GHS Interact Makes an Impact

Group Earns Youth Advocacy Award

By Pam Johnson
Courier Senior Staff Writer

Kimberly was 16 years old and recovering from a gunshot wound when she decided to turn her life around.

"I was in the hospital and I didn't want to die a nobody," the New Haven resident said.

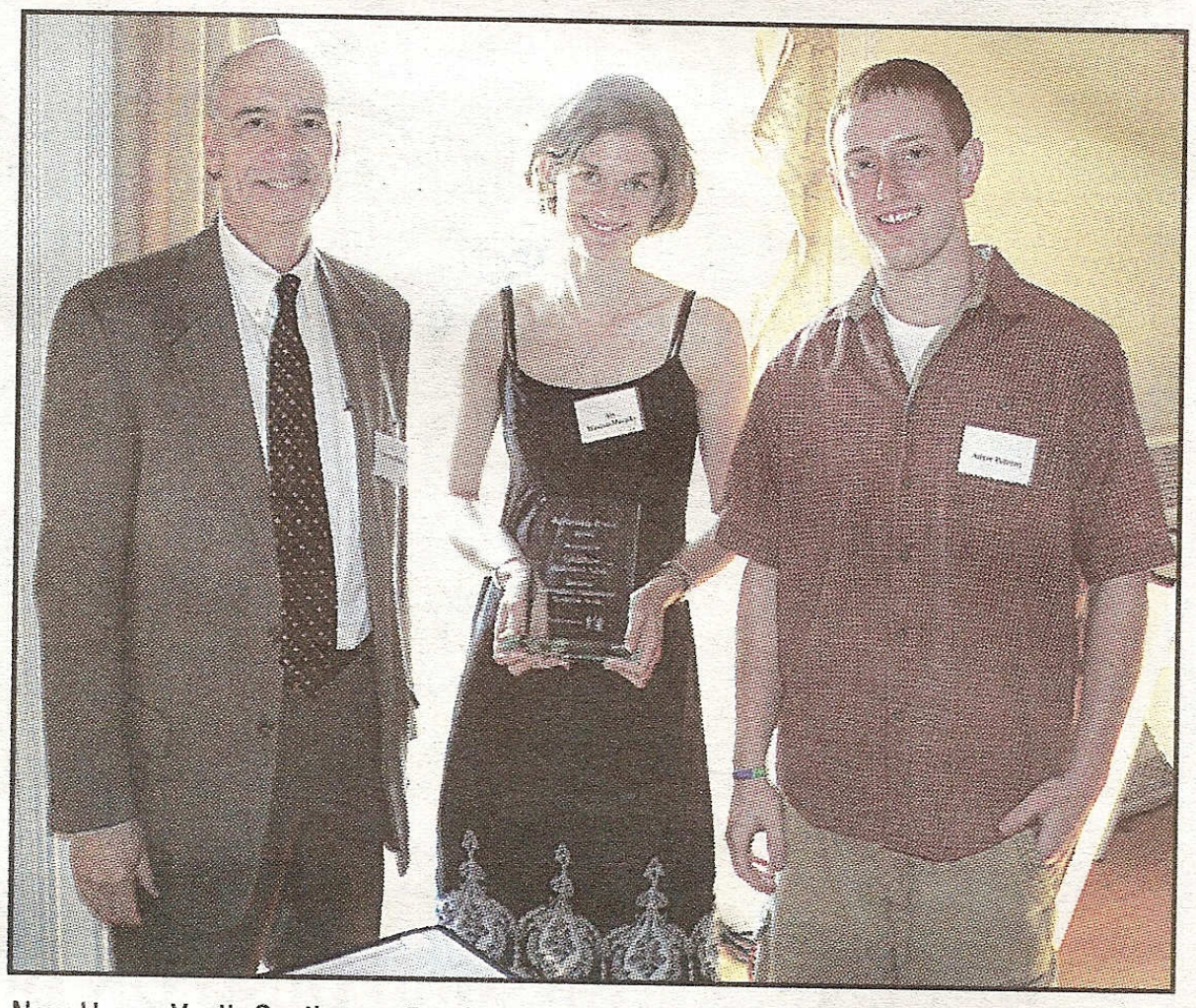
Thanks to New Haven's non-profit Youth Continuum, she found shelter in a group home and encouragement from its staff. After completing her GED, Kimberly went on to graduate from college. Attending her graduation were the Youth Continuum members who'd helped change her life.

"When I stood on the stage to give my speech, I looked out in the audience...and saw my family," said Kimberly, now a successful business manager, wife, and mother.

Kimberly's story is just one of many proving every contribution to Youth Continuum is important. On June 10, at its annual Youth Advocacy Awards in New Haven, Youth Continuum recognized Guilford Rotary's GHS Interact Club for its contributions.

GHS Interact collaborates with the Guilford Rotary on several events each year to help generate funds for a range of community service efforts. Annual events where residents are likely to see GHS Interact members hard at work include the Rotary's Frosty Five K and the upcoming Rotary Lobsterfest. GHS Interact also organizes at least two food drives per year and produces the Seniors' Prom, an intergenerational program with Guilford Senior Citizens.

This past Christmas, GHS Interact contributed a stack of gift cards to places like Wal*Mart, Best Buy, and Stop & Shop to be given to the young adults served through Youth Continuum's independent and transitional living programs. The 2007 contribution marked the fourth year in a row GHS Interact contributed to Youth Continuum.



New Haven Youth Continuum President Cary Scapillato presented GHS Interact Co-Presidents Aly Weston-Murphy and Adam Petrone with a Youth Advocacy Award on June 10. The GHS club, sponsored by Guilford Rotary, was recognized for four years of contributions to the New Haven non-profit. *Photo by Pam Johnson*

Youth Continuum's Chief Executive Officer Carole A. Shomo said the gift cards contributed by GHS Interact are one of the most coveted donations the organization can pass on to its young adults, many of whom have little or no family to turn to as they face new challenges of balancing work, school, and housing.

"They're like gold to our kids, especially our single moms and those in transition," said Shomo, who then introduced Youth Continuum President Cary Scapillato to present the award to GHS Interact.

GHS seniors and Interact Co-Presidents Aly Weston-Murphy and Adam Petrone accepted the award on behalf of the club. Being there to hear stories from young people who've benefited from the Youth Continuum made receiving the award even more significant, said Petrone.

"Growing up in Guilford, I know how privileged I am, and that other kids aren't as lucky. We should help them," he added.

Weston-Murphy brought GHS Interact the idea of supporting Youth Continuum again this year. The 20-member club then voted from among a list of New Haven area non-profits, and Youth Continuum emerged as the top choice, she explained.

"We chose to support them because we wanted to make the biggest impact we could on other people our age," said Weston-Murphy.

Youth Continuum is a non-profit, community-based agency that protects the well being of at risk youth and provides them with the skills necessary to take advantage of opportunities for a healthy and productive future. For more information or to make a contribution, visit www.youthcontinuum.org or call 203-562-3396.

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