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YMCA OF GREATER LOUISVILLE SELECTS
2014 YOUTH CHARACTER AWARD HONOREES

Louisville, KY (October 30, 2014) -- Mayor Greg Fischer and YMCA of Greater Louisville CEO Steve Tarver last week presented the 2014 Youth Character Awards to 11 outstanding youth from the Louisville area.

The recipients of the Youth Character awards were selected because they exemplify the Y’s commitment to strengthening our community and embody the Y’s core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. The honorees were not only winners of academic and sports awards, but were extraordinary volunteers and school leaders.

The award, for teens ages 13 through 17, comes with a $1,500 scholarship. Here is a short profile of the winners:

Kelan Belton, 17, Louisville Male High School

Kelan works to strengthen community through his service and ingenuity. He is a member of YMCA Black Achievers, leading the choir and serving on the Teen Senate. He tutors at the Boys & Girls Club, serves as Youth Leader at his church and helped form an organization called “Silent Angels” – providing mentoring to youth with drug problems. Kelan also worked for City Metro last summer and was awarded outstanding student and youth instructor of the year. He is an excellent student and was awarded a trip to the national Aerospace Academy. He attended a law academy in Washington, DC and participated in a mock trial before the U.S. Supreme Court. Kelan is an incredibly caring and inspirational leader.

((MORE))
Noah Burke, 16, DuPont Manual High School

Noah started volunteering at the Southeast Family YMCA four years ago and went from stuffing new member packets, to the Leaders Club, then Club President in just a year. He has completed the YMCA Blue Ridge Leaders School and served as a Team Captain in the Southeast Y’s Annual Campaign. He is active in his church youth group and has been on several mission trips. He has volunteered with Samaritan’s Purse to help with Operation Christmas Child, Brightside, and has helped with food drives through the Southeast Area Ministries. He is also an Eagle Scout, Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, an honor student and is on the varsity wrestling team. Noah has tremendous character and spends most of his spare time giving back to others.

Tuong Dinh, 17, Iroquois High School

Tuong has served as an assistant to her teacher for four years, where her diligence and personality were put to use making new students feel comfortable. She volunteers for Dare to Care, Americana Community Center and donates her time at the Iroquois Free Public Library helping shelve books, tutoring children with their reading skills and helping to translate English to Vietnamese. She also helps people in her neighborhood by donating to Goodwill, collecting clothing at home and in her community. Even though she only works part-time, she also makes a monthly donation to the Cancer Research Center as well as helping people in her hometown in Vietnam. Tuong plans on becoming an Engineer.

Trevor Gravil, 17, Kentucky School for the Blind

Trevor is an incredible volunteer, mentor and inspiration. He has excelled academically at Kentucky School for the Blind, where he is also on the track team and takes guitar lessons. Trevor’s passion for Math and Science have earned him Math Awards and he was one of 30 visually impaired high school students from across America to be chosen as an apprentice for the National Federation of the Blind's STEM2U 2014-2015 Program. He recently attended a leadership conference at the NFB’s Jernigan Institute in Baltimore. Trevor is an active member of his church, where he seizes every opportunity to volunteer, help out and take a leadership role. Trevor loves helping others, especially children and he wants to pursue a career in Education.

Emily Hall, 16, Presentation Academy

Emily volunteers in numerous ways to benefit our community, including St. Joseph Children’s Home, Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Gilda’s Club, Kosair Children’s ((MORE))
Hospital, Teens for Jeans, and working with disabled adults. Emily spent nine months volunteering with the Jefferson County Teen Court diversion program, she mentors middle-school youth in decision-making and responsibility through the Peer Leader program, and she was chosen to lead within her school through the Freshman Leadership Program and the School Recruiting Team. These activities earned her a Holthouser Service Scholarship and she feels humbled by every opportunity to help others. She also plays volleyball, varsity soccer and studies piano. Emily lives her life demonstrating values, character and compassion.

**John Kolb, 17, Atherton High School**

John is an exceptional student and takes giving back to the community to a superlative level. John carries a 4.153 weighted GPA and is ranked number one in his class of 277. He serves in his church as a volunteer, mentor and role model. In his school, he serves as a leader on the Ocean Science Bowl Team, Quick Recall Team, Kentucky United Nations (KUNA), and he is the "Me to We" chairperson for the class of 2016. In his community, John serves on the Louisville Youth Philanthropy Council, Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Healing Futures Fellowship and the Muhammad Ali Center. John sees a level of need in his school and community and commits his whole heart to meeting that need.

**Mya McClain, 16, Presentation Academy**

Mya is an exceptional volunteer who cares deeply about her community. She belongs to the Teen Leadership Council at the Louisville Central Community Center and helped to promote the 5K Beautification Run/Walk to support the Boulevard West of 9th vision. She participates in the Kentucky Teen Court Program, the Muhammad Ali Center Council for Students and the Healing Futures Fellowship. She is a Metro Youth Advocate and serves on the Teen Board at Kosair Hospital. She has participated in Advanced Art Camp, joined the Louisville Youth Conversation, and is active in her church. Mya has worked hard to succeed academically, has already secured academic scholarships and hopes to attend Fisk University.

**Isaac Mitchell, 16, Bullitt Central High School**

Isaac demonstrates the characteristics of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility by actively participating in his youth group and mission trips, helping repair the church building, leading Bible studies for younger children and often contributing his musical talents to church services. He is a dedicated, hard-working student and is active in BETA Club, Spanish Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Future Business Leaders of America. Isaac sets a great example for his peers and his family for healthy living. He founded a running club for younger children and is on ((MORE))
the cross country team, serving as captain for two years. Isaac volunteered in August for the Ironman Race and dreams of one day competing in the race.

**Selena Pantoja, 17, Oldham County High School**

Selena exemplifies the core values of the YMCA. For two years, she served families in the critical care waiting room at Norton Audubon Hospital, also assisting the hospital volunteer coordinator and music therapists. She has volunteered through the Dollars for Scholars, Operation Brightside, Big Brother/Big Sister, Alley Cat Advocates, Repair Affair and Cedar Lake Lodge. She has also served in the Kentucky Youth Assembly, Sigma Sigma, Gamma, BETA Club Leadership and as Vice President of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. She is a gifted vocalist, musician and writer, works part-time and is very active in her church. She is also taking advanced placement classes and maintains excellent grades. Selena plans to work towards a degree in Dentistry and to continue serving and inspiring others.

**Andrew Parker, 16, Eastern High School**

When Andrew hears of a need in his community or school, he wants to help. Last year, Andrew formed a "Boo Radley Society" to encourage random Acts of Kindness. He earned the money himself to fund his idea and the club now has over 150 members. He worked to get enough donations to give out backpacks and school supplies for over 200 students this year. Though a childhood injury left him with some ongoing physical challenges, Andrew has refused to let this discourage him. He works tirelessly to grow his skills in the classroom and on the baseball field. He recently saw a need at his school and initiated the creation of a donation center for school sports supplies. Andrew is a shining example of caring, respect, honesty and responsibility.

**Cole Schuhmann, 15, St. Xavier High School**

At 13, Cole was diagnosed with T-cell lymphoma and quickly became a spokesperson and advocate for kids fighting cancer, volunteering and speaking publicly as often as possible. Throughout his treatments, he continued to speak and volunteer as much as possible. He has volunteered for the Kosair Children's Youth Advisory Committee, among other Kosair fundraisers, and has logged close to 100 volunteer hours at Gilda’s Club. He has even lobbied for additional funding for Kosair with state Senators and Congressmen. He is also an outstanding student, a Xavierian Scholar and was recently invited to be a member of the National Honors Society. Cole is now in remission from his own battle with cancer and his passion to help others grows stronger each day.

**ABOUT THE Y:** The Y is the nation’s leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Y is dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities.