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ONLY ON CLIFFVIEW PILOT: A young girl who tried to help restore another’s sight, a career public servant who coordinates life-saving operations for kids throughout the world and a highly respected career cop who helped raise the profile of the National Police Defense Foundation were among those honored by the NPDF at its annual awards dinner last night.



Honoree John Hickey (middle left) with NPDF Executive Director Joe Occhipinti

ALL PHOTOS: [JOSEPH CONWAY](#)
(NPDF Delegate/Photographer)

Tears, cheers and applause accompanied the tales of heroism, sacrifice and volunteerism by the honorees – among them, John A. DePrima, who heads the NPDF’s Operation Kids program

and is solely responsible for coordinating life-saving surgeries in the U.S. for children who can’t get them in their own countries.

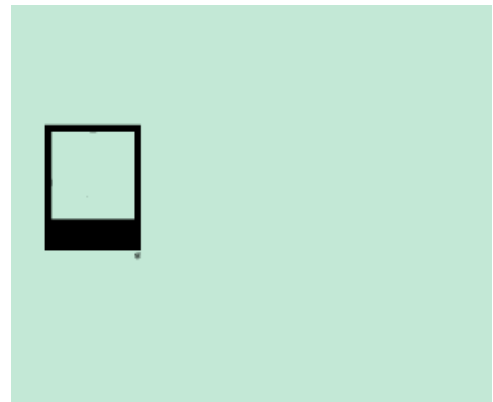
Operation Kids was the main theme of the evening, which included a special

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award given to 12-year-old **Lillian Pravda**.

Pravda created the Vision For and From Children Foundation after cataract surgery restored sight to her left eye. Her group has helped thousands of youngsters and their parents through visits and gifts aimed at reassuring everyone involved that everything, as Lillian says, "will be just fine."

Lillian also helped arrange for an operation intended to help restore sight to 16-year-old Gladys Marivel Pomavilla Loja of Ecuador, who was blinded after her 9-year-old brother accidentally shot her in the back of her head.



NPDF Executive Director Joe Occhipinti went to the Andes Mountains in Ecuador and brought Gladys and her father to the states, but doctors here said her



Lillian Pravda with Occhipinti;
BOTTOM: Scholarship winners

condition is currently irreparable. However, surgeons said she could be a candidate for cornea transplants in a few years.

The foundation gave it Lifetime Achievement Award to retired NYPD Detective **John M. Hickey**, who served as the NPDF's vice president for 15 years. Hickey worked homicide – and was instrumental in solving the murders of Police Officers Chris Hoban and Mike Buczek, pursuing the killers internationally.

"His diligence and commitment to duty were recognized with many awards for valor and meritorious police duty," the NPDF said. "He performed selfless humanitarian acts for the welfare of his fellow law enforcement community and has been a strong advocate for the NPDF Operation Kids and Safe Cop programs."

LEFT: John DePrima, RIGHT: Jon Adler

Also honored during the event, which drew more





than 600 people to Russo's on the Bay in Queens, was ATF Special Agent **John Capuano**, whose family accepted the award and a

“Line of Duty” benefit from the foundation.

The NPDF this past year expanded its membership to more than 275,000 members and supporters nationwide and in a dozen foreign countries. It represents the interests of federal agents, state troopers, police chiefs, peace officers, firefighters and EMS personnel.

Fulfilling its founding purpose, the NPDF helped secure the dismissal of an indictment against Bound Brook Police Chief Kenneth Henderson after he reported housing discrimination in town.

The foundation also continued its “Safe Cop” program, which posts rewards for the arrests and convictions of cop killers.

Guests of honor at the NPDF dinner last night included its 2012 scholarship recipients (pictured):

Jacqueline A Conway

St. Francis College

Stephanie Matousek

Morrisville State College

Michael A. Soldano

Stony Brook University

Nicole Milstein

TBD

Megan Fielding

Monmouth University

Eleanor F Abraham

Fashion Institute Of Technology

David C. Shafer, the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of the FBI's New York City office, was recognized as the NPDF's Person of the Year.

John Adler, president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, got its President's Award.

Brian Thompson, an NBC News correspondent based in Fort Lee, received the Excellence in Media Award.



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