

Article from the Sun-Sentinel

Lauderhill student-athletes honored for academic achievement

Paige Pierre-Louis doesn't perceive herself as anything special, but the City of Lauderhill begged to differ.

The city honored the 12-year-old student from New River Middle School with the Sports Advancing Kids Education Scholar Athlete of the Year Award for her accomplishments in the classroom, as well as her athletic skills with the Cheetahs Track and Field Club. Along with the recognition came a check for \$1,000, which will be used to further her education.

The 7th Annual SAKE Awards Ceremony was recently held at the Parkway Middle School of the Arts in Lauderhill and put an emphasis on champions in the classroom as well as on the field. Fellow Scholar Athlete of the Year nominees, Cameron Jones of the Lauderhill Broncos Youth Football League and Michael Manna of the Lauderhill Giants Baseball and Lions Soccer, were also recognized for their achievements and each received a \$500 check.

"I just believe that our freedom, our happiness and our success depends on education," Lauderhill's Parks and Leisure Services Director Irvin Kiffin said. "The more we can get these kids to understand and develop who they are, the better it will be for our community and our world. I love kids and understand the importance of having a village around them for support and positive direction. We understand the importance of SAKE and of kids going to school getting good grades. If you believe in yourself you can do just about anything."

Former San Francisco Giant and Philadelphia Phillies baseball player Pedro Feliz was the guest speaker for the SAKE Awards. The Dominican native enjoyed a 20-year career in the minors and majors, culminating in a World Championship with the Phillies in 2008. Now with a business in Lauderhill, he wanted to support and give back to the community.

"Life has been very good to me and when I was growing up in the Dominican Republic, we didn't have the wonderful facilities that Lauderhill has made available to the kids," Feliz said. "What the children have today is precious and they need to appreciate it and have respect for their coaches, parents and city officials. This is an important occasion for the young kids."

Pierre-Louis, a 3.8 GPA student, was very humbled after receiving the award.

"I thank God for giving me the ability to be successful in sports and in school," Pierre-Louis said. "My parents were very instrumental in pushing me to do better and supporting me and I dedicate this award to my grandfather. I'm shocked that I even made it this far and it's a good feeling. The award shows that I'm a hard worker."

The SAKE Awards acknowledged many other winners. Sportsmanship Award went to Cash Lewis of Lauderhill Giants Baseball; Volunteer of the Year was Veronica Smith of Broncos Football & cheerleading; Leadership Award was awarded to Christopher Baptiste for his involvement in Youth Football Programs; The Monford Johnson Community Service Award went to Broncos football PA announcer Jonathan Lederman; Team of the Year was the Lauderhill Broncos Jr. Midget Cheerleading squad; The Charles Bingham Coach of the Year was presented to Cheetahs Track & Field Coach Darryl Wright.