



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## Press Release

### BHS' Gonzalez recognized for Peer leadership & service

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*Bellingham High's Iliana Gonzalez, center right beside District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey, is the 2018 recipient of the Haley Cremer Do-Unto-Others Award for community service and peer leadership. She was joined on stage by her mother Marisol Gonzalez, at left, and Haley's parents Marc and Ivie, and sister Morgan.*

Bellingham High's Iliana Gonzalez was presented with a regional community service leadership award at Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey's Peer Leadership Conference during Thanksgiving week.

"We accept nominations from every high school in Norfolk County, looking to honor a student who has made exceptional contributions to her school community and her town," District Attorney Morrissey said after the Nov. 20 presentation at Gillette Stadium.

Iliana's nomination letter, sent by BHS' Student Council Advisor Sarah J. Houle, says that "she exemplifies caring selflessness and outstanding leadership in a way that makes her shine among her peers at Bellingham High School."

"In addition to her work on the school's food and toy drives at the holidays, Iliana continued that work into the spring by initiating a healthy food drive to work with the local YMCA and food pantries," Morrissey said. "She also took a lead role in Bellingham's first "Senior" Prom, an event where high school students cooked and served dinner to elderly residents at the town senior center – complete with prom photos and a king and queen."

The Haley Cremer Do-Unto-Others Award is named for a Sharon woman who lost her life to a distracted driver at age 20. Three years before that crash, Cremer had earned one of the first Norfolk County "Peer Leadership" awards for her work against bullying and distracted driving while at Sharon High School.

The 250 peer leaders attending the conference came from 20 high schools across Norfolk County; they heard stories about other teens who had done inspiring work in their school communities – including anti-bullying and no-text-and-drive campaigns – but also heard from adults who made profound mistakes in their teens.

Cory Palazzi, a former standout athlete, took the stage in the wheelchair he has used since a 2013 opiate overdose left him permanently disabled and spoke about his advocacy work, which is detailed on his web site, [www.coryscause.com](http://www.coryscause.com). Cory Scanlon spoke to a completely silent crowd about the night of teen drinking that ended with his two best friends dead in the car he was driving.

"It is important for peer leaders to recognize what is really at stake in preventing substance abuse, drunk and distracted driving, and other destructive behaviors," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Having a group of peer leaders in any school making the right choices creates space for the kids who may be more apt to follow than lead, but would be just as happy to join a group making good choices."

Information about this program, open to all public high schools in Norfolk County, can be found on the TEAM RIVAL Scoreboard located on [www.norfolkda.com](http://www.norfolkda.com).

The conference was funded by the award of a Drunk Driving Trust Fund Prevention Education and Training Grant – for the fifth consecutive year.