

# Hudson Valley Press Online

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## Six to Receive Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal

**HYDE PARK** - The Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal Awards recognize and honor individuals and organizations that reflect the ideals of the former first lady and human rights advocate.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill will present the 2014 awards on Sunday, Oct. 19, at a ceremony and luncheon at the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, where Mrs. Roosevelt lived after the death of her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Leymah Gbowee

The award is given annually to those who have made significant contributions in areas that were the focus of the work of Mrs. Roosevelt's life such as education, advocacy, social justice, public service and human rights. This year's ceremony is also a celebration of the 130th anniversary of her birthday.

The 2014 honorees are:

- Diana Nyad, champion athlete, journalist and humanitarian. Nyad's own words are an example of the similarity between her and Mrs. Roosevelt when it comes to living a life that is meaningful and impactful to oneself and others: "We should never ever give up."
- Geraldine Laybourne, change agent, advocate for women's leadership and serial entrepreneur in media and technology. Like Mrs. Roosevelt, she is committed to helping the women of the world as evidenced by her "Global Mentor's Walk," a national program for shaping the next generation of leaders.
- Nobel Laureate Lehmah Gobowee, Liberian peace activist and advocate for women and girls. Gobowee was selected for her stellar contributions as a transformational change agent for peace.
- Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of The Nation. Like Mrs. Roosevelt, she is an exemplary leader and advocate for human rights and social justice throughout the world.
- Ambassador William J. vanden Heuvel, founder and chairman emeritus of the Four Freedoms Park Conservancy Inc., and former U.S. ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations. In his distinguished career, he has tirelessly given of his time, talent and treasure to carry out Mr. Roosevelt's ideals of social justice, human rights and collaboration among nations.

- Astor Services for Children & Families, a Rhinebeck-based nonprofit that champions and advocates for empowering healthy children and families. Astor lives up to the promise of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family ..."

"This is our opportunity to honor those who bring to life the values of Mrs. Roosevelt's legacy," said Chris Roellke, ERVK board chairman and dean of the college at Vassar. "This year's medalists come from all walks of life and are role models for the global community."

This honor, in the name of Eleanor Roosevelt, who taught us to lead bold, impassioned lives, touches me deeply," Nyad said. "I keep one of the myriad of Eleanor Roosevelt quotes on my desk: 'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.' I shall stand mighty tall next to the other inspiring individuals as we receive this year's Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal Award."

"On behalf of the children, board and staff of Astor, we are honored to be the recipient of the 2014 Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal Award along with the other distinguished award recipients. We feel privileged to do the work we do on behalf of vulnerable children and families, carrying on Eleanor Roosevelt's life's work to educate and care for the well-being of children and families and to ensure that all children have a childhood," said Jim McGuirk, executive director/CEO, Astor Services for Children & Families.

In addition to honoring the recipients, the awards ceremony will raise funds to support the Eleanor Roosevelt Leadership and Human Rights Legacy programs at the center, including Girls' Leadership Worldwide, which empowers girls to be principled leaders and catalysts for creating sustainable change; Eleanor Roosevelt Emerging Leaders Program for community college students and other initiatives.

The center's founders were instrumental in having Val-Kill declared a national historic site. Today, the center inspires and empowers individuals and organizations to use their time, talent and resources to build a just and sustainable world, both close to home and abroad.