

Jeffrey Balek Awarded Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award

July 29, 2016 – The Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award was recently awarded to Jeffrey Balek, a volunteer at Y Readers, the YMCA of Greater Charlotte’s literacy program for students in grades K-3 who are reading below grade level.

Jeffrey, who was born blind, has been teaching kids to read through the program at Nations Ford Elementary since 2013. He uses specially made braille books that allow him to read as the children follow along the written words in their books. His work as a volunteer has garnered national and state-wide attention for the program, including coverage in People magazine and “The Dr. Oz Show,” as well as being honored by Gov. Pat McCrory for his service.

“It’s a great honor to receive the Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award,” Jeffrey said. “Children who don’t learn to read well early tend to struggle in school and later in life. I’m glad to be a part of this important program and couldn’t do my volunteer work without the people at the Harris YMCA. I thank Foundation For The Carolinas and Dr. Jamgotch for their support of volunteers and programs like ours.”

The Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award is presented annually to an individual or group that demonstrates exceptional service to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community. Named for the retired UNC Charlotte professor who established the program, the Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award is facilitated by Foundation For The Carolinas. Previous award winners include Thereasea Elder, a public health pioneer who was among the first to integrate health care in our region, and Ric Elias, CEO of Red Ventures and an advocate for education opportunities for undocumented youth.

In the words of Professor Jamgotch, “to be creative means to uncover something new; or to synthesize seemingly unrelated experiences in a fresh and inspiring way; or to provide a foundation for future intellectual and scientific breakthrough that can truly make a difference” and it is in this spirit that the annual award should be made.

The award includes a \$6,000 cash gift, which was presented at a ceremony at the Harris YMCA on July 29.

About Foundation For The Carolinas

Foundation For The Carolinas is a nonprofit community foundation serving donors and a broad range of charitable purposes in North and South Carolina. With assets of more than \$1.7 billion, the foundation encourages and makes possible philanthropic giving by individuals of all means to benefit their communities. Visit www.ffc.org.

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