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Youth leaders learn skills for college, life

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Local leadership

Top 12 youth leaders

The 12 scholarship winners in the 2011 Youth Leadership Bartholomew County program:

- Lucy Guo
- Macy Thornburg
- Lauren Lewis
- Christina Huang
- Evelyn Schultz
- Jordan Patterson
- Anton Hopkins
- Alicia Williams
- Karen Ma
- Luke Galle
- Margaret Newton
- Jamie Rothbart

To donate toward future scholarships, contact Pam Voelz, 372-4292 or Nita Whaley, 418-5207.

Columbus North High School senior Lucy Guo is bold.

She embraces opportunities to learn about diversity, and she is a natural leader.

Left: Local participants in the 2011 Youth Leadership Bartholomew County program were, from left, front: Lucy Guo and Margaret Newton. Seated on chairs: Alicia Williams, Evelyn Schultz, Macy Thornburg, Christina Huang, Lauren Lewis and Karen Ma. Standing: Jordan Patterson, Anton Hopkins and Luke Galle.

Below: John Slater, left, Tricia Souza, Molly Rinehart and Emily Scheidt share lunch.

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Learning and lunch!

Guo learned this about herself and gained skills that are helping her prepare for college through the Youth Leadership Bartholomew County program.

"I think it just gives kids a boost of confidence that they have more potential than they see in themselves right now," she said.

More than 170 local high school seniors participated in the program that recently culminated with a day of leadership training, hands-on learning, a luncheon with local community leaders and an awards ceremony to recognize their accomplishments.

For more than 25 years, the program has begun each February with a group of high school juniors who carry at least a B-plus average and demonstrated leadership in their school, community or church.

That kind of well-rounded look at what makes a leader is what helped earn Columbus Signature Academy New Tech High School senior Jordan Patterson sixth place in this year's leadership program. In addition to carrying a 4.14 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale, the 18-year-old plays football and basketball, has participated in mission trips to Alaska, held a free basketball camp for children from low-income families and participates in his church's youth group.

Patterson said the leadership program made him aware of his strengths as a leader and the areas in which he can improve. And the program's required resume, essay and interviews with community leaders helped him practice skills he'll need.

"It was a really good experience," said Columbus East High School senior Anton Hopkins. "The resume and essay especially helped me prepare for applying for schools and scholarship programs."

Participation in this year's youth leadership program was up about 20 percent from years past, according to Pam Voelz, co-chairwoman of the leadership day. The program, which began as a project of Columbus Rotary, for the last six years has been sponsored by Columbus Service League.

The top 12 student winners earned scholarships totaling nearly \$5,000, and the top four were invited to participate in the Leadership Bartholomew County program.

On this year's leadership day, participants discussed and debated which historical leaders demonstrated the strongest leadership qualities. They also worked through a hands-on demonstration that showed what it feels like to be the victim of discrimination. Leading the leadership day were Columbus Parks and Recreation Director Ben Wagner and Elise Foster, a leader in the Kelley School of Business.

Nita Whaley, co-chairwoman of the leadership day, said participants wrote letters describing their goals.

Organizers will return the letters to students in March.

"So often, these kids are so busy that it's easy to lose sight of their goals," Whaley said. "This is just a great way to remind them of what they're working toward." Patterson encouraged this year's juniors not only to participate in the leadership program but to make sure they "try their best."

"The experience was great. There's a lot of competition, but we're going to have that going on to college and getting a job," he said. "It really helps you prepare for the future."