

Daily News (Bowling Green, KY)

January 24, 2007

ALIVE Center honors some of area's best and brightest Focus placed on community service

NATALIE JORDAN, The Daily News, njordan@bgdailynews.com/783-3243

Youth throughout Warren County found themselves in the spotlight Wednesday.

The Bowling Green/Warren County Spotlight **Youth** Council and the **ALIVE Center** hosted their second annual **youth** recognition ceremony, at which eight individuals and 19 **youth** groups from across the county were given their due for community and academic achievements.

“We wanted to bring them together in an environment where they feel honored and respected by the adults in this community,” said Leah Ashwill, event organizer and **youth** development coordinator for the **ALIVE Center**.

With the theme “A Night at the Oscars,” **youth** and **youth** groups received honorary certificates and achievement trophies. The event also provided entertainment before and after the awards presentation from Natcher Elementary School’s Jumping Jaguars jumprope team and the Kaleidoscope Arts Drumline.

While individual awards were given for success with special projects, groups were awarded for their community service projects – Greenwood Baptist Church’s **youth** group was honored for creating a family and **youth** recreation resource guide, and Kaleidoscope teamed with Greenwood Park Church of Christ **youth** to help with cleanup after Hurricane Katrina.

“I think the projects these **youth** have done and the content of some of the performances added an impressive level of depth,” Ashwill said.

Other groups were also recognized for the grants they received from the **ALIVE Center** for their creation of a service project – including Taylor Baptist Church **youth**, who received \$1,000 to train adults in computer literacy, and Henry Moss Middle School, which received \$640 to help the Humane Society.

“It was very interesting,” said Tonya Bennett, who saw her daughter get recognized at the ceremony. “I liked it.”

The invitation-only event brought about 450 people – about 100 more than last year – to the Capitol Arts **Center**. Groups and individuals were nominated by community organizations and other individuals in the community, including schools and afterschool programs.

Though young people are often characterized for the negative things they do, Ashwill said, the ceremony shifted that focus to all the amazing things **youth** do in the community.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for the community to give back to the **youth**,” said Lucena Davis, a nurse with the Commission for Children with Special Healthcare Needs. “Our focus should be the **youth**, and this is a wonderful event to recognize them. And it’s a night they can come have for themselves. It’s a good self-esteem builder.”

According to Ashwill, a survey this fall by Spotlight **Youth** showed only 25 percent of children feel adults in Warren County value them, and only 26 percent feel they have an opportunity to serve.

“So what we are doing is trying to take that information and show the **youth** here they are valued and create opportunities for them in this community,” Ashwill said.

There is no real, formal, communitywide event that focuses on the achievements of **youth**, she said.

“And from that survey, the **ALIVE Center** wanted to create a formal event that focused just on the **youth**,” she said. “And I was impressed with what these **youth** were recognized for.”

Individuals recognized include: Anthony Brown of Bowling Green High School; Brent Davis of Greenwood High School; Sean Dias of Warren East High School; Emerald Smith of Richardsville Elementary School; and Trevious Boards, Jordan Lyons, Nacarius Shannon and Antonio Shields, all of Parker-Bennett-Curry Elementary School.

— For more information about the program or the **ALIVE Center**, contact Leah Ashwill at 782-0812 or e-mail leah@alivebg.org.