

Yale University Seton Elm and Ivy Awards

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Elm Awards

Carolyn Baker and Diane Petaway

Carolyn Baker and Diane Petaway, co-presidents of the Greater New Haven African American Historical Society, are a dynamic duo of community memory. With unwavering dedication and collaborative spirit, they work hand-in-hand with Yale University, particularly the Beinecke Library, to keep Black history vibrant and alive in New Haven.

As devoted volunteer leaders, Carolyn and Diane have been the driving force behind an inspiring array of community programs celebrating Black history. In recent years, they have partnered with Yale to organize and promote impactful events that engage and educate the community. Their efforts have fostered deeper connections between the university and the city, creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue and learning.

Among the events they organized are "New Haven Black History: Alive in the Archives!"—an open house at the Beinecke Library showcasing historical collections—and "New Haven, Yale, and Slavery in the Archives: Display of Original Materials," offering an insightful look into the city's complex past through original documents and maps.

Beyond their event leadership, Carolyn and Diane are powerful advocates for other Black history initiatives at Beinecke, including "Mondays at Beinecke" and its annual MLK Day Program. Their outreach has brought hundreds of community members through the library's doors, many for the first time.

In addition to their public contributions, Carolyn and Diane serve as trusted advisors to Beinecke staff, offering their knowledge and perspective as the library develops new community-focused programs. Their thoughtful feedback on the Yale and Slavery Research Project, including reviews

of the documentary film about the 1831 Black College proposal, has been instrumental in ensuring the work resonates with the community.

For their exceptional dedication to preserving and promoting Black history in New Haven in partnership with Yale University, Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli and President Maurie McInnis present Carolyn Baker and Diane Petaway with the Elm Award.

Dr. Vlad Coric

Dr. Vlad Coric exemplifies visionary leadership and a deep commitment to fostering collaboration between Yale University and the New Haven community. A local physician and biotech entrepreneur, Dr. Coric has helped transform the landscape of biomedical innovation in New Haven—and in doing so, has created remarkable opportunities for students, professionals, and neighbors alike.

As CEO of Biohaven, Dr. Coric has overseen groundbreaking work in neuroscience and migraine treatment, raising the profile of New Haven as a national hub for biotech excellence. But equally important is the way he's opened doors for others to grow and thrive. Through a transformative summer internship program at Biohaven, Dr. Coric has provided over 250 high school, college, and graduate students with hands-on experience in both science and business—offering real-world exposure and mentorship to the next generation of leaders. He has also welcomed Yale students into Biohaven for educational rotations, deepening the connection between the university's academic mission and the city's growing biotech ecosystem.

Dr. Coric's leadership extends well beyond his professional accomplishments. He serves on the boards of both The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and Yale Ventures, where he contributes his time and insight to efforts that support local innovation, education, and economic development. His work helps ensure that New Haven's growth includes broad opportunities for collaboration and community benefit.

By bridging academia, industry, and civic life with creativity and care, Dr. Coric demonstrates how entrepreneurial success can be a powerful force for shared progress. His efforts have not only advanced scientific discovery but also brought lasting benefits to students, families, and professionals across our region.

For his inspiring leadership in transforming New Haven's biotech sector, creating meaningful educational pathways for young people, and fostering a strong, enduring partnership between Yale and the city of New Haven, Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli and President Maurie McInnis present Dr. Vlad Coric with an Elm Award.

Jessica Haxhi

Jessica Haxhi, World Language Supervisor for New Haven Public Schools (NHPS), has long been a champion of connecting NHPS students with Yale's vast language and international resources. Her dedication to fostering global understanding has transformed language education in New Haven.

Recognizing the critical role that world languages play in shaping a global perspective, Jessica was instrumental in designing and implementing Yale's World Class after-school language program over a decade ago. Each year, this vibrant program offers NHPS students the opportunity to study languages such as Arabic, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Urdu, and Japanese.

Jessica has also built meaningful partnerships by training members of the Yale community to teach these language courses to High School students. Her leadership introduced the Seal of Biliteracy to NHPS, providing students with a credential that enhances college applications and career prospects. In collaboration with Yale's Center for Language Studies, she expanded this initiative to also recognize heritage speakers, ensuring that students fluent in languages like Pashto receive well-deserved acknowledgment of their bilingual abilities.

Just as Jessica is a familiar presence on the Yale campus, many Yale students and faculty are welcomed into NHPS classrooms through her efforts. From conducting workshops for language teachers to mentoring aspiring linguists, she has fostered a vibrant exchange of knowledge and culture.

For her exceptional contributions to strengthening the ties between Yale University and the New Haven community, transformative leadership in language education, and tireless advocacy for multilingualism, Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli and President Maurie McClinnis present Jessica Haxhi with an Elm Award.

Ivy Awards

Dr. Arielle Baskin-Sommers

Dr. Arielle Baskin-Sommers, a tenured professor in Yale's Department of Psychology, has combined scientific insight with compassionate action to meet a critical community need: the mental health care of individuals returning to New Haven following incarceration.

Recognizing a major gap in services—Dr. Baskin-Sommers partnered with the New Haven Transitions Clinic, which offers primary care to formerly incarcerated individuals living with chronic health conditions and substance use disorders. In 2019, she launched a pro bono mental health initiative within the clinic, creating a truly integrated care model tailored to this vulnerable population.

What makes this effort even more remarkable is Dr. Baskin-Sommers' unwavering personal commitment. Despite leading two research labs, teaching a large undergraduate course, and serving as Head of College, she dedicates substantial time to direct patient care. Dr. Baskin-Sommers exemplifies the best of Yale's engagement with New Haven.

For her visionary leadership, her tireless advocacy, and her dedication to advancing health equity, President Maurie McInnis and Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli present Dr. Arielle Baskin-Sommers with an Ivy Award.

Dr. Anjelica Gonzalez

Dr. Anjelica Gonzalez is a powerful force for connection between Yale and New Haven—an educator, scientist, and entrepreneur who brings her expertise out of the lab and into classrooms, community centers, and public forums across the city.

Dr. Gonzalez is deeply committed to making science accessible and relevant across the New Haven community. She has delivered public talks in local schools, including Career High School, and frequently participates in Yale Pathways to Science and Yale Science Saturdays—programs that invite New Haven students and families to engage directly with Yale scientists. She is also one of a small number of faculty repeatedly invited to teach in the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, helping public school teachers bring cutting-edge science into their K–12 classrooms.

Dr. Gonzalez’s work in medical technology—including the invention of PremieBreathe, a low-cost respirator for prematurely born infants designed for use in low-resource settings—has earned international recognition. Yet she remains deeply rooted in New Haven, where her efforts continue to inspire local students and educators. Her recent recognition by the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce as an Industry Superstar speaks to her impact as a local leader in life sciences and education.

For her dedication to making science accessible, for her lasting partnerships with New Haven educators and students, and for her commitment to inclusive innovation, President Maurie McInnis and Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli present Dr. Anjelica Gonzalez with an Ivy Award.

Professor Jordan Peccia

Professor Jordan Peccia has long been driven by a deep belief that environmental research should serve human health—and his work reflects a deep commitment to using science in service to the New Haven community.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Professor Peccia quickly mobilized his lab's expertise to support the city's public health response. Just days after New Haven's first confirmed case in March 2020, he launched the Yale COVID-19 Wastewater Monitoring Project—a groundbreaking early warning system that tracks virus levels in wastewater. This innovative approach allowed health officials to detect outbreaks well before traditional case data became available, offering a crucial head start in protecting public health.

From the start, Professor Peccia partnered closely with the City of New Haven and the Water Pollution Control Authority, building a strong network of collaboration that soon expanded to include Yale New Haven Hospital, the New Haven Health Department, and the Connecticut Department of Health. His lab's real-time data became a vital tool for local decision-makers and remains a public resource to this day.

As of January 2025, his team marked 1,749 consecutive days of monitoring infectious diseases in New Haven wastewater. Even as federal and state case tracking has wound down, Jordan's lab continues to provide free, high-quality surveillance data to city officials and residents.

In addition to COVID-19, Professor Peccia's team now monitors local outbreaks of influenza, RSV, and norovirus. They also played a key role in tracking the 2022 mpox outbreak and recently launched surveillance for H5N1 bird flu. These efforts—funded through Yale support, grants, and private philanthropy—have all been made available to the city at no cost.

For his visionary leadership, his trusted partnerships with local public health institutions, and his commitment to scientific service for the common good, President Maurie McInnis and Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli present Professor Jordan Peccia with an Ivy Award.

Yale University Undergraduate Ivy Award

Kaylen Yun

Kaylen Yun, a junior at Yale College majoring in Global Affairs and Economics, exemplifies a deep commitment to bridging Yale and New Haven. A proud graduate of New Haven Public Schools, Kaylen is passionate about expanding access to educational resources and fostering meaningful partnerships between the university and the city she calls home.

Kaylen's dedication shines through her leadership in Dwight Hall's Public School Intern (PSI) Program, where she began as an intern at Elm City Montessori School and now serves as the program's student director. In collaboration with Yale's Office of New Haven Affairs, the PSI Program places Yale students in New Haven public schools for two-year terms. Through this immersive experience, PSIs contribute by providing direct support to teachers, students, and administrators, while helping their partner schools access the vast resources Yale has to offer. Under Kaylen's guidance, the program has continued to strengthen its impact, cultivating long-term relationships that benefit both Yale students and the New Haven community.

Beyond her work with PSI, Kaylen serves as Co-President of the Migration Alliance at Yale, a student organization dedicated to supporting migrants, including refugees, documented and undocumented immigrants, and asylum seekers, as they navigate the challenges of resettlement in New Haven. Her advocacy reflects a heartfelt commitment to ensuring that all members of the community feel welcome and supported.

A true daughter of both Yale and New Haven, Kaylen Yun's unwavering dedication to service, leadership, and community-building has left an indelible mark. Her work embodies the spirit of partnership and mutual growth, inspiring others to continue fostering the connection between the university and the city we call home.

For her dedication to educational equity, her leadership in strengthening ties between Yale and the New Haven community, and her compassionate advocacy for migrants, President Maurie McInnis and Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli present Kaylen Yun with an Ivy Award.

Yale University Graduate Student Ivy Award

Ryan Sutherland

Ryan Sutherland exemplifies the power of student leadership to foster meaningful partnerships between Yale and the New Haven community. As a student at the Yale School of Public Health and now the School of Medicine, Ryan has dedicated his academic and volunteer efforts to advancing health equity for New Haven's most underserved residents, including individuals who are unhoused, undocumented, or uninsured.

Throughout his time at Yale, Ryan has led and collaborated on numerous initiatives that directly benefit the New Haven community. As a coordinator for the Neighborhood Health Project (NHP)—a student-run clinic offering health screenings and referrals—Ryan has helped connect hundreds of New Haven residents to critical health services. Under his leadership, NHP hosted its most successful fundraiser to date, raising over \$5,000 for clinical supplies. He also helped create the inaugural Health and Wellness Village at New Haven Pride, a collaborative effort that brought together local organizations to promote community health and well-being.

Ryan's work with the HAVEN Free Clinic and as a founder of the Community Health Pantry initiative further reflects his commitment to addressing social determinants of health in partnership with community members. Through these programs, he has helped expand access to essential health and hygiene supplies while mobilizing Yale students to engage in service grounded in respect, trust, and collaboration.

As Executive Director of the New Haven PAUSE Project, Ryan leads the only local organization dedicated to providing shoes, socks, and hygiene kits to individuals experiencing homelessness. What began as a small effort has grown into a citywide initiative, collecting more than \$120,000 in donated goods, including over 10,000 pairs of socks and 2,000 pairs of shoes. PAUSE now partners with local health professionals to provide direct foot care and has collaborated with Macy's to distribute over 400 new winter coats.

For his outstanding leadership in strengthening Yale–New Haven partnerships and advancing community health, Economic Development Administrator Michael Piscitelli and President Maurie McInnis present Ryan Sutherland with a Graduate Student Ivy Award.