

IDC's 4th Annual Award Ceremony was held on June 5th at Hannover Marriot Hotel. Over 200 guests and many dignitaries participated in celebrating multiculturalism and diversity. IDC endeavors to promote dialog and cross-cultural tolerance among various ethnic groups in New Jersey.

To this end, IDC publicly recognizes the outstanding achievements of those individuals and institutions that have distinguished themselves in their service to New Jersey community and humanity in general.

2011 Honorees are;

Diversity Appreciation Award: Congressman Leonard Lance (Congressional District 7)

Community Service Award: N.J. Attorney General Paula T. Dow

Peace and Understanding Award: Joy Kurland, Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey

Media Award: Michael Gabriele, Editor, the Catholic Advocate

Education Award: Ross Danis, Executive Director, Newark Education Trust

Business Award: Michelle Lee, North East Regional President, Wells Fargo

Master of Ceremonies: Asm. Jon Bramnick (District-21)

The winners of IDC's Diversity Art and Essay Contest were also recognized at the event. The contest for grades 6 thru12 was held for the second time and the winning projects were exhibited just outside the ballroom. Winners received more than \$10,000 all together.

One of the distinguished awardees, **Ross Danis**, said "One needs to devote oneself to a cause that has a greater purpose." He added that when he started working as the Executive Director of the Newark Education Trust, he was told that Newark had the biggest problems. His answer was "Newark has the biggest promises."

Congressman Lance applauded IDC and Turkish American community for wonderful work that they have been doing. He said he believes that this type of organization and work is essential in NJ. He added "IDC's motto is 'Love is the essence of the creation', which, as a Christian, reminds me of 'God is love'. He continued, "I shall place this award on my bookshelf with pride in my office in Canon House Building on Independence Avenue. Everyday as I cross Independence Ave. to vote on the floor of House of Representatives I look at great dome over the rotunda, the most famous room in America, I recognize the great 8 murals there. My favorite is the embarkation of the pilgrims as they embarked from Holland to England, and from England to this country to establish the generation in and generation out, the America we all cherish together, the America filled with diversity, that is the promise of this land"

Peace and understanding award honoree **Joy Kurland** said she met Levent almost 8 years ago and invited the IDC to be part of Bergen County Brotherhood Sisterhood Committee. Kurland said she is "truly humbled and honored being the recipient of this prestigious award," and that one of the major focuses of her career has been on "coalition and community building" and "building bridges of mutual understanding and respect."

Michele Lee of Wells Fargo thanked the IDC for the award and said she has a great deal of respect for the IDC as IDC's mission is to promote respect and mutual understanding amongst all faiths and cultures. "It is not only important in New Jersey, but everywhere in the world, we need to appreciate diversity and multiculturalism." She added that the IDC has the same focus as her company. "You can see diversity at all levels at the company. However, there was not an African American executive vice president 27 years ago to look to who looked like me."

Micheal Gabriele, editor of Catholic Advocate said that he has been inspired, over the past 6 years, by people like Levent and many others throughout New Jersey; that inspired him to pursue issues in interfaith dialog. He added, "It is my duty as an editor to make myself available and aware of various interfaith groups, doing so many wonderful things. Michael Gabriel also said that he accepted the award on behalf of his paper.

Attorney General Paula T. Dow said after she received her award that "My passion for the last 25 years has been devoted to a 6 word phrase that we repeat so often that perhaps we don't recognize the importance of these words, which are "with liberty and justice for all". I've been truly blessed to have some wonderful jobs working with phenomenal people and some of the important causes in this state and this country just focusing on those 6 words. And, I will tell you that my passion for working with those 6 words, in parts, stem back to impact on me of two great Americans from different periods who did 2 great speeches that I love and adore till this day and they are Abraham Lincoln with the Gettysburg address and Martin Luther King with the "I have a dream" speech. Messages and all that inherent in those speeches and in those 6 words were shaken to its very core 10 years ago with what happened to the world trade center at this great nation. And, we came to another crossroads, where we had a chance once again to think about America and what it means to the words "with liberty and justice for all". And, out of those ashes and out the period of time came groups just like this, Interfaith Dialog Center. It came here and brought us together. This is one of the most diverse groups of a different kind that I have ever been involved with together around these meals. I like what IDC does for us. I think that many respect what you do to bring us together is another step forth for those great words, liberty and justice for all peoples of all worlds."

Pictures from the event:



Emmickman Leonard Lopez received the award from Master of Ceremonies Asm. Jon



Michael Gabriele received the award from Dr. Dorothy Rodgers & Dr. David Benfield, Montclair



Ross Danis received the award from Dr. Charles Mitchell, Seton Hall Univ.



Ms. Kurland received the award from Rabbi Neil Berovitz



Attorney General Paula T. Dow received the award from Pros. Robert Bianchi



Master of Ceremonies Jon Brown, left, received the award from Dr. Levent Koc



Awardees Group Picture

