



Greater Joliet Area YMCA

P.O. Box 3939 Joliet, IL 60434-3939
Telephone: (815)729-9638 Fax: (815)729-9629
sender@jolietyymca.org web: www.jolietyymca.org

We Build Strong Kids, Strong Families, Strong Communities.



Contact: Susan Lee, YMCA Dir. of Assoc. Adv.

Tel: 815.729.9638 x326

Cell Phone: 815.325-2777

Email: slee@jolietyymca.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2010

YMCA Teen Achievers Celebrate another Successful Year

Approximately 100 Joliet Township students, parents, siblings and volunteers crowded into the All Nations Church Hall on May 19th to celebrate YMCA Teen Achievers' efforts and results. There was a great sense of excitement and pride in the air.

The Central City YMCA Teen Achievers Program is part of a national academic/career planning program for high school youth. The purpose of the program is to provide inspiration and guidance to students in setting goals to graduate from high school, gain entry into college and ultimately achieve successful entry into a career of their choosing. The program fosters leadership skills and focuses on character development and helping teens strengthen positive traits such as caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Most importantly, the experience strengthens self-esteem, confidence and goal achievement.

Since the program's inception in 2005, the Teen Achiever's target group has been socio-economically disadvantaged children from the Joliet Township High Schools. These children generally come from low income African-American or Hispanic families, and are often the first family member to seek college level education. Most students are from female led single parent homes.

Guest speaker Reverend Wendell Martin traveled from Atlanta Georgia to address the students and their families. He is currently the youth pastor at a large Baptist church in Atlanta, overseeing programs for nearly 2,000 youth. Rev. Martin spoke to the Achiever students because he was born in Joliet to Pastor and Mrs. Edward Martin Jr. He attended Joliet Central High School. By the age of 16, it was clear to Rev. Martin that his path in life would also be in the Christian ministry. His message was first directed to the parents at the banquet. His advice was to be involved in their children's lives and to have the "loudest voice", since teens experience so much "noise" from the media, peers, teachers and others. He pushed them to set high expectations and insist that they are met. His message to the students was not only to achieve their college and career goals but to get involved and give back to their communities.

Thirty-five Teen Achiever graduates have gained entry to institutions of higher level education post high school graduation since the program's launch, resulting in a 100% success rate. To participate in this program, attendance is required at weekly meetings after school. There are also Saturday workshops offered. Thirty four students met the requirements this year.

The highlight of the program is the annual spring college road trip. The trip always includes historically Black Colleges and Universities, so that the students can see others just like themselves in the progress of achieving their dreams. This year the teens visited the University of Memphis and Lemoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Fisk University in Nashville and Tennessee State University.

*YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice by developing relationships among all persons
and providing programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body.
A United Way Agency of Will County*

Special guests at the event included representatives of the Gordon Flesch Foundation, who presented the Teen Achievers with a \$5,000 grant last fall. Also present were Mary Baudino, president of the Zonta Club of Joliet, and Rita Weiss. They presented a \$5,000 grant to the program. Zonta's professional women also provided valuable service by speaking to the students at several of their after school meetings.

The Greater Joliet Area YMCA wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Gordon Flesch Foundation and the Zonta Club of Joliet for their generous grants and service work. For further information on YMCA Teen Achievers, contact Maurice Fears, Community Outreach Executive for the Central City YMCA, at 815-726-3939 X413 or mfears@jolietyymca.org.



Mary Baudino and Rita Weiss attended the YMCA Teen Achievers Banquet on Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at the All Nations Church Family Center in Joliet.



President Mary Baudino presented Maurice Fears with a \$5,000 check from February 2010 Zonta fundraiser.



Thirty-five Teen Achiever graduates pose with Guest speaker Reverend Wendell Martin, far left, representatives from Gordon Flesch Foundation, on left, YMCA staff, Zonta President Mary Baudino and Corresponding Secretary Rita Weiss, on right, and Maurice Fears, Community Outreach Executive for the Central City YMCA, far right. Congratulations to the grads & good luck in college!

*YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body.
A United Way Agency of Will County*