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Marchbanks named post, state Military Youth of Year

Fort Leavenworth Youth of the Year Celesté Marchbanks named 2017 Kansas Military Youth of the Year.

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Fort Leavenworth Youth of the Year Celesté Marchbanks, Leavenworth High School senior and a member of Harrold Youth Center on post, was named 2017 Kansas Military Youth of the Year March 6 in Topeka, Kan.

Harrold Youth Center Director Michelle Eastburn said Youth of the Year is the highest recognition a Boys and Girls Club member can reach within a local chapter. Eastburn said Marchbanks was well prepared for the state competition.

“We’re very excited that Celesté won Kansas Military Youth of the Year and happy she will represent us at regionals in San Antonio, Texas, this June,” Eastburn said. “The process is very competitive and progresses from local and state to the regional level and culminates with the national competition in Washington, D.C.”

With the state honor, Marchbanks receives a \$5,000 scholarship supported by local Boys and Girls Clubs of America sponsors.

Marchbanks was among eight candidates who had advanced to the state level where they presented their qualifications and delivered prepared speeches to a panel of judges. Eastburn said that Marchbanks has distinguished herself as a member of Harrold Youth Center since the sixth grade. Marchbanks’ mother, Child and Youth Services Assistant Director Zaida Rodriguez-Lodge, first brought her to the youth center early in the morning before work. It is a place Marchbanks said she felt immediately accepted.

“Celesté first showed herself to be a positive and dynamic representative of youth through her service with the youth center,” Eastburn said. “She’s been involved in most of our programs.”

Marchbanks said participating in the Girls Go and Smart Girls clubs at Harrold were ways to get involved with making a positive difference in her community and in the lives of others, and she has seen the value of the center’s leadership offerings.

“The military is known for leadership; and all military youth centers are affiliated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America,” Marchbanks said. “Through that resource we have Keystone Club and Torch Club that offer opportunities for our leadership development as youth.”

Marchbanks said the Youth of the Year process looks at the candidate’s service to the youth center, community and family as distinguishing qualities. She said academic performance, moral character and public speaking abilities are important as well.

“My speech comes from my life experiences and how to use everything you encounter toward something positive. It is centered upon my times here at the youth center,” Marchbanks said. “The speech will allow the judges to connect with you on a deeper level than a two-dimensional resumé on sheets of paper.”

Marchbanks said her family is a positive factor in her life. She said she is encouraged to excel in her activities at home, at school and within the community at large.

Marchbanks is a member of the National Honor Society, Kansas State Honor Society, LHS Pioneer Ambassadors and the LHS Junior ROTC program, in which she serves as first sergeant for the Drum and Bugle Corps. She has also served as captain of the LHS girls soccer team.

Marchbanks said her goals include attending college and playing soccer at the professional level.

“I am going to Bethany College in West Virginia to study business management and minor in economics,” Marchbanks said. “My personal goal is to eventually play professional soccer. I have a passion for that sport and enjoy teaching others here at the youth center how to play.”

Eastburn said Marchbanks has assisted with community projects and with other programmed activities associated with the youth center.

“She has also volunteered over 1,000 documented hours of her time since the third grade as a member of the Girl Scouts and by way of activities at school,” Eastburn said. “Celesté has made a tangible commitment to community service.”

Marchbanks said the Youth of the Year process is rigorous, but worth it because investing that much time has helped her improve as a person. She said other youth should consider getting involved in the process.

“I was simply looking for scholarships, and the staff at Harrold Youth Center told me about Youth of the Year as a possibility,” Marchbanks said. “The youth center offers programs that build personal leadership abilities youth will need to succeed in high school and beyond. Programs such as the homework lab,



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Fort Leavenworth Youth of the Year Celesté Marchbanks, right, senior at Leavenworth High School, talks with Naomi Noble, ninth-grader at Patton Junior High School, after school March 2 at Harrold Youth Center. Marchbanks was named Kansas Military Youth of the Year in a ceremony March 6 in Topeka, Kan. She received a \$5,000 scholarship and will compete in regional competition this summer in Texas. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

where you can study and do your homework immediately after school, are very significant. (Harrold has) cooking, technology, sports activities and more to choose from — with great adult staff as on-site mentors.”

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