YMCA YOUTH CHARACTER AWARD WINNERS

Biographies

The YMCA of Greater Louisville has selected 12 local youths to be honored with a Youth Character Award and a $1,500 scholarship. These young people demonstrate outstanding citizenship and stand as examples to those around them. They reflect the Y’s core character values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

“We are impressed with this group of amazing young people who exemplify the Y’s commitment to strengthening our community,” said YMCA CEO and President Steve Tarver. “We feel certain they will help make the world a better place with their determination, passion and commitment.”

The following teens represent an impressive list of accomplishments and civic engagement. Some have distinguished themselves while overcoming adversity; others have provided role models for those who are less fortunate. The YMCA Youth Character Award winners for 2012 are:

Nakori Ellis, 16, Central High School

Nakori has overcome many obstacles to become an outstanding student, soccer player and drummer in the marching band. He has a 3.5 grade point average, is on the academic recall team and was invited to be a Governor’s Scholar. In addition, he is a good citizen and advocate in his Parkland neighborhood, mowing the lawns of seniors and helping to clean up the alleys and abandoned houses. And if that weren’t enough, he also rescues stray dogs and volunteers at the Wayside Christian Mission.

Makenzie Rae Engel, 16, Oldham County High School

Makenzie is a caring and active member of her community. For three years, she has worked with the SHINE program, ensuring that students with disabilities are able to attend prom. She spends prom night, dancing, playing games and taking photos of the participants. Makenzie has also volunteered in her church since the 6th grade and is now a junior at Oldham County High School, where she maintains a 3.75 grade point average and is involved in Beta Club, the school’s newspaper and drama club.

Madison Harley, 16, Sacred Heart Academy

Madison has excelled as a community volunteer even while distinguishing herself as a student, athlete and leader in her school. She volunteers at Gilda’s Club where she cares for and plays with children of cancer patients. She has been on a mission trip to Appalachia.

About the Louisville area YMCAs

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and for her 16th birthday, she hosted a party to raise donations for Gilda’s Club. She is on the school’s swim, track and cross country teams and served as a swim coach for her neighborhood team. She also participated in Louisville Girls Leadership’s Girl Power Day and is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Anastasia Klein, 17, Doss High School

Anastasia is the class president at Doss High School and maintains a 3.7 grade point average. She is on the Doss softball and track teams and is part of Future Business Leaders of America. She was a Governor’s Scholars finalist and volunteers in the school’s “Homework Help” program. And in spite of her busy school schedule, she is an exemplary employee with the Southwest YMCA, working as a soccer referee and membership associate.

Clarence “Joey” Lanham, 13, Newburg Middle School

Joey has been raised in a difficult family situation where he and his six siblings have often been left to fend for themselves. He has been exposed to violence, physical abuse and drug addiction at a very early age. With little adult support, he has strived to stay on track in school and be responsible for his actions. Joey’s character remains strong and he has taken on the responsibility of being a role model for his younger brother.

Michelle Leidgen, 18, Louisville Male High School

As a Kosair Children’s Hospital volunteer for four years, Michelle has touched hundreds of children with her warm smile and bubbly personality. She has taken two mission trips to India to help in orphanages and has served as a camp counselor back at home. She has also helped out at with SHINE, a prom for students with disabilities and sews baby blankets for babies born in crisis pregnancies. As school, she plays field hockey and is an outstanding student.

Jasmyne Elizabeth McCoy, 13, North Oldham Middle School

Jasmyne is a straight-A student who has been selected as a Duke scholar at age 12, a distinction that allowed her to study science and geology on the Appalachian trail last summer. She was selected to the Oldham County Junior Leadership Academy and is also on her schools’ track team. As the school record holder for both the long jump and triple jump, she has been invited to practice with the North Oldham High School team. She is a cheerleader and active volunteer in her church and school, serving as president of the BETA Club.

Ben Otten, 13, Christian Educational Consortium

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Ben is an extraordinary citizen and athlete, particularly since he has had to overcome daily pain, physical weakness and speech difficulties stemming from cerebral palsy. His left side is paralyzed, but Ben has emerged as a community leader. He is a caregiver for aging grandparents, does yard work for the elderly, volunteers for Metro United Way, Operation Christmas Child and Habitat Humanity. He swims, plays baseball, soccer and tennis and is on a track team. Because of his character and perseverance, he has been honored by Cal Ripken Jr. and is currently working on a video using his journey to encourage others.

Raymond Robinson, 16, DuPont Manual High School

Raymond is an outstanding student and French tutor who also plays football and basketball at his school. His academic success qualified him for a Purdue University minority engineering program. He has also distinguished himself as a volunteer and community advocate. Among his activities: ministering to members of Wayside Christian Mission and Salvation Army through song, and volunteering with the Mayor’s Hike and Bike, the Cystic Fibrosis fund-raising walk, Gray Street Farmer’s Market and West End Boys School.

Reagan Patrick Roy, 14, DuPont Manual High School

At an early age, Reagan demonstrated a caring attitude toward a student who has leukemia and has been a tireless volunteer for the Leukemia Society ever since. He has raised money and recruited volunteers and even wrote a book about a girl with leukemia that sold over 400 copies and raised about $4,000. In his life, Reagan has raised more than $10,000 to fight leukemia. He also plays soccer, is a member of the Red Cross and volunteers at the Bon Air Library.

Advocate Scott, 17, DuPont Manual High School

Advocate has taken a special interest in working with the YMCA’s Safe Place program for teens with incarcerated parents. Although volunteers under the age of 21 are not generally accepted, Advocate was invited to participate in a training workshop where his passion and commitment were apparent. Since then he has been active in the program and taking on additional roles and responsibilities. Advocate also served as a page for Senator Mitch McConnell’s office this past summer.

Savannah Warner, 14, Bullitt East High School

Savannah is an honor roll student, soccer player and a member of the Beta Club and Fellowship of Christian Athletes at her school and also serves on three community groups that fight against teen drug abuse and bullying. She sings in her church choir and is on the

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junior faculty for White Mills Christian Camp where she has served as worship leader. She is a lifelong member of the Bullitt County YMCA where she works with children and helps out in any way she is asked.

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