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Sunday, March 24, 2024 \$3.00 FACEBOOK.COM/LOWELLSUN TWITTER.COM/LOWELLNEWS

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DEVELOPMENT

There's a lot to LINC about Lowell

UMass Lowell, city partner on Lowell Innovation Network Corridor

By Melanie Gilbert mgilbert@lowellsun.com

LOWELL » UMass Lowell Chancellor Julie Chen unveiled a multi-million-dollar development plan that leverages the prestige and innovation of the university and the resources and history of the city of Lowell with the job creation capabilities of industry to envision a

vibrant urban village/main street model and economic engine for the city.

“We believe the Lowell Innovation Network Corridor or Lowell Inc or LINC, is going to transform Lowell in its economic development,” Chen said in a Zoom meeting on Thursday that was attended by City Manager Tom Golden.

Formerly known as the East Campus project, Chen said the geographical boundaries of the project expanded to grow the vision. Although the initial four proposed buildings will be located in the East Campus setting, LINC envisions a corridor that stretches from LeLacheur Park on the Merrimack River

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A schematic of the three-phased Lowell Innovation Network Corridor industry co-location and professional housing plan that UMass Lowell is developing in partnership with the city of Lowell and other stakeholders.

COURTESY UMASS LOWELL

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER LOWELL

2024 YOUTH OF THE YEAR CELEBRATED



PETER CURRIER — LOWELL SUN

From left: Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell 2024 Youth of the Year finalists Alix Huynh, 17, Jayden Stella, 16, Isaiah Mwesige, 17, and winner Maureen Onyeneho, 17, at the award ceremony March 21, 2024 at Lenzi's Catering and Function Facility in Dracut.

By Peter Currier pcurrier@lowellsun.com

DRACUT » The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell held its 2024 Youth of the Year Award ceremony Thursday evening and Lowell High School senior Maureen Onyeneho, 17, was declared this year's winner.

Boys & Girls Club Executive Director Joe Hungler noted at the start of the ceremony, held at Lenzi's, that it was the sixth anniversary of the death of Bill Gilmore, the longtime athletic manager for the club. Hungler said Gilmore absolutely loved these kinds of nights, and celebrating local youth.

“I'm not doing a moment of silence, because that wasn't Bill's way. One of my fondest memories of Bill is him pounding his chest and bragging about our teens, and celebrating them,” said Hungler. “He would make sure, sometimes it was to their face to make sure they had the confidence to build themselves up, but more often it was making sure everybody within earshot knew that this teen can do awesome things.”

Onyeneho was one of four finalists for the award going into the ceremony Thursday. The others were Lowell High School juniors Isaiah Mwesige, 17, and Jayden Stella, 16, and Greater Lowell Technical High School



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The Greater Lowell Boys & Girls Club's 2024 Youth of the Year winner Maureen Onyeneho, center, smiles as the audience erupts in applause when the judges announced her as the winner March 21, 2024.

senior Alix Huynh, 17. The award was decided by a panel of four judges, consisting of Ajita Bhat, Neyder Fernandez, Somong Ratanayong and Head Judge Cherrice Lattimore.

Each of the four finalists had Boys & Girls Club staff members speak about them and why they were nominated. For Onyeneho,

that staff member was Sophie Pegba, who said Onyeneho was “a wonderful young leader.”

“She possesses a spark of greatness, determination and drive that sets her apart from her peers. She has grown and flourished into an incredible young lady today,” said Pegba. “Maureen, you are an inspira-

tion to the youth. Continue to do good, and I promise you, you will have all the blessings you deserve.”

Before she was announced as the winner, Onyeneho said that when she first joined the Boys & Girls Club, she did not know what to make of it, and at first

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SCAMS

2 convicted of investment fraud schemes

Reinhart, Rodriguez defrauded victims of \$169K, other property

By Aaron Curtis acurtis@lowellsun.com

WOBURN » A more than decade-old case concluded in Middlesex Superior Court last month with the conviction of two people, including a Wilmington native, who defrauded multiple victims of roughly \$169,000 and other property in connection with a string of investment scams.

Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan said in a press release on Thursday that Robert Ross Reinhart and Clarissa Rodriguez will spend time in prison due to the string of schemes they carried out from 2007 through 2013.

According to Ryan, Reinhart, a native of Wilmington, and Rodriguez, of Arlington, “presented themselves as financially savvy, sophisticated, experienced and very successful people” able to provide investment advice and assistance to others on various projects. The projects included plans to develop property and to promote and market inventions. Rodriguez and Reinhart “failed to deliver, and instead left the victims bereft of their assets,” Ryan said.

Some of the scams included:

- Charging two investors \$55,000 for marketing advice and product research for two separate products that were never delivered.

- Convincing a woman to drain the bank accounts she shared with her husband and held for her 13-year-old daughter so Reinhart could invest the cash. Reinhart convinced the victim to obtain more cash for him to invest by refinancing her paid-off automobile. The money was never actually invested. Reinhart and Rodriguez additionally stole the woman's wedding jewelry under the guise of having it appraised and safeguarded. Reinhart then pawned the jewelry for \$125.

- Reinhart solicited donations to support a bogus organization, titled “Missing Persons Bureau, Special Investigations Unit,” alleged to have been doing business in Washington, D.C. The unit would supposedly attempt to solve the 1977 disappearance of a 14-year-old girl from Townsend, Deborah Ann Quimby. During the scheme, Reinhart solicited a contribution from the mother of the missing girl and attempted to convince the town to pay over \$11,000 in phone expenses for his fake investigation.

Ryan's office stated that in October 2013, a branch manager of Citizens Bank in Wilmington contacted police to report his belief that a customer was the victim

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2024 Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell Youth of the Year nominee Jorge DeJesus, 16, was named the winner of the inaugural Club Leadership Award during the Youth of the Year ceremony March 21, 2024.



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From left: Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell 2024 Youth of the Year judges Ajita Bhat and Neyder Fernandez, 2024 Youth of the Year winner Maureen Onyeneho and judge Somong Rattanyong March 21, 2024 as Bhat hands the award to Onyeneho.

Youth

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she felt out of place.

"I didn't know how to play four square, I didn't know how to play mancala and I didn't know how to make origami," said Onyeneho. "Being in a space with so many people was daunting. Despite my desire to participate in these activities, I was still frightened by the fear of rejection."

She said she was able to get over these fears after meeting a staff member she referred to as "Billy G" — the aforementioned Gilmore.

"Billy had a bright spirit. He constantly encouraged me to meet new people by enrolling me in different programs at the club, such as the girls' fitness program. Through the programs, Billy taught me the power of perseverance," said Onyeneho. "Despite one's shortcomings, it is important to always remember to be tenacious. A person's ability to achieve something relies on the effort they are willing to put in."

Onyeneho grew into

being a youth leader with the club.

After being announced as the winner, Onyeneho said she felt honored.

"I am thankful for all of the Boys & Girls Club staff who pushed me to apply ... even though I was scared because now my picture goes up on the wall," the 2024 Youth of the Year said to laughter from the crowd. "Most importantly I am proud to be seen as a leader in my community, and I hope I can continue to inspire everyone here."

Hungler said after Onyeneho was declared the winner that these nights are "bittersweet" because while the club wants to honor the winner, they don't want it to be lost on anybody that the other finalists accomplished something great as well. He said that all four finalists would get a college scholarship — \$1,000 for Onyeneho and \$500 each for Huynh, Stella and Mwesige.

"We all think you're a big deal," said Hungler.

The final four contestants had been narrowed down from seven nominees, which also included Greater Lowell Tech senior Kevin Tuon, 17, and



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Finalists for the 2024 Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell Youth of the Year Award wait anxiously for the judges to announce the winner at the March 21, 2024 ceremony at Lenzi's Catering and Function Facility in Dracut. Finalist Isaiha Mwesige, right, seems to correctly predict the winner as he points across the table to Maureen Onyeneho, who was announced as the winner seconds later.

juniors Jorge DeJesus, 16, and Nana Donkor, 17. While DeJesus did not make it to the final round,

the judges panel decided to recognize him with the first-ever Club Leadership Award.

"When your peers are speaking about you within their essays and

within their interviews in this interview process where you are competing against one another, that is remarkable when someone can say you made them feel welcomed, you

made them feel good and was the essence of what the Boys & Girls Club is all about," said Lattimore before announcing DeJesus as the leadership award winner.

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