



Trumbull teenager cited for volunteerism

By Meg Barone
CORRESPONDENT

BRIDGEPORT—A Trumbull teenager's commitment to helping others has been recognized with an international award for her and summer camp scholarships for 175 local children.

Stephanie Davis, 16, an incoming junior at Trumbull High School, on Tuesday was presented with the Violet Richardson Award in a ceremony at Cesar Batalla School before a group of about 180 people, most of them children enrolled in the city's Lighthouse after-school program. Davis was given the award because of her four years of volunteering and fundraising for the Lighthouse program, beginning when she was 12 years old.

After the ceremony, Davis was swarmed by the second-graders she works with weekly, all of them offering her hearty hugs.

"She helps us with our work and teaches us new games. She does a lot of helpful things," said Kadarah E. Elliston, 7, of Bridgeport.

"She is so friendly to me and I like that about her. She

always helps me with my work, like math and science," said Javier Torrealba, 6, of Bridgeport.

Peyton Stern, 7, and Aaliyah Beason, 6, both of Bridgeport, said they enjoy playing outside with Davis and braiding her hair.

"I know how important it is for kids to feel that someone cares about them and their education. By helping them with their education they'll be able to prosper for the rest of their lives," Davis said.

The award honors young women between the ages of 14 and 17 around the world for community service. Davis was selected from 28 region-level winners from North, Central and South America, Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan to receive the award, which is bestowed annually by Soroptimist International, a volunteer organization founded more than 80 years ago for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world. The local club, Soroptimist International of Greater Bridgeport, was

chartered in 1992.

"It's the highest award in this program," said Sara Nichols, governor-elect of Soroptimist International Northeastern Region.

Davis received the award from Robert Tremaglio, her principal at Trumbull High, and Hector Sanchez, the principal of Batalla, where Davis does her Lighthouse volunteering. Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch was also on hand, and he praised Davis for her "commitment to other human beings."

That commitment began 10 years ago when Davis and her mother, Cynthia Davis, began babysitting for the women who lived at Operation Hope, a women's shelter in Fairfield, while those women were interviewing for jobs.

"She comes from a family of volunteers. She has gone above and beyond anyone's imagination," said Tammy Papa, director of the Lighthouse program. She said Davis was the winner of all three levels of Soroptimist International's award—local, regional and federation. Each level came with a monetary award totaling



NED GERARD/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Stephanie Davis, of Trumbull, is surrounded by her second-grade students from the Lighthouse after-school program at Cesar Batalla School in Bridgeport following a Tuesday afternoon ceremony during which she received an award from Soroptimists International.

\$5,000, which was donated to the Lighthouse program in Davis' name. That funding was used to provide summer camp scholarships to 175 children citywide, Papa said.

"You're a wonderful person and we love you," Papa told Davis.

Davis seemed uncomfortable with so much attention focused on her, but said she was willing to accept it if it

encouraged children to engage in community service. "I want kids to be inspired to make a difference in the lives of others, make a difference in the world," she said.