

Two Mississippi youth honored for volunteerism at national award ceremony in Washington, D.C.
Monday, April 30, 2018 06:07:00 PM (GMT)

Olympic gold medalist and World Cup champion Lindsey Vonn pays tribute to Nettleton and Indianola students

WASHINGTON, April 30, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Mississippi's top two youth volunteers of 2018, Grace McAllister, 15, of Nettleton and Jameshia Attaway, 14, of Indianola, were honored in the nation's capital last night for their outstanding volunteer service during the 23rd annual presentation of The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. Jameshia – along with 100 other top youth volunteers from across the country – received a \$1,000 award and personal congratulations from Olympic gold medalist and World Cup champion Lindsey Vonn at an award ceremony and gala dinner reception held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. Grace, who was unable to attend last night's events, was honored in absentia for her outstanding volunteer service.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, sponsored by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), named Grace and Jameshia Mississippi's top high school and middle level youth volunteers in February. In addition to their cash awards, they each received an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip with a parent to Washington, D.C., for four days of recognition events.

Grace, a member of Monroe County 4-H and a freshman at Nettleton High School, has collected and donated more than 1,000 new stuffed animals to comfort children traumatized by sexual abuse and let them know that they are not alone. Grace knows firsthand the immeasurable pain of being abused by a person she trusted. "Being a survivor of sexual abuse at the hands of my own father, the one person who should protect me, not hurt me, I decided I wanted to help other victims," Grace said.

Grace was abused from the age of 6 until, at 10 years old, she found the courage to tell her stepmother what was happening. What followed were months of interviews, counselors, lawyer visits, court appearances and the disbelief of some family members, she said. She felt nobody understood. So, Grace created a YouTube video to tell her story and encourage others to "break the silence." It's been viewed more than 40,000 times. She then contacted a local Family Resource Center with a proposal to provide stuffed animals to young abuse victims. She held collection drives through her Facebook page, raffled off a huge teddy bear to raise money, and partnered with local businesses to collect stuffed animals. She also started an "ambassador" program to encourage children in other states to collect stuffed animals for their local resource centers. "I have gained the knowledge that I am a survivor, not a victim," said Grace. "I have seen that small tokens of love and hope can make a difference. I have gained back myself from volunteering."

Jameshia, a member of Girl Scouts Heart of the South and an eighth-grader at St. Joseph High School, supplies five schools in her area with personal hygiene items that she collects for students who have a need for them during the school day. An avid volunteer whose role model is her mother, Jameshia was inspired to start her project after hearing a girl in her school restroom say she needed a sanitary napkin. "She was embarrassed to walk out of the restroom," said Jameshia. "Seeing young girls the same age as me having to leave school because they don't have sanitary napkins, or a child being picked on because they smell, made me sad. I promised myself that if I ever got enough money, I would place personal hygiene products in schools within my area."

So, after getting permission from the school district and arranging for staff members to assist her, she began raising money and collecting donations by competing in pageants, speaking to civic organizations, soliciting businesses, and applying for grants. Within three months, she had supplied five schools with personal hygiene items such as soap, towels, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes and sanitary napkins. She recruited two students at each school to stock the items and notify her when supplies run low. "Students don't have to leave school or call home if they need something," she said. "They can stay in class and learn."

"These honorees exemplify something we've known for a long time – that young volunteers have the power to bring meaningful change to their communities," said John Strangfeld, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial, Inc. "These students have shown leadership and determination well beyond their years, and it's a privilege to celebrate their service."

"Through their acts of service, these honorees drive home a powerful lesson for their peers: that one student really can make a difference," said Daniel P. Kelley, president of NASSP. "We are honored to shine a spotlight on the compassion, drive and ingenuity of each of these young volunteers."

Youth volunteers in grades 5-12 were invited to apply for 2018 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards last fall through schools, Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and affiliates of Points of Light's HandsOn Network. More than 29,000 middle level and high school students nationwide participated in this year's program.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program was created in 1995 to identify and recognize young people for outstanding volunteer service – and, in so doing, inspire others to volunteer, too. In the past 23 years, the program has honored more than 120,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

For more information about The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards and this year's honorees, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com> or www.nassp.org/spirit.

About NASSP

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council. Learn more at www.nassp.org.

About Prudential Financial

Prudential Financial, Inc. ([NYSE: PRU](http://nyse.com)), a financial services leader, has operations in the United States, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Prudential's diverse and talented employees are committed to helping individual and institutional customers grow and protect their wealth through a variety of products and services, including life insurance, annuities, retirement-related services, mutual funds and investment

management. In the U.S., Prudential's iconic Rock symbol has stood for strength, stability, expertise and innovation for more than a century. For more information, please visit www.news.prudential.com.

Editors: For pictures of the Spirit of Community Awards program logo and medallions, visit <https://spirit.prudential.com/resources/media>.

For B-roll of Mississippi's honorees at the 2018 national recognition events, contact Prudential's Harold Banks at (973) 216-4833 or harold.banks@prudential.com.



☐ View original content with multimedia: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/two-mississippi-youth-honored-for-volunteerism-at-national-award-ceremony-in-washington-dc-300638800.html>

SOURCE Prudential Financial, Inc.

Contacts: Harold Banks, Prudential, (w) 973-802-8974, (c) 973-216-4833, harold.banks@prudential.com, Robert Farrace, NASSP, 703-860-7252

Countries: United States

Industries: Banking & Financial Services, Education, Insurance

Languages: English

Primary Identifiers: PRU-US

Related Identifiers: PRU-US

Subjects: Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Interest Groups