

The **Positive** Place For Kids



Teen volunteer named 2009 Youth of the Year

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HOBE SOUND – For overcoming a difficult childhood, serving as a peer role model and helping others throughout the community, Jonathan Owens was named the 2009 Youth of the Year for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Martin County.

A member of the Clubs' East Stuart branch and a junior at Jensen Beach High School, Jonathan was chosen by a panel of distinguished judges for showing leadership and a dedication to community service every day.

"Jonathan has a kind, giving spirit and is a wonderful representative for the Boys & Girls Clubs," said Anne McCormick, executive director. "We know he'll be successful in whatever he chooses in life."

At 16, Jonathan works as Junior Staff at the Boys & Girls Clubs, helping younger members with homework and play time. He volunteers behind-the-scenes during performances of the Clubs' hip-hop dance teams, and he even dressed up as a mascot during CHARACTER COUNTS! day last year.

In school, Jonathan is a straight-A student who volunteers with the Inspire Club, helping mentally or physically disabled students with their work and at lunch every day. He also draws editorial cartoons for the school newspaper and pitches in to help his teachers and friends. At home, he helps around the house with cleaning, cooking and taking care of the dogs.

At the official judging held at the Cole-Clark branch on Feb. 19th, Jonathan was asked which of the six pillars of character he most identified with.

"Respect," he said. "Because without it, you have nothing. But with it, you can have everything."

Jonathan competed with three other nominees: Ashley Bilodeau, 14, of Palm City; Kayla Jones, 14, of Hobe Sound; and Kadence Leger, 13, of Port Salerno. Each nominee completed two essays and prepared a short speech with the help of volunteers from ToastMasters of Stuart.

All Youth of the Year nominees will travel to Orlando in April to support Jonathan at the state-wide competition against other Youth of the Year from the other Boys & Girls Clubs throughout Florida.

After listening to speeches and asking questions of all the nominees, the judges said they were most impressed with Jonathan's ability to overcome an unstable and sometimes violent childhood and become the strong, kind person he is today.

Jonathan said he plans to study either radiology or special education in college.

The volunteer judges were: Martin County school Superintendent Nancy Kline; John Reese of the Loblollypop Foundation; Laura Haase of the Children's Services Council of Martin County; Wendie Berardi, assistant director of development for the United Way of Martin County; Robin Delgado and Mark Brechbill, both of Kiwanis of Jensen Beach.

Funding for the program was provided in part by the Loblollypop Foundation.

For more information about the Youth of the Year program or the Boys & Girls Clubs of Martin County, please call the administrative offices at (772) 545-1255.

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