



Everyday Heroes' and young scholars honored by 100 Black Men, Urban League and Verizon



'Everyday Heroes' and young scholars

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“True heroes are all around us,” the video narrator said as the audience sat eagerly waiting to shower love on St. Louis’ ‘Everyday Hero’ winner and contest finalists on Saturday afternoon. “They inspire us by teaching, mentoring, breaking barriers and innovating to create a better tomorrow.”

Friends A Meeting Place was the perfect venue for family and friends to come and cheer for finalists Torri Anthony, Darlissa Diltz, Amy Hunter and JoAnna Vann and Everyday Hero Koran Bolden.

But it would be safe to say that for the plenty of influential citizens who joined Verizon – along with the 100 Black Men of Metropolitan St. Louis, The St. Louis American and The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis – had never heard of how this handful of gems were quietly serving St. Louis and offering immeasurable support by way of their respective initiatives.

“We at Verizon recognize the power of one person,” said Kevin Buie, Network Team Manager for Verizon Wireless. “To create change, touch lives and make a very real difference – whether it’s at home, school or the community and beyond.”

And according to Jim Buford, president and CEO of The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, the program going against the grain of awarding the usual suspects among civic and community leaders was a beyond a good thing.

“The way that you’ve done this over the past three years has been awesome,” Buford said as he spoke specifically to Verizon. “You pick out the people who make a difference where the rubber meets the road. Some of us get awards – and rewards – but the people you have here today are the ones that really do God’s work and I think that it’s a special award.”

From volunteer work to ministry, music and random acts of kindness, the lasting impact and impression of these heroes rippled through the room.

“Today we will honor individuals who have given their time, their resources and their many talents,” Buford said. “They give all that they have to create a change in our community. I am honored that Verizon picked the 100 and the Urban League to participate in this program.”

Now in its third year, Verizon’s Everyday Heroes, is a national program that recognizes modern day heroes who make a difference in the community and touch the lives of others. The community votes online to select a winner among five finalists based on a video uploaded to the Verizon Everyday Heroes site.

“It is truly exciting and it is a great honor to highlight these individuals for flourishing in education and giving tirelessly to make a difference,” said Jacque Land, executive director of the 100 Black Men of Metropolitan St. Louis. “You are true role models that personify the iconic essence that make up the fabric and foundation of this community.”

They were all worthy candidates, but the public ultimately voted for Koran Bolden – founder of Street Dreamz recording Studios – to represent St. Louis as its 2013 Everyday Hero.

His studio focuses on creating music with uplifting messages – and he uses those messages, along with the power of music, to help young people move their lives in a positive direction.

“The recording studio was inspired by the fact that in today’s society there’s no positive message in today’s music,” Bolden said. “I think the most powerful feeling in the world is to be able to speak a word over somebody’s life and see that word sprout up and become something they never could have seen for themselves.”

He’s also a motivational speaker whose programs on leadership and character development have reached more than 30,000 children and teens.

In addition to the public recognition, each finalist received a special plaque, cash prize and Verizon Galaxy 2 tablet.

“This is our award,” Bolden said as he spoke to the finalists. “And I’m just so happy that Verizon has done something for us to get recognized –because we need to get poured into as well.”

Today’s scholars – and tomorrow’s leaders

Saturday’s ceremony was also an opportunity to honor the 2013 winners of the 100 Black Men’s annual black history month Essay contest.

“Our city of St. Louis producing leaders of tomorrow who are thriving in education,” said Richard Miller, co-chair of the 100 Black Men’s Education division.

3rd Prize winner Xavier Williams of De Smet Jesuit High School, 2nd Place winner Courtney M. Walker of Belleville East High School and 1st Place winner Jordan Mosley of Cardinal Ritter College Prep received scholarships and a Verizon tablet for their efforts.

Ms. Keona Griffin was also recognized for her efforts to recruit students to participate in the scholarship essay contest.

The students were asked to ponder how much greater of an impact would black leaders like Harriet Tubman, Fredrick Douglas or Dred Scott use today's technology (smartphones, tablets, social media, etc.) to further their cause?"

"The impact of high-speed wireless internet and mobile technology on the lives of our young people is profound," Buie said. "We see this new technology as a great equalizer. They use mobile technology and social media to have a voice – they can share their own thoughts and pictures and create social movements that can change the community and maybe even change the world."

And as the audience sat back and listen to the winning essay, the notion of how invaluable the technology – which is available at our fingertips – was made plain even before he began.

"I was going to print out my essay," Mosley said. "But I thought about the subject and decided it would be more appropriate to read it from my Galaxy Note II...powered by Verizon Wireless lightning speed 4G Network."

The audience couldn't help but erupt with laughter.

As he recited his essay, Mosley talked about Harriet Tubman using GPS to navigate slaves to freedom, Frederick Douglass taking advantage of YouTube to upload his speeches and social media to alert fellow abolitionists of meet ups and the talk to text technology that would have eliminated the barrier Dred Scott's illiteracy must have presented as he attempted to be hands on with his case.

It would be Scott's case that Mosley offered the most compelling impact of today's technology by way of the virtually unlimited information that is readily available.

"Modern technology provides a certain transparency and accessibility to legal and social policy that was simply unavailable then," Mosley said. "Today Dred Scott and his attorneys would have been able to build a much stronger case in the recognition of what he really was – which was a free man."

Once again the audience felt compelled to cheer and shout as the teen pointed out how blessed the current generation is with the gift of today's technology.

"I am proud to be here today for a lot of reasons," Buford said as he stood beaming from the presentation. "I'm a proud member of the 100, I am proud to be CEO of the Urban League and I am a proud graduate of Cardinal Ritter Prep."