

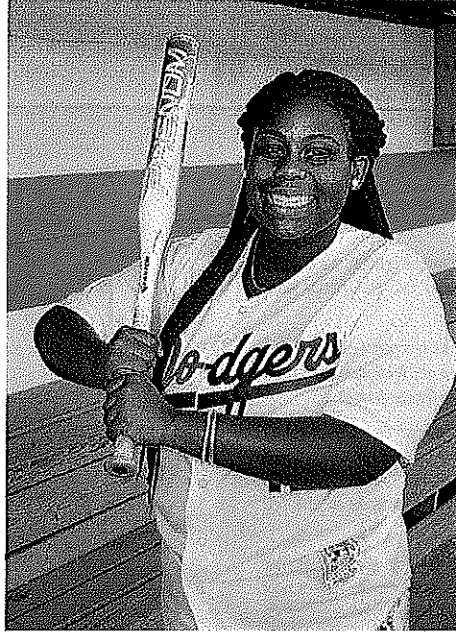
Teen of the Week: Annapolis High teen fosters goodwill as 'change agent'



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Raegan Parker, 15, an sophomore at Annapolis High School, and a member of the school's softball team, shows off her favorite sports jersey. It bears the logo of the old Brooklyn Dodge's team, which, in 1947, hired her inspiration, Jackie Robinson. He was the first African-American ballplayer in Major League Baseball. (By Wendi Winters, Staff / August 29, 2014)

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of Haitian teens her age.

By Wendi Winters, wwinters@cappgaznews.com

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Annapolis High School sophomore **Raegan Parker** has several goals she'd like to see achieved before she graduates.

An enthusiastic member of the Panthers' softball team, Raegan would love to see the team win a game. Just one. Though it works hard, the team hasn't had a winning score in five years.

She may get her wish. A new coach is being sought for the next season.

Playing softball since she was 9, Raegan plays second base for the Panthers.

Last summer, the South River Seahawks softball team organized a summer softball team. They invited the Annapolis team to play alongside them. Raegan was one of three girls who joined the team. The combined team played 13 games against Southern, a second South River team, Arundel and Severna Park High Schools.

The Bywater teen hopes to visit Haiti before she dons her cap and gown. When the island nation was hit by a devastating magnitude 7.0 earthquake Jan. 12, 2010, Raegan read the gruesome news reports and first learned about Haiti's grinding poverty, lack of education, food and resources.

"I look at my life," she said. "Any of those Haitian kids could be me."

She is saving her money to visit the country. Raegan plans to film a documentary contrasting her life and lifestyle with those

As a member of Annapolis High's Black History Club, she's traveled with club members to New York City. Once there, they rode uptown to Harlem and visited the famed **Apollo Theater**. The 100-year old building, now on the National Register of Historic Places, was originally a "whites only" burlesque showplace. Falling into disuse, it reopened as a music hall catering to the Harlem community in 1934. Through the years, it has showcased many legendary African-American performers.

Like teens everywhere, they also enjoyed shopping on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

Odessa Ellis, the coordinator of the Black History Club, first encountered Raegan last fall. She was impressed.

"Her positive personality stood out immediately," Ellis said. "As a freshman, she stood in as emcee at the last-minute of our Black History Program and did a fantastic job. She is a multi-talented young lady."

The teen's deep interest in the history of black Americans was sparked in third grade by Mildred D. Taylor's 1976 novel, "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry." She's avidly watched movies like "Mississippi Burning," "Rosewood," and "Ghosts of Mississippi" — a film about the 1994 trial of white supremacist Byron de la Beckwith accused of assassinating civil rights activist Medgar Evers in 1963.

At her church, Asbury United Methodist Church, she wrote and produced several short black history plays during its February Sunday services.

The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme student is involved in her school's Leadership Series, which meets three times monthly. During the sessions, Raegan and her classmates learn leadership skills from guest speakers and in interactive exercises.

"Raegan's strength is her character and leadership, which has been shown in her participation in our Signature Program Leadership Series," said **Eric Elston**, the Signature Program facilitator. He noted Raegan volunteered on a **Habitat for Humanity** field trip to build a home for a family in need.

"She is always willing to work with her peers that need support and never impatient," Elston said, calling her a "change agent" in the school community, as she works to help the other students understand the importance of honoring all cultures and appreciating differences in points of view. "Raegan is not afraid to be an individual, take the unpopular viewpoint and have the facts to justify her statements. She has proven the true skill set to be a global change agent to foster good will."

The high school's pilot program, Change Engineering, also counts Raegan as one of its participants. The program provides a platform for "business and community leaders to engage the Annapolis High School students, faculty, and business partners in thought-provoking dialogue about Change Engineering trends and possibilities in business," according to the school's website. It is typically introduced at the college and graduate school levels.

"It's a great program," Raegan said. "We visited **Northrop Grumman** and built radios from scratch. We've visited a fire station at BWI Airport. The instructors want us to see different aspects of life."

In eighth grade, Raegan was invited to join the Doing It Via Academics Successfully, or DIVAS, a mentoring group at Annapolis Middle School.