so immensely important and these award winners have so much to teach the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors."