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Attitudes In Reverse® Honors Neelima Mahapatra and West Windsor Gives Back as *Partners in Hope*

PRINCETON, NJ, October 2, 2025 – In addition to being residents of West Windsor, NJ, Neelima Mahapatra, Councilwoman Sonia Gawas and West Windsor Lions Club member Rachna Sharma have in common their connections with and support for Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR®), a Princeton-based nonprofit dedicated to saving lives through mental health and suicide prevention education. Mahapatra and West Windsor Gives Back (WWGB), of which Gawas and Sharma are members, will be honored as *Partners in Hope Award* during AIR's 9th Annual Taste of Hope event on October 8, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal, Princeton, NJ.

Neelima Mahapatra

"I had a brush with deep depression about six years ago. I experienced firsthand how an understanding support network of doctors, counselors, family and friends was crucial to the recovery journey," shared Mahapatra, who is the Founder of AmileenScapes, which creates live succulent container gardens. "I learned about AIR about three years ago when I stumbled upon a Facebook post about Trish visiting schools with dogs. Being a dog lover, I wanted to know how I could volunteer. The fantastic work that Trish does in de-stigmatizing mental health issues and in suicide prevention resonated at a deeper level with me. I could not have chosen a worthier organization to associate myself with," she added.

"This award means the world to me. I am humbled to be receiving it. It inspires and motivates me to align myself more with AIR's mission and to do more in the area of mental health awareness amongst our children and youth," Mahapatra said.

"We are fortunate to have developed friendships with many special people like Neelima who share our compassion and determination to help prevent youth and their families from experiencing tragedies that we have had," said AIR Co-Founders Tricia and Kurt Baker.

West Windsor Gives Back (WWGB)

"As an individual who has dealt with depression after losing my first husband to 9/11, I can tell firsthand how important it is to have open discussions about one's feelings," Gawas shared. "I first met Trish a few years ago at West Windsor's National Night Out. I'm a dog lover myself so when I

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saw Trish's table with dogs, I had to go and talk to her, and I am so glad I did, and I was delighted to work closely with Trish last year through WWGB, which selected AIR as the special honoree.”

“Mental health is very important and is overlooked many times due to social bindings. I am grateful to play a small part in bringing light to such an important topic,” Gawas added.

"AIR is teaching students to not suffer in silence and that asking for help does not mean you're weak. It's actually a kind of strength," Sharma said. "I am proud to stand with AIR and help in any way I can."

“We are so grateful for the support that WWGB has given to AIR. Their contributions are enabling us to educate more youth in our local community and helping us to save many more students’ lives,” the Bakers said.

The WWGB team also includes Mara Pugliese, Jyotika Bahree, Uta Steinhauser, Suprana Mahableshwarkar, Arundhati Bhosle and Kristy Kyriakopulos.

Awards to Be Presented at 9th Annual Taste of Hope Event Oct. 8, 2025

Mahapatra and WWGB will be honored along with fellow *Partner in Hope* Brenda Pfau, a teacher in the Hopewell Valley Regional School District, and *Champions of Hope* Radwa Saad, DMD, a nationally recognized cosmetic and implant dentist at Dent Blanche Dental, and Joe Papa, Founder and CEO of Truversity.

AIR is most appreciative of the Taste of Hope event sponsors Summit Dental Partners; Dr. Dayna Zoller; Szaferman Lakind Attorneys at Law; Stark & Stark Attorneys at Law; Philadelphia Insurance Companies; Leary, Bride, Mergner & Bongiovanni P.A. Attorneys at Law; Ocean First Bank; Princeton Brain & Spine; Renzi Legal Resources; and Hinkle, Prior & Fischer Attorneys at Law; J. Robert Bratman; Sasha’s Sitters; Hofing Management; BeTheLi9ht Foundation; Dr. Nirav Shah; Torrieri Contracting, LLC; Champagne Law Group, LLC; Mike & Paula Mumola; Best Version Media and *Princeton Living Magazine*; Moore Engineering Services, Certified Wealth Management; 20 Paws; Robert Wood Johnson; and String Theory Schools.

AIR is equally grateful for the participating restaurants and dessert, wine and spirit vendors: A&A Distributors, ABC Indian Grill, Amalfi’s Kitchen & Bar, Anna Mae’s Catering, Black Pearl, Bonfish Grill, Buy Rite Wines & Spirits, Carella's Chocolates, Iron & Ivy at Princeton Marriott, McCaffrey’s, Outback Steakhouse, PF Chang's, My Pink Little Cake, Public Wine, Beer & Spirits, Texas Roadhouse, Railroad Distillery, Seasons 52 and Starbucks.

To register to attend the Taste of Hope event or make a donation, please visit <https://toh.ngo/>.

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Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR®) was established by Tricia, Kurt and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, NJ, in 2010, soon after their son/brother Kenny died by suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Since January 2011, they have presented to more than 250,000 students in elementary, middle and high schools and colleges in New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Missouri, Texas and Arizona. AIR also offers the AIR Dogs: Paws for MindsSM program, bringing dogs into schools to help students de-stress and engage in the conversation about mental health. In addition, AIR trains and certifies Emotional Support Animals and offers a lunch-and-learn program for businesses. For more information about AIR, please visit www.air.ngo or call 609-945-3200.

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