

Triton High School senior awarded Peace Fellowship Scholarship

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NEWBURY — Morgan Foster has been working for peace and justice within her community for quite a long time, since elementary school in fact.

At 8 years old, Foster raised money as a participant in the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center's annual Walk Against Violence.

Ten years later, Foster is not only raising money but also working to educate other women. She has spread her support across the community, involving not only herself but her peers as well. In past years, she has hung fliers and organized informational meetings to gather a team of nearly 50 students for the Crisis Center walk.

"I've really been inspired by helping women," Foster said.

This year, to honor Foster's hard work within her community, the Newburyport chapter of Women's Action for New Directions awarded its annual Peace Fellowship Award to this promising high school senior. WAND, which awarded Foster a \$1,000 scholarship, is a national organization that encourages women to actively support peace, justice and the reduction of violence within their community.

Since her fundraising began a decade ago, Foster has raised almost \$100,000 for the center through her organization of walking teams from Triton Regional High School, where she has also created a teen dating violence prevention presentation to not only involve but educate her peers as well.

Foster, now 18, became involved with violence prevention and education when a family friend asked for her help in raising money for the Crisis Center walk. Traveling door to door, the young girl went to community members collecting donations for the center.

Foster said the more she did it, the stories of the abused women at the Crisis Center inspired her to do even more.

"At the time, I didn't know what it all meant," she said. "But as I grew older, I realized the importance of what I was doing."

But Foster's work within her high school did not end with Crisis Center fundraising. Inspired by the women she had met during the walks as well as her participation with the Crisis Center, she went on to organize multiple presentations on teen dating violence in order to further educate her peers on the dangers of abusive relationships.

"I know a number of girls who have been in abusive relationships with their fathers or boyfriends," Foster said. "I want them to know that they are not alone and that there is help."

In addition to her work with violence prevention, Foster also works as a community service officer in her high school. In the future, she hopes to continue her community service work as she heads off to her first year at Wheaton College.

For the past three years, the Newburyport chapter of WAND has offered the Peace Award to young men and women graduating high school as well as those already pursuing education at a post-graduate level. Students from Greater Newburyport submit an application as well as an essay to compete for a \$1,000 scholarship. The essays and applications are evaluated by a committee composed of WAND members.

"We look for students with qualities of leadership and perseverance toward peace and justice within their communities," said Barbara Hildt, chapter leader for Newburyport WAND. Hildt also said that it was Foster's commitment to women's crisis centers and violence prevention that made her an excellent candidate for the award.

This year's award was presented at a public ceremony Monday night at the Peace Garden located on the Newburyport waterfront, an area created by Newburyport WAND in 2005.

"We hope that by giving this award, we are encouraging Morgan as well as other students to pursue their studies and work toward peace and justice," Hildt said.

Morgan is the daughter of Candy Way and Roger Foster and is a resident of Newbury.