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Program honors Trailblazers in the making

By JUSTIN STORY jstory@bgdailynews.com
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For 25 years, the Trailblazers Organizing Committee has honored Black men and women who have opened doors and pioneered opportunities for people of color in Bowling Green and Warren County.

The 25th annual Trailblazer Awards program, which was Sunday at State Street Baptist Church, went in a different direction by recognizing organizations that are mentoring local youths and young adults.

The event honored local groups developing Trailblazers in the Making, shining a light on seven agencies whose efforts have focused on helping young people engage with the community and gain leadership skills.

Each organization was recognized with a video clip depicting its activities.

Leisha Carr, chair of this year's Trailblazers committee, said she was glad to see several agencies nominated for recognition and came away from the event impressed at the variety of organizations mentoring youths.

"It was amazing to see how much the young people enjoy all these wonderful programs and you could tell when they introduced their videos how well they are being taught," Carr said. "As we're learning about these awesome organizations, let's go out and support them and the work they're doing to help our children."

The organizations that were honored included:

- Black Male Scholars, a program at Bowling Green Junior High School that emphasizes the importance of community, collaboration and fellowship among students, their teachers and mentors. Participants complete academic subjects as a cohort, with a curriculum taught through the lens of Black history and culture.
- Boys to Men and Leading Ladies, offered to elementary school students. Boys to Men provides a positive, loving leadership group for students regardless of race and empowers boys to be the best version of themselves. Leading Ladies, started as a sister program to Boys to Men, teaches girls confidence and self-respect.
- For a Real Change Inc., a nonprofit established in 2020 that empowers youth to improve their quality of life through education, applied learning and service projects.
- Girl in the Mirror, a program designed to empower girls by providing programming that builds self-esteem, positive self-talk activities and discussions on maintaining healthy relationships.
- Light of Chance, a nonprofit formed in 2005 to serve youths and the community through innovative arts and wellness programs that help develop leadership and character.
- Police Officers with Educated, Responsible Girls. P.O.W.E.R.G. was organized after Bowling Green Police Department Deputy Chief Penny Bowles met with the Housing Authority of Bowling Green to discuss starting a mentoring program for girls. The program pairs female BGPD officers with female youths and creates awareness of the role of police officers while focusing on fitness, health, cooking, vehicle maintenance and other activities.
- WKU Young Male Leadership Academy, which was started in 2007 as a partnership between the state Department of Education and Western Kentucky University. A college preparation and recruitment initiative, the academy develops leadership and communication skills of young men from diverse backgrounds.

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The Trailblazers Committee features members from five historically Black Bowling Green churches, who each take turns hosting the annual awards ceremony.

Lequentin Flippin, a junior at Warren East High School, is a member of the WKU Young Male Leadership Academy.

The program helps young males explore the teaching profession, and Flippin said he was grateful for the friends and connections he has made through it.

“The mentors are probably some of the best you’re going to get in this community,” Flippin said. “They care so much about the students that are in it.”

Girl in the Mirror has reached out to more than 400 girls ages 8-15 in the community through one-day seminars in which each girl leaves with a personalized mirror and stickers featuring statements of affirmation.

The organization was started by LaVonda Satterfield, and her daughter, Jharon Satterfield, is involved as a mentor as well.

“It’s such a blessing, it’s something that all little girls need to be empowered to feel,” Jharon Satterfield said of Girl in the Mirror. “My favorite aspect of the program is mentoring the children, seeing the smiles on their faces and the love and passion that’s in them.”

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