

**PRESS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Three Times the Celebration at Mill Neck Manor's Deaf Education Center**

The Mill Neck School's Deaf Education Center (DEC) wrapped up the school year on a triumphant note with three graduation ceremonies held during the last week of June. The DEC's elementary students celebrated their moving up to middle school on Monday, June 23. After congratulatory remarks from DEC Principal Katie Kerzner, the Moving Up Class of 2014 recited the poem "Alone" in honor of the late Dr. Maya Angelou. Before the class was awarded their Elementary School Diplomas, they took a few moments to reflect upon their elementary school years with a visual slide show.

The next day, June 24, the DEC's preschool children received their diplomas in eagerness of beginning their journey to kindergarten in their home school districts in September. The little grads, adorned in their special occasion clothes, charmed the gathering of families, friends, and Mill Neck students and staff, with a performance of several songs before accepting their diplomas.

Four accomplished high school seniors celebrated their milestone two days later, at a ceremony attended by several members of the Mill Neck Manor Board of Trustees and alumni, in addition to proud families and school staff. The class of 2014, Salman Adenwala, Daniel James Ambrose, Jordan Noelle Beasley, and Chukwuazogobi Gabriel Obi, began the program with their performance of the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem in American Sign Language.

In her welcoming remarks, Superintendent of Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf Francine Atlas Bogdanoff acknowledged the dedicated parents of Mill Neck Manor graduates, expressing her gratitude by saying, "Thank you for supporting your children, as parents you're always there for them, and will continue to be the person to support them throughout their lives."

Michelle Coelho Guerrero, a 1999 Mill Neck graduate, encouraged the graduates to build upon the foundation of support they established at Mill Neck as they pursue their future. She recounted, “I started at Mill Neck when I was 3 years old. Today I have a job, [I’m] married and have a 12 year old daughter. During my time at Mill Neck and later when I began working, I always had support. I want to remind you that at times we all need to ask for support and should. Without the help of supportive teachers and job coaches in my life, it might have been difficult to succeed. Today I feel I am successful.”

Among the several awards handed out was the Shameka Edwards Character Award in memory of Mill Neck Manor’s 2001 Valedictorian, and former teacher assistant Shameka, who passed away suddenly in 2013. The awarded recipient, Sabrina Russel, displayed all of the required criteria of being a role model to her peers; demonstrating empathy for others; and, always striving for excellence. Shameka’s family proudly observed from the audience as the award was presented by teacher Rose Madera on behalf of the Mill Neck Manor Educational Association. Madera eloquently stated, “Shameka represented Mill Neck in so many ways and in such a positive light, that an award in her name is so apropos.” She went on to say “Everything Shameka gave to Mill Neck, and everything she was, is a credit to her incredible family whom she often spoke of lovingly.”

The Mill Neck Family is proud of all the accomplishments by our little preschool scholars, our elementary students, and our seniors. Congratulations Grads! Thank you for giving us three times the celebration!

Founded in 1947 by Lutheran Friends of the Deaf, Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf opened in 1951. It is part of the Mill Neck Family of Organizations, a not-for-profit group dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people who are Deaf, or who have other special needs, through excellence in individually designed educational, vocational or spiritual programs and services. For more information, please call (516) 922-4100 / (800) 264-0662 or visit [www.millneck.org](http://www.millneck.org).

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*Photo Captions:*

1. Mill Neck Manor Class of 2014 (from left): Salman Adenwala, Jordan Noelle Beasley, Daniel James Ambrose, Chukwuazogobi Gabriel Obi.
2. Sabrina Russell (center) recipient of the Shameka Edwards Character Award pictured with members of her family, Shameka’s family, and Mill Neck Manor staff.
3. DEC Pre-K grads will head off to kindergarten in their home school districts.
4. DEC Moving Up Class of 2014 pictured with their proud families and Mill Neck Manor staff.

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