



NEWS

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Philanthropist Eugene M. Lang Named "Citizen of the Year" by National Conference on Citizenship

*Founder of I Have a Dream Foundation and Project Pericles
to be Honored by Leading Advocate of Civic Engagement*

WASHINGTON -- The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) will recognize philanthropist and industrialist Eugene Lang as Citizen of the Year at its annual conference on Monday, September 22, 2008 at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

NCoC Chairman Michael Weiser said that the "Joseph H. Kanter Citizen of The Year Award" is being presented to Lang to honor his lifelong commitment to civic participation.

"Eugene Lang is a shining example of what an individual citizen can do to strengthen our country," Weiser said. "The son of immigrant parents who came of age during the Great Depression, he became an extraordinarily successful businessman – and he shared much of his success by ensuring that countless others were given an opportunity to succeed."

Born in New York City, Lang left the Harlem school he attended by winning a scholarship to Swarthmore College, from which he was graduated at 19 years of age. He subsequently earned an MBA from Columbia University and studied mechanical engineering at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.

His grasp of the manufacturing process and its financial workings quickly made him a leader in the technology transfer field. Because of his insights into foreign trade, he was made a consultant to the Departments of State and Commerce, and served on trade and investment missions throughout the world.

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In 1981, Lang created the now nationwide "I Have a Dream" Program that, with its sustained personal mentoring program, has guided many thousands of lower income students through their K-12 years with an assured college opportunity after high school graduation. More recently, he founded *Project Pericles*, which encourages colleges and universities to teach social responsibility and participatory citizenship and is now an active part of more than 20 colleges. He has generously supported higher education, including contributions to Columbia University, which houses the Eugene M. Lang Center for Entrepreneurship, Swarthmore and the Eugene Lang College at New York's New School.

In 1996, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton. In 1990, he was designated a "Point of Light" by President George H.W. Bush.

The presentation of the Joseph H. Kanter Citizen of The Year Award will be part of a day-long conference of civic leaders.

Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States (retired) Sandra Day O'Connor will keynote this year's conference, which will focus on the subject of citizen participation "Beyond the Vote." Also speaking at the conference will be William Galston of the Brookings Institution, Sean Parker, founding president of Facebook and Napster, political consultant Joe Trippi, and *Time* columnist Joe Klein. Klein will moderate an intergenerational panel on civic engagement and action, featuring executives from AARP, Be the Change, Common Cause, and MTV.

The NCoC also will release the 2008 Civic Health Index at the conference. The Index is the definitive statistical report on the health of civic engagement in the United States, and is used by national civic leadership to track and analyze their efforts.

The National Conference on Citizenship is the nation's leading advocate for civic participation and the only organization in the country chartered by Congress to do this work. NCoC is non-profit and non-partisan. Its research, educational programs and outreach to public policy leaders foster a more active and engaged citizenry.

Among its other activities, NCoC is mandated by Congress to convene an annual conference on civic participation that is attended by several hundred foundation executives, corporate executives, policy-makers and non-profits concerned with the quality of national and community service, American history and civics education and engagement in the political process -- NCoC's core areas of interest.

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