



Local Students Honored for Volunteerism

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Instead of watching TV or talking on the phone, some teenagers get out after school and serve as volunteers.

"Our big project was Operation G.I.," explains Claire Barry, a junior at Charlottesville High and President of the school's Key Club. "[We gave] soldiers the necessary supplies that they need like toothpaste and toothbrush and that type of stuff."

Ivy Creek junior Michael Pesca says his reasons for volunteering for the local SPCA are simple: "I love animals. I've got a soft spot for animals and, you know, I can't stand people that can actually sit there and abuse an animal."

Barry and Pesca were among students from the 11 area public and private high schools who were recognized Monday at the Fourth Annual Celebration of Youth Service. Proud parents and teachers came out to Monticello High as the students were honored for their work in the community.

"It's a great spectrum of things going on," says Shaele Wood of the local United Way, a sponsor of the event. "Some of [the recipients] are really active in their Key Club in coordinating large groups of volunteers to get motivated and go out and make a difference. Others are volunteering on an individual basis, like with Habitat for Humanity or with Sexual Assault Resource [Agency] or Salvation Army."

The kids say they're not giving their time to try and pad a college resume; instead they say they understand the importance of serving others in the community and they're looking to break down typical teenage stereotypes.

"That's a big thing in this day and age," Pesca complains. "People judge the book by the cover before they get to know somebody, you know, and I just don't think that's right."

"The normal teenage stereotype is the type of person that would watch, you know, crazy movies and go party," Barry explains, "but there are a lot of teenagers that are involved."

The awards were put on by the United Way Thomas Jefferson Area and the Commission on Children and Families Youth Service Work Group.