

NEWS FROM...

Pathways/Senderos Center

A Publication of Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Inc.



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Fall 2009

Teen Pregnancy Prevention in the State Budget!

By RoseAnne Bilodeau,
Executive Director

After a long, tumultuous summer, we have some good news: the state budget passed and our funding was restored! We owe a great deal of gratitude to our state legislators for working hard on a state budget that includes funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs.

We'd like to send a special thank you to state Sen. Donald DeFronzo, Rep. John Geragosian, co-chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Timothy O'Brien, Rep. Elizabeth "Betty" Boukus, Rep. Peter Tercyak, Sen. Toni Harp, co-chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Chris Donovan and Rep. Denise Merrill for ensuring funding for our program.

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Sixth-graders Jairis Torres, left, and Kimberly Rodriguez work on an art project.

Thailand Comes to Pathways/Senderos

By Geoff Elterich,
Community Education Coordinator

Recently, a friend of our board member, the Rev. Anne Marie Meyerhoffer, visited Pathways/Senderos Center for the second time to share her amazing story with our students and staff. The Rev. Dr. Sirirat Pusurinkham founded Prachakittisuk Church Orphanage in Chiangrai, Thailand. Dr. Sirirat built the orphanage in 2003 as a response to her close friend's death from AIDS. Her friend contracted AIDS after being sold as a child into the Thai sex trade, which has an estimated 800,000 child prostitutes. Before the friend died, she asked Dr. Sirirat to take care of her children. At the time, Sirirat's village already had 100 AIDS orphans. It became Dr. Sirirat's mission to provide for these children and raise awareness of the horrors of the Thai sex trade.



In the past few years, the orphanage has grown from five to 26 children with two buildings, one for girls and one for boys. There is still more work to be done, however; raising children is a lifelong process that requires investments in time, physical resources and most of all, heart. Dr. Sirirat founded the Women's Handicraft Project in 1991, which provides an opportunity for many poor women in her village, some who have HIV/AIDS, to be gainfully employed by sewing and cross-stitching in their own homes. These women are provided wages for creating beautiful tote bags, and the proceeds from the sales of the bags go directly to the orphanage.

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Making It Through Tough Times

By RoseAnne Bilodeau, Executive Director

School started Aug. 31 for most of our girls and boys. We have youngsters in all of New Britain's middle schools, the high school, E.C. Goodwin and at several Hartford magnet schools. As of Sept. 1, there was still no state budget. As you may be aware, the Connecticut Department of Social Services is our primary funding source and without a state budget, we were on a modified schedule since July 1.

Although we had to lay off our part-time staff and reduce our full-time staff to part-time hours, our youngsters experienced a minimal level of service disruption. At the end of June, we had an all-center meeting where we explained to our participants about the state budgeting process and the current gap in funding. We asked their assistance to make it through this difficult time. We asked that they be more mature, more cooperative and even more responsible than in the past. We explained that there would be fewer staff members and greater involvement of volunteers. By the end of the summer, my respect and admiration for our youngsters increased immensely. First, our attendance figures were the greatest ever. And throughout the summer, our youths' behaviors and willingness to cooperate were absolutely exceptional! They were an integral reason to our success this summer.

Another exceptional group of people who has helped us tremendously during this challenging time has been our wonderful volunteers, which includes the part-time staff members that were laid off in June. Because of them, we were able to offer every activity this year that we normally have in previous summers. Our older youngsters enjoyed and benefited from our Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program which was sponsored by Capital Workforce Partners and funded by the American Savings Foundation. Our younger girls and boys continued to be challenged by "more relaxed" academic and career preparation programming. With the volunteers' assistance, our youth went to the city's parks and pools every day.

Yet none of this would have been accomplished were it not for our magnificent staff. In spite of their reduced work schedule, our staff has remained strong and absolutely committed to our children. Their flexibility and dedication to their work is unparalleled! It is my good fortune to work with such talented, committed individuals.

All in all, this very difficult time has brought us all closer together – sort of a Hallmark story. I wish to sincerely thank each Pathways/Senderos participant, staff member and volunteer for helping us move graciously through this most challenging time. Without their special efforts, this time of uncertainty could have been extremely chaotic and quite disheartening.

I also wish to thank our donors. Because of your support, we were able to keep our doors open and not interrupt our service delivery to our fragile, yet resilient, girls and boys. Because of you, we were able to accommodate more children this summer than ever in the past. With your support, we look forward to the future with great optimism!

Thank you, thank you, thank you, one and all!

P.S. We now have a state budget and have resumed our very important work of helping New Britain's poverty-stricken youngsters move forward in their lives by graduating high school, pursuing post-secondary education and averting teen pregnancy.



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Dr. Sirirat was kind enough to take the time to tell her story to the students and staff at Pathways/Senderos. "I wanted to visit the children and share my ministry in Thailand," she said.

After her presentation, all of our students wrote essays about what they learned and how they felt about it. It was obvious that her presentation really moved the students emotionally. Most of the youngsters were unaware of the horrible conditions women and children face in some parts of Thailand. Many of the students expressed a desire to help the orphans by teaching them English. Dr. Sirirat even told them they are all welcome; volunteers stay free of charge, they just have to pay for airfare.

"Anytime I have the opportunity to be in Connecticut, I will not miss my chance to be with the children there; they are so special to

me," Dr. Sirirat said. She is quite impressed by the staff and students, she said. "The center is a welcoming place and has a very good team who love children. I wish I could spend more time to be a volunteer there."

It was a great experience for all of our students to hear Dr. Sirirat. It's good for our students to learn about the living conditions in other parts of the world. They rarely, if ever, see much of the world outside of New Britain, and they need to understand that we are a part of a larger, global society. We wish to thank Rev. Meyerhoffer for coordinating the presentation, and of course, Dr. Sirirat for gracing our center with her presence.

See below for the students' points of view.

Students Speak Out Against Child Prostitution

When Dr. Sirirat came and talked to the program, I couldn't believe the things she was saying. I didn't know kids in Asia were forced into what is called child prostitution. It shocked me even more to learn that the children were as young as 9 years old.

I am so grateful to live in America, even though we are in a big recession right now. I'd rather be in a recession than be forced into prostitution. Americans don't appreciate the little things we have. We should be grateful we're not like some other countries.

When I'm older I would like to donate stuff and adopt a child of my own to send stuff to and send money to them. Dr. Sirirat showed us these cute bags that I would have bought if I had money and if she brought more bags with her. I thought it was real cool that the bags were made by some of the women she helps back in Thailand.

Dr. Sirirat has really changed my view on the world. I always forget that America is a very lucky country. In other countries many children starve. We are spoiled and I think we should donate some of our money and stuff to the other poor countries.

Thanks to Dr. Sirirat I will appreciate the little things in life. I will also donate when I'm older if I have the money. One day I would like to go over there and spend time with them.

I will appreciate more and help out the world. If I were rich I would have already helped and continue helping but if only that was true.

— Krystal Garcia, grade 11

Dr. Sirirat was talking about prostitution in Thailand and how it's not even being stopped, and how cops act like it's nothing. Children's mothers are going into prostitution and they catch HIV and still have sexual intercourse and die because of the diseases not being treated. Their children have nobody, so they go to this shelter that Dr. Sirirat has basically provided for many. I feel as if their government or whatever should at least try to stop this problem. If it leaves kids homeless and without anybody to watch over them, and their mothers are out there getting HIV and doing nothing with their lives — not saying that it's their fault and not because they want to — this problem should be addressed.

If I could do something about it, I would get everyone into it, so that everyone would know what is going on. I would find out all the hot spots and I would go after the people that are in charge or run this whole thing. It impacts everyone because that just isn't right. I would just end all of this mess and make everything better. It probably would take a while, but I would get the job done.

— Diego Peralta, grade 12

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These individuals fought very hard to keep us in the state budget and we are extremely grateful for their diligence and perseverance. These legislators wisely determined that while difficult economic times require serious spending cuts, an investment in successfully-evaluated teen pregnancy programs is an investment in today and the future. These legislators truly have the best interests of their community in mind.

We would also like to send a special thank you to our board member and friend, Kathleen Sauer. We cannot fully express our gratitude for her constant efforts on our behalf. She is the chairwoman of our Board of Directors' Legislative Committee and the fact that we have retained our funding is a direct result of her committed efforts. We have made it through one of the most difficult times in our agency's history, and we could not have done it without Kathleen and the New Britain legislative delegation. From all of us at Pathways/Senderos, thank you!

Shining Pathways of Success: Teen Pregnancy Prevention Conference



This past June, Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention Inc.'s Pathways/Senderos Center collaborated with The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy to present "Shining Pathways of Success: Teen Pregnancy Prevention Conference." More than 70 people gathered at Trinity-on-Main in New Britain to hear professionals in various social service positions talk about the importance of successfully-evaluated teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Sarah Brown, chief executive officer of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, spoke about the rising national trend in the teen birth rate and what types of programs are needed to combat this trend. Susan Philliber, senior partner at Philliber Research Associates, talked about the importance of evaluation in successful programs. A representative from U.S. Rep. Christopher Murphy's office expressed the congressman's pride in being associated with Pathways/Senderos. Finally, in the afternoon, Pathways/Senderos' students, alumni and parents were able to speak about their experiences at Pathways/Senderos. The personal stories really

shed light on the powerful effect that programs like Pathways/Senderos can have on individuals and their families.

Thank you to all those in attendance and thank you to our wonderful presenters!

An Open Letter of Thanks

On behalf of the students, alumni, parents, staff and board of Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention Inc.'s Pathways/Senderos Center, we wish to sincerely thank former U.S. Rep. Nancy Johnson and U.S. Rep. Christopher Murphy for all of their hard work and support over the years.

Without the efforts of Congresswoman Johnson, our teen pregnancy prevention conference would not have been possible. She held the torch for us for many years. Her initial support for funding allowed our conference to happen, and her ongoing support for and encouragement of teen pregnancy prevention in Connecticut has helped our program thrive. We greatly appreciate all she has done, and all that she continues to do, for our program and for our communities.

We are also very grateful that Congressman Murphy has been such a staunch supporter of teen pregnancy prevention, thereby making it a non-partisan issue. He was able to secure the funding which Nancy Johnson sought for us, and he has continued to be a champion for our cause. With his support, we have been able to increase the awareness of our program throughout the community and positively affect more youths and their families.

We truly appreciate the support of these two wonderful people. We are forever grateful for their efforts on behalf of the Pathways/Senderos Center and their ongoing support for successfully-evaluated teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Thank you both so much!

— Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Inc.

Otis-Hispanic Leadership Forum Grants Award to Pathways

On Sept. 24, Pathways/Senderos was honored as the recipient of the Otis-Hispanic Leadership Forum's Annual Fundraiser Dinner at O'Porto Restaurant in Hartford. Pathways/Senderos was chosen by Otis-HLF as this year's honoree after an intensive online search of worthy recipients.

All proceeds from the dinner went to Pathways/Senderos Center. We cannot thank Otis-HLF enough for such a great honor and a wonderful evening. There was a terrific dinner, a silent auction, a raffle and even live music! Before the dinner began, Jocelyn Colon from Otis-HLF introduced our program and our executive director, RoseAnne Bilodeau, briefly addressed the nearly 80 people in attendance and expressed her gratitude for HLF's selection.

After her speech, a Pathways/Senderos graduate and a current participant, **Angelica Zapata** and **Brandon Carrero**, respectively,

talked about their experience with Pathways/Senderos and what the program has meant for their lives.

We received overwhelming support from those in attendance. Many offered their time and their skills to the program, giving us their business cards in order to coordinate a time to talk with our youngsters at the center. We have never had so many young engineers and lawyers willing to volunteer and speak with our students! It is important for our students to see and hear professionals from various careers and we are very excited to have them at our center. This was an extraordinary night and we met some very kind, compassionate people.

We sincerely appreciate all the support and we are grateful for this honor bestowed upon us by the Otis-Hispanic Leadership Forum.



Meet Our...



...New Volunteer: Courtney Molter



Courtney Molter began volunteering in May through a graduate program in which she is enrolled. She found the match through an online search. "It chose me rather than me choosing it," she said. Having attended Central Connecticut State University, she felt comfortable in New Britain. An art teacher in Newington for grades kindergarten through

fifth, she was well-acquainted to working with youngsters. Her previous teaching position was in Hartford where she taught lower-income children of diverse ethnicities. "I missed the diversity," she said. "When I started at Pathways, it seemed like the right thing."

Courtney's art talent emerged when she was a child and she plans on continuing creating throughout her life. "It's my passion," she said. "It's how I process the world around me."

She said art is a great way to bring people together and it has been fun to introduce them to different projects such as splatter painting, clay, collages and during a recent session, designing a huge butterfly. "I don't teach art; I bring it so they can enjoy themselves, express themselves," Courtney said. "I love the kids."

"We do lots of fun things. It doesn't matter how good or bad you are," said **Sarah Mahaffy**, a sixth-grader. Sarah's favorite project has been splatter painting on canvas.

"She's really talented and brings wonderful things," said **Imani Ingram**, also a sixth-grader.

The Joy of Volunteering

A short while ago, Connecticut Public Television aired a documentary special titled "Volunteering: The Power of Giving," featuring several heartwarming stories of volunteers at various non-profit agencies in Connecticut. During live station breaks, members of more than 20 nonprofit agencies in Connecticut described their missions and their need for volunteers.

Pathways/Senderos' Community Education Coordinator, Geoff Elterich, was able to speak briefly about our successful teen pregnancy prevention program and the increased need for volunteers at the center. Pathways/Senderos' High School Coordinator and two Pathways/Senderos' volunteers also participated in the event, answering phone calls from individuals watching the program who were looking to give their time to non-profit organizations throughout the state. It was a great opportunity to spread our message and receive some recognition.

The event was particularly relevant to us, considering the importance of volunteers at the center. Unfortunately, due to the state's budget crisis over the summer, we lost some staff members.

"If we need help, she'll help us out," added **Jessica Martinez**, a sixth-grader.

Her work at the center has also included "hanging out" with the youngsters and going to the swimming pool with them this summer. The high school students are busy with schoolwork, jobs and their own activities, so her work has been primarily with the middle-schoolers, though all are welcome for any session.

Courtney said she benefits greatly from the relationship with the students. "They enrich my life, add something special to life."

...New Volunteer: Maritza Sanchez



Maritza Sanchez has had a connection to Pathways/Senderos Center for years: many of her nieces and nephews have participated in the program. A medical assistant, she is also attending Tunxis Community College in Farmington. A course requirement is volunteering. When researching opportunities online, Pathways popped up first: She knew it was a perfect fit.

A new volunteer, Maritza is settling into the program by building friendships with the students and helping any way she can from assisting staff to joining in activities. She said she likes being at the center and looks forward to seeing her volunteering develop.

Volunteers have become more important to the program than ever before. We always need more adults to serve as positive role models for our youngsters, and we have numerous volunteer opportunities available at the center. Tutors and mentors are crucial to the success of our program.

The youngsters at the program benefit greatly from positive adult interaction. Our program model has a heavy focus on academics so we need people to assist our youngsters in all subject areas, from middle school math to high school English. Job Club is another important component, and we often have presentations from various business professionals around the community. It is important for our students to see what is available to them after high school graduation. It is also important for them to know that people care about them.

So if you have some time to give, and if you want to make a difference in a child's life, call Geoff at (860) 229-2776 for more information on volunteering at Pathways/Senderos.



Our Kids Shine

...In Middle School:

The end of the 2008-09 school year was a busy one for our middle school students here at Pathways/Senderos. The middle school students continued to do well in school. For the fourth quarter of this past school year there were seven students on the honor roll: **Rafael Montes, Dennis Villanueva, Ananda Thillet, Brianna Cirianna, Danerick Peralta, Tavares Neal** and **Alicia Davis**. We also had eight students that were promoted to high school and 11 new program participants that were promoted to middle school.

The summer proved to be busy as usual, despite the fact that we had limited resources. However, we had near-record attendance for the summer and all of the youngsters that attended participated in the daily components. They also went swimming on an almost-daily basis. We did have the opportunity to take the students to one of our board member's homes for a barbecue and swimming, a tradition that has been happening for four years and always proves to be a wonderful time.

Now the students are back to school, ready for another school year. This year we have 23 middle school students. A majority of our students attend the New Britain middle schools. We also have one student attending Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford and another who attends an independent school. All of the students are looking forward to the new experiences this school year will bring.

— By Heather Mills, Middle School Coordinator

...In High School:

For our seniors, the new school year brings about the end of his or her high school career, while many others are just beginning their journey.

During the summer, a vast majority of the high school students were involved with our Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program. This summer the students focused on numerous elements of the world of work, such as time management, personal qualities and money management to name a few.

Each student began to think and develop a vision for his or her future. Whether they were going to be a freshman in high school or about to enter their senior year, each student learned vital job skills and life skills that they will continue to develop and perfect as their time with us continues.

All of the students collaborated on writing a book this summer, something that has become a yearly project. This summer's book, "Nobody But Us," carries on the tradition of students writing vignettes about certain subjects that are part of their lives and encompass their thoughts. Each student worked diligently on their section and contributed some amazing, entertaining and deep perspectives on life. The students all worked hard this summer and plan to continue their hard work into the school year.

This year we have five seniors who will be finishing their high school careers and going off to some sort of higher education. **Brandon Carrero, Diego Peralta, Josette Sanchez** and **Kassandra Burgos** are all seniors at New Britain High School and **Joshua Wrice** is a senior at E.C. Goodwin Technical High School. During the next three months, these students will be finalizing their college searches, filling out college applications and begin to ready themselves for the transition from high school to higher education.

While these students are on the tail end of their high school careers, nine freshmen are beginning their journey. **Mike Matos, Daquan Frink, Tavares Neal, Felix Gonzalez** and **Alicia Davis** are all freshmen at E.C. Goodwin. **Danerick Peralta** is a freshman at Sports and Medical Science Academy in Hartford. **Antanique Jordan** is a freshman at the Greater Hartford Academy of Arts in Hartford. **Jessica Maldonado** and **Millie Molina** are freshmen at New Britain High. We wish all these freshmen the best of luck as they start their high school careers. It should be another exciting year for all the high school students at Pathways/ Senderos and we look forward to watching them grow, in and outside of the classroom.

— By Nick Jakubowski, High School Coordinator

**Check out our Web site www.pathways-senderos.com
for the latest news, photos and information about events.**



CENTER BRIEFS

A Day at the Lake



From left, Emilio "Geo" Martinez, Rafeal Montes and Brandon Carrero.

Before the start of the school year, our board member and friend Kathleen Sauer welcomed our youngsters into her house by the lake in East Haddam, Conn. It turned out to be a beautiful day, one of the few sunny days this summer, and the kids had a blast. They were treated to hamburgers, hot dogs, corn on the cob, fruit, chips, candy and ice cream with homemade whipped cream.

They spent the afternoon in the lake, swimming, floating on rafts, using the paddle boat, and playing with water guns. The most amusing part of the day was watching all of the youngsters trying on wetsuits. It was absolutely hilarious watching them put them on backwards, trying the wrong sizes, and splashing around in the water once they finally got the suits on. Our students had a very long summer, considering budget cuts and staff shortages, so they really deserved to have a day of pure fun.

Kathleen, we cannot thank you enough!

Our Wish List

With 60 students participating in the program, we are always in need of certain supplies. Thank you for considering picking up a few items when shopping. Questions? Call Geoff Elterich at (860) 229-2776.

- Office supplies including copier paper, #2 pencils, pens (blue, black, red), staples, labels, Wite-Out, glue sticks, Post-its, etc.
- School supplies including 3-ring binders, loose leaf paper, pocket calculators, etc.
- Hand sanitizers.
- Dish detergent.
- Kitchen sponges.
- Paper towels.
- Hygiene supplies including shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, feminine products, soap, etc.

Rained Out ... Again

In past years, rain once canceled the annual Pedaling for Pathways Bike/Walk-a-thon, the largest fundraiser of the year. To dodge inclement autumn weather, this year's event was scheduled for Sept. 27 but to no avail. Once again the skies opened and let loose a deluge, forcing another cancellation. On Oct. 2, in honor of the bike/walk-a-thon, students, staff and supporters walked around Walnut Hill Park. We're hoping for better weather next year!

Students Pen Third Book



This summer, the students in our Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program, sponsored by Capital Workforce Partners, collaborated on our third book, titled "Nobody But Us." Twenty-one middle school and high school students, ages 14 to 16, worked tirelessly on their segments every day during the summer. The result is a collection of honest, heartwarming and introspective stories about these youngsters from New Britain. The book provides a fresh and interesting perspective on the lives of today's teens. We'd like to thank **Brandon Carrero** for once again designing the cover of the book. We are very proud of our students' hard work and their willingness to put their lives and thoughts on display.

The book will be published within the next few weeks and will be available to purchase for \$15.

Visit our web site, www.pathways-senderos.com, or call Geoff at (860) 229 2776 for purchasing information. Our two previous books, "Silenced Teen Voices Heard" and "Life + Love, Sex + Struggles," are still on sale as well.

The Holidays Are Coming ...



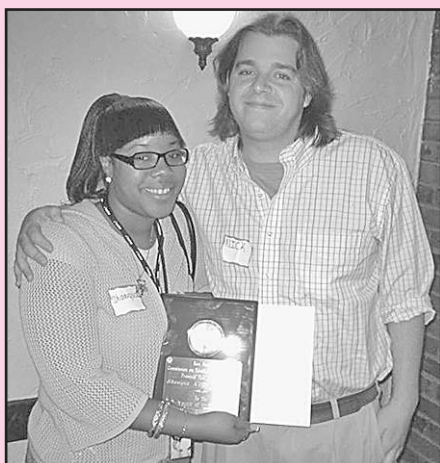
Our Pathways/Senderos youths and their families deserve to celebrate a joyous holiday season. Thus, each December we celebrate with a special family party complete with gifts, dinner and a visit from Santa Claus who brings a box of goodies to each student.

We need your help in making it possible. Can you contribute new, unwrapped items that are appropriate gifts for preteens and teens? Ideas include CD or cassette players, calculators, toiletries, sports equipment, watches, photo albums, disposable cameras, socks, slippers, gift certificates, umbrellas, games, sweatshirts, T-shirts, gloves, hats, and school or art/craft supplies. Tickets to sporting events, museums and movies are welcome. We also need wrapping paper, ribbons and adhesive tape. Groceries are also appreciated, especially those that can be used for the holiday dinner such as canned fruit cocktail, canned vegetables, stuffing, potatoes, juice, rolls and frozen turkeys.

All contributions will be gratefully accepted before Dec. 11. For further information, call Geoff Elterich, Community Education Coordinator, at (860) 229-2776.

Thank you for making Christmas 2009 especially memorable.

Fourth Participant Wins Youth of the Year Award



Shaniqua King-Barrington, left, receives congratulations from Nick Jakubowski, High School Coordinator.

We wish to congratulate **Shaniqua King-Barrington**, the recipient of the 2009 New Britain Youth and Family Services' Youth of the Year Award. This is a great honor for Shaniqua and for Pathways/Senderos. Four out of the past five winners have been Pathways/Senderos participants: Awilda Rodriguez, Reggie Roberts and Angelica Zapata. Shaniqua is an excellent role model to her peers in and out of school and she is very deserving of this honor. She is now a freshman at the University of Bridgeport, on a full four-year scholarship, where she is studying to become a physician's assistant.

She was one of only 18 students nationwide selected to be a part of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy Youth Leadership Team. She traveled twice to Washington, D.C. to talk about the truths and consequences of teen pregnancy. She has met with New Britain's state legislators numerous times to discuss her life and the positive influence Pathways/Senderos has had upon it. Capital Workforce Partners named her a "Rising Star" because of her commitment to herself and securing her future. She has co-written two published books with Pathways, which led to her appearance on National Public Radio's "The Faith Middleton Show." Much like the previous Youth of the Year Award winners, Shaniqua is the first in her family to go to college.

We are very proud of Shaniqua and her accomplishments. Congratulations!

Established in 1993, Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Inc. (GNBTPP) is based on Dr. Michael Carrera's successful prevention model developed in Harlem, NY. The Carrera philosophy states "In order to create an environment where positive change can occur, it is necessary to influence multiple facets of young people's lives over a continuous and prolonged period of time." Because academic success is the key to teen pregnancy prevention, the core of this program integrates educational support with career/vocational preparation and family life education. To accomplish its goals, GNBTPP has created a public-private partnership involving all of the community's key stakeholders that maximizes existing local resources. Programming and participants at GNBTPP are evaluated annually by an independent social scientist to insure that outcomes are measured accurately.

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