

Two students win top awards for community service

By Lia Russell
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Celebrity Apprentice Omarosa Manigault shared the inspirational story of her youth with attendees of the sixth annual Teens With a Purpose fundraising Gala & Masquerade Ball held Nov. 1.

Keynote speaker Manigault, a professor at Howard University, described growing up as an "at-risk" teen in a low-income community in Youngstown, Ohio.

It was her mother's encouragement and the support of a youth group similar to Teens With a Purpose that helped her realize her potential and achieve her dreams, she said.

Teens were the VIP guests of honor at the event where two local youths, one from Teens With a Purpose and one from the local community, were recognized with "Move Maker" awards for successfully overcoming adversity while positively impacting others.

Falon Persley, a student at Granby High School and TWP member who has battled cancer twice, was honored for her peer-mentoring ef-

forts and anti-bullying advocacy. Persley also is a dancer with the youth group.

Dancer and choreographer James Yapnayon, who attends Tallwood High School in Virginia Beach, was the community Move Maker Award recipient.

Yapnayon is an active community volunteer and was honored as a 2013 Elie Wiesel Multimedia Award winner by the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater for "The Sitting," a video he created about prejudice.

"What stood out to me the most was the number of youths in the audience," said TWP founder and director Deirdre Love.

"Being able to honor that many young people as VIPs was the highlight for me."

Also honored with adult Move Maker awards for their work with youth were Tanya Kearney of the AIDS Resource Center at Eastern Virginia Medical School and TWP volunteer Marvin Muhammad.

Local WAVY-TV news anchor Nicole Livas was the evening's host. TWP board member and longtime supporter Al Roker of NBC's Today



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Khayla Walla, left, and Allannah Evans, right, pose with Omarosa Manigault, center, from NBC's "The Apprentice," after a closed-door session with teens only at the fundraiser for Teens With a Purpose on Nov. 1

show was scheduled to attend the event but had to cancel at the last moment due to a work conflict. Roker has attended the organization's previous three annual gala events in Norfolk.

The gala, attended by 280 guests, TWP offers peer-led youth development and empowerment pro-

grams that promote critical thinking and inspire and engage teens to improve themselves and their community.

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