

Bloomington Youth MLK AWARD NOMINATION - 2020

First Name	Mary
Last Name	Aplington
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City	Normal
State	IL
Zip Code	61761
Phone	309/287-8644
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Is the nominee aware that you are nominating them for this award?	Yes
First Name	Gavin
Last Name	Cunningham
Address 1	2106 Parker Ave
City	Bloomington
State	IL
Zip Code	61701
Phone	3092122425
Email Address	gavinjmcunni@gmail.com
What school does the student attend?	Normal West High School
What grade is the student in?	Senior

1. What are your reasons for nominating this individual?

I am nominating Gavin because his efforts on behalf of peace, justice, and advocacy are remarkable and inspirational. He feels deeply, walks with humility, and acts with integrity. His leadership, service, and selfless engagement in efforts to make his school, community, church, state, and world a place of equity, dignity, safety, and peace have created successful movements for change and fostered healing. Guided by a strong and unwavering conscience tuned to the plight of others, Gavin displays a compulsion to act when he sees a wrong. His moral compass is unerringly aligned with justice. He is a strong, passionate, and steadfast leader whose style is one of collaboration, inclusivity, hard work, and firm commitment. His earnest and gentle nature draws others to hear his pleas and join his campaigns for equity, safety, and service. In 2017, Gavin co-founded Bloomington Normal Youth Activists, (BNYA), "A group of passionate young adults working to tackle issues in the community from a youth perspective." BNYA members, "strive to tackle issues in the community from the perspective of youth." Gavin has been the sole leader since 2018, recruiting and engaging a diverse group of students as allies. As a leader, he's partnered with and led adult cohorts, school personnel, elected officials, and faith groups. He's organized town hall meetings with candidates for office and elected officials. He's organized, led and spoken at community gatherings promoting peace, reaching out to various people and groups for inclusion in the events.

Gavin's investment in leadership and service is significant. He served on Gov. Pritzker's Youth Transition Team to discuss issues impacting youth to the new state leadership (2018-2019).

Gavin is a youth leader in his church, Normal First United Methodist, through which he attended an international Youth leadership conference in September, 2019 to discuss the future of the church. He was the youngest of the 2,000 attendees, chosen to attend for his

leadership, wisdom, investment in positive outcomes, and collaborative approach. Gavin's service to others includes the participation in six mission trips throughout the country, trips on which he responded generously, donating his time and energy to address the needs of those with fewer resources.

2. How has the nominee demonstrated commitment to improving cooperation and fostering mutual respect among people of different racial, ethnic, religion and other backgrounds

Gavin is rooted in the value of mutual respect. He displays an openness to all with a desire to truly know others, honoring each person's dignity and acting with respect. He comes from a family reflective of diversity and is strongly oriented towards such a commitment. Gavin carries empathy and compassion deeply within himself. He's participated in multiple, "Stand Up for Social Justice," rallies at the BCPA. At NWHS, he participated in Best Buddies, an organization dedicated to ending the "social, physical, and economic isolation...of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities." Inclusivity, diversity, and sensitivity are hallmarks of Gavin's approach to people and life.

As a Junior and Senior, he has been a mentor of his high school's "Freshman Mentoring Program," in which upperclass students encourage the growth of freshman. Gavin demonstrates intentional inclusivity in his leadership, maintaining an awareness of the many groups comprising the community, speaking of the need to ensure that groups represent the diversity of the community. He recently organized "Constitution Trail Clean Up": inviting participants of all ages and backgrounds to join him in a community event that resulted in the collection of 200 pounds of garbage in 2 hours.

3. How has nominee's efforts addressed discrimination, prejudice and the effects of past discrimination?

Beginning his freshman year, Gavin has been a member of Not In Our School (NIOS), a movement to create school environments that are safe and inclusive for all. In this effort, he has advocated for systemic changes where needed and alliances with members of populations negatively targeted. He is sensitive to instances of discrimination and quick to respond appropriately. His is a strong and courageous voice when identifying wrongs and promoting change.

In an October 15, 2019 public event, Gavin participated as a voice for children separated from family at the border and put in cages. He read the words of children who spoke of their experiences. After hearing these accounts of the treatment of children, Gavin, declaring that he couldn't stand idly and quietly on the sidelines, took action to increase awareness of the situation. He has recently created a group dedicated to action, including lobbying of elected officials, on the issue.

4. What recognition has the nominee received for his/her service to others?

Gavin was nominated for a 2019 YICU Award, an FBT (For a Better Tomorrow) recognition of youth who display leadership and contribute to the community.

I agree that the information provided on this nomination form is true and accurate. I also agree that if any information provided is not true the nomination will be void.

Yes
