

THREE ERLH TEENS WIN TOP HONORS AT HIGH SCHOOL

Three of our teens have been singled out by their teachers for a 2014 “People’s Choice Award” from Lenape High School. These awesome young people were praised at a ceremony on May 14, 2014 for their maturity, honesty, compassion, enthusiasm and even for helping one educator become “a better teacher, a better parent and a better person.”



TIFFANY MAJETTE with her teacher JENNIFER GAFFNEY

“I remember once, when I was a little girl, asking my mom what the halos around the heads of the angels and saints in a medieval painting were. She told me, “When people are really good inside, they glow.” “Oh,” I answered her, “so I guess there aren’t any really good people left in the world now because you never see any of those in real life anymore.” But she explained to me that there truly is a “light of goodness” that emanates from certain people. (And, moms are always right!) As an adult, I have witnessed that inner spark in so many people. Sometimes, you might have to look a little harder to see it, but in others, that light is truly blinding. Such is the case in my People’s Choice nominee, Tiffany Majette. I first met Tiffany her freshman year when she helped her English class win our annual poetry contest by motivating them to create a class poem with the theme: “Love...there’s an app for that!” Her care for others and enthusiasm about sharing it were both inspiring and infectious. Since then she has shared her beautiful voice and talents with Lenape on many different occasions and events over the years. I was most impressed, however, when I got the chance to see her connect with middle school students on an outreach trip our Lenape SADD club took to Harrington. Tiffany spoke there with such energy, confidence and compassion, and made me realize she’s the type of person who can use her many gifts to touch others and change their lives for the better. Sadly today, it seems people are losing

the ability to make eye contact with others, but I don't think I ever passed Tiffany once in all her years at Lenape without her catching my eye, smiling, and saying, "Hello!" Even in a dark, crowded hallway, she "shines". I am going to miss seeing her and the spark she brings to Lenape, but know she is going to light up the world wherever she goes."



WILL FEASTER with his teacher LARRY S. TRITTMATTER

In the always honest and interesting conversations I've had with my People's Choice recipient, I find myself repeating the words maturity, choices and potential an awful lot. Through our mutual conversations, and several disagreements as well, there exists an honesty and confidence I haven't been able to take part in with many students. I genuinely respect Will Feaster and his view of the world. Will has grown into a thoughtful and sure young man who can do anything he decides to set his mind to. I value our relationship and our ability to speak to one another candidly about things that really matter. It has been said that "maturity is the ability to think, speak and act on your feelings within the bounds of dignity." This certainly applies to senior, Will Feaster. Thank you for being yourself Will, and I wish you nothing but the best in all that you do beyond Lenape!



ISIAH RODRIGUEZ with his teacher JENNIFER MORGAN

I have struggled to write this for months because Isiah Rodriguez is difficult to define in a two minute speech. I could tell you about his amazing transformation from a confused freshman who followed the crowd to a focused young man and senior ready to take on the world. You might be impressed to hear that Isiah gave up his lunch period every day last year to audit my senior English class as a junior. I could wax poetic about the fact that I can mention his name anywhere in this school and students and staff alike will respond, "I love that guy!" I could crack jokes about how mosquitoes refuse to bite Isiah purely out of respect, his personality is so magnetic that he cannot carry credit cards and his charm is so contagious that they have developed a vaccine for it. However, the most heartfelt thing I can say is Isiah, thank you for making me a better teacher, a better parent and a better person. Your honesty and openness forces me out of my comfort zone more times than I can count. Your strong faith inspires me to embrace my beliefs without fear or apology. Witnessing your transformation keeps me from becoming discouraged and reminds me that everyone is capable of change. Thank you for being my touchstone and a part of my life.

*** Will and Isiah were Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center students ***