

# PRSA-NY Recognizes PR Industry's Rising Young Talent with Presentation of Inaugural "15 Under 35" Awards at Gala Awards Luncheon

**Award Recipients Named to New Board Level Young Professionals Advisory Committee to Help Set Industry Agenda in New York Metropolitan Region**

**Keynote Address Presented by Jeff Merritt, Director of Innovation, Mayor's Office of Tech + Innovation**

NEW YORK, July 25, 2016 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Fifteen of the most promising young leaders working in communications in the New York metro area were honored on Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, with the inaugural [PRSA-NY 15 Under 35 Awards](#), presented by The New York Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA-NY). **#15toFollow #PR #PRPros**

The new industry awards recognize the most inspired and inspiring young talent, ages 35 and under, working in corporations, agencies, non-profits and academia, and representing a broad range of industries and professional backgrounds.

Following a six-week open nominations process, the recipients were chosen by a panel of distinguished industry judges as representing the "Best of the Best" in public relations practitioners with more than five years' experience in the New York City metropolitan area.

"Your nominators described you as fearless ... passionate ... innovative ... strategic ... inspirational ... compassionate ... driven ... creative ... and invaluable," said Bill Doescher, PRSA-NY president and president of The Doescher Group in his congratulatory remarks. "You are breaking ground in the communications industry. We appreciate and applaud your innovation."

Recipients of the first PRSA-NY 15 Under 35 Awards are (in alphabetical order):

- Cessie Cerrato, director, Public Relations, Palace Resorts
- Christa Conte, vice president, Hotwire PR
- Katie Creaser, vice president, Affect
- Adam Davis, vice president, Corporate Communications, IMAX Corporation
- Tori Fernandes, director, Global Media Relations & Issues Management, Nielsen
- Ariana Finlayson, senior digital engagement strategist, MMC
- Rida Bint Fozi, senior account supervisor, The TASC Group
- Bettina Garibaldi, vice president/director, Ketchum Inc.
- Kellie Jelencovich, senior account executive, MSL Group
- Soogyung Cho Jordan, global head of communications, S&P Dow Jones Indices
- Lauren Clifford Knudsen, senior vice president, J Public Relations
- Joanna Leis, senior account executive, Finn Partners
- John Puskar, vice president, Public Relations and ABC Campaign, Frontier Communications
- Justin Saia, senior director, Strategic Communications, Transactions, Crisis & Restructuring, FTI Consulting
- Shawna Gallagher Vega, APR, director of communications, Xavier High School

Each of the award recipients received a personalized plaque and a commemorative certificate for a one-year membership in PRSA and PRSA-NY. They have also been invited to join the newly created PRSA-NY Young Professionals Advisory Committee, a group that will work alongside the chapter's Board of Directors to foster networking and shape the continuous education of PR professionals in the local market.

"We are thrilled to welcome such a diverse group of rising stars into our organization," said Olga Gonzalez, PRSA-NY president-elect and CEO of Pietra PR. "Their ideas, input and leadership will help keep our industry at the cutting edge of innovation. Leadership is about sharing ideas, empowering others, showing appreciation and giving back. We are confident that members of this group will become the chapter's future leaders."

The keynote speaker for the 15 Under 35 Awards luncheon, held at Aureole in New York, was Jeff Merritt, director of innovation, Mayor's Office of Tech + Innovation. Merritt is an expert in the design and implementation of innovative civic engagement and good government programs.

The event sold out nearly immediately and will be expanded next year to accommodate broader attendance by the chapter's membership.

The 2016 luncheon was supported by a broad range of industry sponsors including: Crystal Sponsor: NAPS; Sapphire Sponsor: S&P Global; Ruby Sponsors: Crabbie's Alcoholic Ginger Beer and IMAX Corporation; Emerald Sponsors: MMC and Nielsen; and Friends of 15 Under 35 Sponsors: Doescher Group, Feintuch Communications and Germinder & Associates.

"North American Precis Syndicate is proud to be the major sponsor of this event," said Dorothy York, president of NAPS, a service that distributes public relations materials in a variety of formats to 10,000 newspapers, thousands of online publications, 6,500+ radio stations and 1,000 TV stations nationwide. "We congratulate PRSA-NY on its initiative to establish this new program honoring some of the best and brightest rising stars in the industry."

- Biographies and individual photos of the honorees can be found in [the luncheon program](#).
- Event photos can be found in an [album on the PRSA-NY Flickr page](#).
- A high-res image of all award recipients is available; the low-res image and caption can be found below.

#### **About PRSA-NY**

The Public Relations Society of America, New York City chapter is the industry go-to for knowledge and networking for communications professionals in the New York metro area. Established in 1948, PRSA-NY is one of the founding chapters of the Public Relations Society of America, the world's largest professional organization for public relations practitioners, and the third largest PRSA local chapter in the U.S. It serves the interests of public relations professionals working in business and industry, counseling firms, government, associations, hospitals, schools, professional services firms and nonprofit organizations. Chapter board and committee members are volunteer public relations professionals who work in the New York metropolitan area. For more information, please visit our website and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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