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## 4 local girls winners for Laws of Life essays

By The Times-Union  
 Special to River City News,

Local non-profit Empowerment Resources Inc. recently teamed up with Atlanta youth organization Chosen Heirs Inc. for the Laws of Life Essay contest.

Empowerment Resources' Journey Into Womanhood program was invited to participate in the essay competition, and four of the girls from the local program placed in the top seven. Journey Into Womanhood participant Nikki Young placed first in the essay contest and received prizes that included a savings bond and gift card for shopping.

Nikki's essay was on the topic of self-discipline. She wrote about her summer experience at the University of Florida, where she took part in a health care program.

These are some of the girls and their parents attending the Atlanta banquet for the Laws of Life Essay contest winners, from left, Nikki Young, Kim Harris, Jasmine Harris, Janay Badger, Kaila White, Keica Love, Elaine White and Paul White. Special

"I learned what self-discipline is during the three weeks that I was at UF," Nikki wrote. "I had many things that tried to get in my way while in the program at UF. The self-discipline that I learned will be an aid for me with my success in the future."

The contest was designed to help young people reflect on and write down values that will help them live a productive and successful life. The four Jacksonville girls who placed in the top seven were:

First place: Shawntavia "Nikki" Young, 17, 11th-grader at Fletcher High School, \$200 savings bond.

Third place: Charla Hamilton, 12, sixth-grader at Darnell-Cookman Middle School, \$50 savings bond.

Fourth place: Erica Mitchell, 17, 11th-grader at Paxon School for Advanced Studies, \$50 savings bond.

Fifth place: Kaila White, 12, seventh-grader at James Weldon Johnson Middle School, certificate of participation.

Empowerment Resources' mission is to make children and families stronger and empower them to be successful leaders in the community. The organization was founded in 2003.

The Journey Into Womanhood program provides empowerment tools for girls to have a choice of what their life will entail for their futures. It is for girls ages 12-17 and consists of 12 topics that include academics, health and nutrition, social/interpersonal skill and development, and community involvement and appreciation. Curriculum for the program is presented through a series of workshops co-facilitated by community organizations and leaders. The program also consists of cultural field trips (museums, plays, parks, and college campuses), creative writing and community service projects.

While in Atlanta, the girls visited the historic King Center, university and college campuses, and participated in Make A Difference Day.

Applications are being accepted for the next semester of the Journey Into Womanhood. The organization also offers a math workshop and reading workshop. For more information, call 268-8287.

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