

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
#21-17

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HONORS COMMUNITY EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS WHO WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND IN 2016**

On Wednesday, April 26th, in celebration of National Volunteer Week, the New York City Emergency Management Department honored 40 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who volunteered over 100 hours of service in 2016 with both presidential and mayoral volunteer service awards. CERT members are dedicated volunteers who help to prepare their neighbors and communities for different types of disasters.

“Whether it’s organizing events to prepare their neighbors for emergencies, assisting during large community events, or responding to emergency events throughout the five boroughs, CERT volunteers are an invaluable resource for their neighborhoods,” **said NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “Those being honored today are the best of the best, individuals who time and again go above and beyond to serve their communities.”

Khalil Abdul-Wahhab, Team Chief for the Bronx 10 COOP City CERT team, logged the most hours of any of his CERT colleagues at Wednesday’s event. Abdul-Wahhab completed 1000 hours of service as a CERT volunteer in 2016.

“COOP City, if it was truly a municipality, would be somewhere around the 11th or 12th largest city in the state. There’s about 60,000 people living there, there’s 35 high-rises and about 245 townhouses, all on 320 acres of land. The same problems that occur in New York City occur within COOP City,” Abdul-Wahhab said. “CERT is important for the entire City of New York, period. Preparation helps always and it is better to be prepared in advance rather than trying to scramble to get things in place after something does occur.”

In addition to organizing dozens of outreach events and personally giving presentations throughout his community and New York City, Khalil has personally fostered a growing relationship with COOP City Police Department (CCPD).

“Working with CCPD is akin in many ways to trying to work with the NYPD. That’s been a challenge that was both accepted by CCPD and Bronx 10 CERT, as we try and find more and better ways of working together for the benefit of the community,” Khalil Abdul-Wahhab said. “The CERT program and CERT members help their communities by teaching, showing, and giving presentations, to help them be prepared for these incidents and emergencies. It helps communities and therefore the City be more resilient in times of emergencies and disasters. I’m proud to be part of that.”

Four COOP City members and a total of nine Bronx CERT members were recognized for their service at Wednesday’s first annual event in recognition of volunteers who go above and beyond in serving their communities.

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. There are currently more than 1,300 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement

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CAPTIONS:

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Bronx Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who served over 100 hours in 2016. *From left:* Roy Lester, Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, Kenton Vanzandt, Khalil Abdul-Wahhab, Brenda Francis, Wali Abdun-Noor, Commissioner Joseph Esposito; *Front:* Joseph Loya, Dave Laguer.

Khalil 1_ Khalil Abdul-Wahhab (*center*) with fellow CERT members William Vitale (*left*) and Dave Laguer(*right*).

Kahlil 2_ Khalil Abdul-Wahhab (*right*) will fellow CERT member Eric Hebert.

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