

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS



PATTI SAPONE/THE STAR-LEDGER

Dachel Martinez, 17, of Newark received a \$20,000 scholarship from Wal-Mart for being named New Jersey State Youth of the Year by the Boys & Girls Clubs of New Jersey.

Her dedication led to \$20K award

DACHEL MARTINEZ
17, Newark

ACHIEVEMENT

She is the first Hispanic girl from her local Boys & Girls Club to be named New Jersey State Youth of the Year, an achievement that earned her a \$20,000 scholarship.

PICKING A WINNER

She competed against 22 other local Youths of the Year throughout the state and is among hundreds of winners across the country recognized for their sound character, leadership skills and willingness to give back to the community. The selection process involved a written application, an oral presentation and an interview with a panel of judges composed of community and business leaders.

EXTREMELY COMMITTED

She's one of the most committed Boys & Girls Club members current Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark executive director Felix Rouse has ever met. Rouse himself is a former New Jersey State, as well as Northeast Regional, Youth of the Year (1989-90). "There are a lot of similar stories," Rouse said in comparison to Dachel's experiences, which included adjusting to

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EYES ON THE PRIZE

In addition, Dachel won \$5,000 for placing in the Youth of the Year program from her local club, the Broadway Unit. As runner-up, Dachel won \$1,000 in 2007 and \$1,000 in 2008 from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark for being named the Youth of the Year of the Broadway Unit. A three-time Youth of the Month winner, as well as a nine-year member of the Broadway Unit, Dachel is the eighth statewide honoree from the club.

The Youth of the Year program, which is administered by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, has been nationally sponsored by the Reader's Digest Foundation since 1947.

a new setting while growing up.

THE CHALLENGES

The Youth of the Year program honors club members between the ages of 13 and 18 who have also overcome personal challenges and obstacles.

"My mother had to work a lot. I had nowhere to go after school" after her family settled in New Jersey from the Dominican Republic, Dachel said. The lack of a place to go is what led her to finding out about the Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey.

She also had to learn another language. "Open the door. Close the door," Dachel said, referring to how those were the first two sentences she learned in English because her aunt always asked her to open and close the door when she was hot or cold.

CLUBBING IT

As president of her Boys & Girls Club's Keystone Club this year, Dachel represented the Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark at this year's 42nd Annual National Keystone Conference in Atlanta. The club has raised money for Malaria No More and AIDS Walk NYC and participated in park cleanups.

STAYING CONNECTED

"I'm still going to keep involved," Dachel said of the Boys & Girls Club, even though she will begin attending Rutgers University in New Brunswick in the fall to major in history. She aspires to be either a corporate or criminal lawyer.

FAMILY

Mother, Gisela Martinez, an brother, Girson Rivera, 8, who is also an active member of the Broadway Unit.

— Susan King