

Gianna Patino Awarded Joan Connelly Memorial Scholarship



Gianna Patino, a 2020 graduate of Putnam Valley High School, has been awarded the Joan Connelly Memorial Scholarship by the Mental Health Association of Putnam County. Photo courtesy Gianna Patino.

BY ERIC GROSS

Gianna Patino, a member of the 2020 Class at Putnam Valley High School, has been awarded the \$500 Joan Connelly Memorial Scholarship by the Mental Health Association of Putnam County.

Gianna, who is pursuing a career in nursing, was chosen among 15 finalists, according to Megan Castellano, Executive Director of the non-for-profit, because of her “compassion in addition to being an accomplished student.”

Castellano explained last week the scholarship was normally awarded during the Mental Health Association’s annual breakfast which was cancelled due to the pandemic: “I contacted Gianna to advise her of the honor and requested that she send us a photo which made the recognition more personal to our board members. After chatting on the phone and receiving the photo, we felt as though we met Gianna up close and personal.”

Gianna thanked the association for its recognition: “It was so nice to receive the letter of congratulations. I want the board to know how much I appreciate receiving the scholarship.”

The Mental Health Association also commended Alice Herde and Angela Brainard as the association’s Employees of the Year for 2020.

Castellano said Herde, the Mental Health Association’s Deputy Director, was nominated by “everyone on our management team as well as our direct care staff. She received glowing nominations for all the wonderful things she does—always with grace and a smile on her face. Alice is never too busy to take the time to assist someone in need.”

Brainard is a member of the organization’s Direct Care Team who works in the Drop-in Program where according to Castellano “people are invited to visit on Thursdays for a meal. She is a welcoming friendly face who is the ‘hostess with the mostest.’”

Due to COVID-19, the drop-ins have been suspended. Despite this, Brainard has been hosting a virtual drop-in where Castellano said “people can call in and get together. Angela has also been conducting a ton of outreach by checking with people and making sure they are OK. What a wonderful gesture!”