



Everything Michigan

Teen earns Greater Ottawa County United Way's top volunteer award

By Greg Chandler | The Grand Rapids Press

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HOLLAND — When Megan Bos walked into the Grand Haven Golf Club, she expected nothing more than a pleasant dinner marking the Greater Ottawa County United Way's successful fundraising campaign.

That's when she was greeted by Liz DeLaLuz Vanderby, the organization's director of community impact.

Vanderby asked the Black River Public School senior whether she was excited to be getting an award that night.

Bos was stunned. That's when she learned she had been named United Way's Volunteer of the Year — the first high school student in the organization's history to be honored.

"I was shaking throughout the whole two hours (of the dinner), I was so excited," said Bos, 17. "I was so shocked and so grateful."

Bos was honored for more than 1,000 hours of community service she performed for a variety of organizations during her four years of high school. They ranged from encouraging teens to stay away from substance abuse to serving as a youth representative on Holland's International Relations Commission.

"She's just a great student who has a heart for others, that's why she volunteers," said Shannon Brunink, head of school at Black River. "She's one of those go-getter type of kids, but she's always got a smile on her."

Students step up

Bos is an example of the growth of student volunteerism at United Way. This academic year, more than 200 students from six high schools in the county volunteered for United Way and its member agencies, compared with just 10 students a year earlier.

"Not only is she a wonderful role model for Ottawa County, but she's also a great peer role model at Black River," United Way director of volunteerism Shannon Morton said. "She's made a difference in every person that she's touched."

Four or five more high schools could join United Way's student service learning program next fall, Morton said.

Bos began getting involved in community service as a freshman, working with a Rotary Club to which her father, Tom, belonged.

Through Rotary, she spent a week in Mexico in an educational and cultural exchange program.

From there, she got involved with the city of Holland, joining its Youth Council as a sophomore and serving on its recreation committee. She also was appointed a youth representative to the International Relations Commission.

Among Youth Council activities Bos was involved with was creation of an outdoor movie night at Kollen Park that debuted last summer.

Bos was a member of Student Leaders Initiating Change (SLIC), a countywide group that provides anti-substance abuse programs for teens. She served as an educator with middle school students, said Leigh Moerdyke, a former adviser for SLIC.



Courtesy photo

Awarded: Megan Bos, 17, named the Greater Ottawa County United Way's Volunteer of the Year, receives the award from Paul Thurman of ITW Drawform. She is the group's youngest Volunteer of the Year.

"She was fully engaged, and she had great ideas that were helpful as a peer educator," Moerdyke said.

Campus leader

At Black River, Bos is president of the student council, and a member of the school's soccer and volleyball teams. As student council president, she helped lead an effort to raise \$8,000 to establish a school in Africa.

"We've been focused on making our school think more globally, rather than just think about our campus," she said.

Bos plans to study international business in college. She is considering three schools outside Michigan — Butler and Ball State universities in Indiana and Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

"I want to focus more in the humanitarian arena, so I can effectively run an organization as well as work with people of different cultures," she said.

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