

Volunteering a top priority for teen

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HUNTINGTON -- A Huntington High sophomore spent a day in the capital last week as a state finalist for the West Virginia Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year.

Though Russell Bailey, 15, came up short of the state title, he says the community service projects and involvement are his focus.

Bailey began volunteering at the Huntington Boys and Girls Club several years ago, but he has participated with the club since he was 6.



"I know that whenever I was younger, I didn't always have someone to talk to," Bailey said. "If I can be there for one person, it makes me feel like I've helped a million."

Monday, Bailey was to begin teaching a class at the club for teens -- Program Toward No Tobacco Use. He recently wrote and received a grant to keep the class funded.

Efforts against the use of tobacco is his main passion, and Bailey says he has high expectations for himself. Since he began his efforts in 2000 with RAZE -- a teen-based group who fights against large tobacco companies by teaching other teens the truths of tobacco use -- tobacco use in West Virginia has dropped 38 percent, something of which he said he was proud.

"Russell is one of the most mature, thoughtful, giving teenagers I have ever met," said Gary Walker, the executive director of the Huntington Boys and Girls Clubs. "In my 6 1/2 years here, nominating and selecting the individuals, he has to be the most outstanding youth of the year we have selected."

Before nominations, they look at the individual's grade point average, his or her moral character, participation in community service and service to the Boys and Girls Club.

"It is very unusual in this day and time to find a teen ... no, to find anyone who is that involved in volunteering their time," Walker said. "He is an outstanding young man."

Russell serves as a teen mentor through the Huntington Housing Authority's Operation Right Choice Program.

Brothers Exemplify Youth Empowerment

Tim White



Brothers Joseph and Russell Bailey look, act and talk like your average teen brothers. But in reality they are superheroes. They are superheroes because they are involved everyday with making their school, community and region a better place to live, work and play.

Last fall, Joseph and Russell were selected to be AppalYouth Fellows and each was awarded a \$2500 service learning grant through the Sojourner's Care Network. Joseph is focusing on youth violence, and Russell is focusing on tobacco prevention/education among teens.



On March 4 and 5, Russell Bailey, along with adult mentor Tim White, attended the second of four AppalYouth Fellows Retreats in Marietta, OH. Unfortunately, Joseph's work schedule did not permit him to attend.



Each of the AppalYouth Fellows showcased their service learning project to the group.

Then the other AppalYouth Fellows gave feedback and asked questions about the project in an effort to help each student maximize their potential.

Students Speak at National Conference

On Tuesday, March 14, Joseph, Russell and Tim were also invited to join Rich and Timberly to facilitate a workshop on service learning at the Forging New Links Conference held at the Easton Hilton, in Columbus, OH.

Joseph and Russell highlighted their involvement in their community and the leadership roles they play. They encouraged other agencies to get their youth an opportunity to step up and take on leadership roles within their agencies and programs.



Middle School Teen Institute Huge Success

Tim White

ORC students began meeting in January to plan the seventh Region II Middle School Teen Institute. The theme for this year's MSTI was, "get connected" and focused around the high-tech world of computers, IPODS, Internet, and cyber space.

This two-night, three-day camp held at the Asbury Woods Conference Center, 10 miles south of Huntington on Rt. 10, attracted over 125 participants and youth and adult staff.



Karlie Belle Price from Boone, County kicked things off the first night with the entire camp forming the worlds largest caterpillar.

She was followed by Detective Kendra Beckett of the Huntington Police Department who facilitated a workshop on cyber predators.

The first day ended with table games and karaoke hosted by Rockin' Reggie from Athens, OH.



Each morning, students attended workshops on tobacco prevention, bullying and youth violence, team building and Internet safety.



Friday evening, the teens enjoyed the annual TI Teen Dance followed by the bonfire, where each group showcased a song, skit or cheer focusing on the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and violence.

The next TI is planned for June 1-3, 2006.