

Awards Abound, 2005 MARFY Reception & Ceremony—Excitement in the Air

By The Writers' Pool

Wednesday evening, May 18th, 2005, Sheraton Barceló, Annapolis, Maryland—excitement was in the air! Two young men, representing GUIDE's Oak Lane Therapeutic Group Home in Prince George's County, and a community volunteer who had been nominated by GUIDE's Barrington Road Therapeutic Group Home in Baltimore City, along with staff and friends were excited participants in the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth's (MARFY) Annual Awards Reception and Ceremony. Dale and John had both been nominated by



Endrias Afework, the Program Director of the Oak Lane House, for Youth Achievement Awards at this year's banquet. The young men who were previously honored by the GUIDE Board of Directors on April 13th have been making great strides in their academic pursuits and

their participation in activities at Oak Lane. Dale whose attendance record has been excellent has received recognition from his school particularly for his success in Math, and was selected the "Most Improved Student." Mr. Afework reports that "Dale exhibits an "I can do it attitude" and is a "role model" for other youth "who reside with us at Oak Lane." John, who averaged a 3.2 grade point average during the last quarter in school, has earned himself a place on the Honor Roll for "demonstrating superior achievement and academic excellence." According to Mr. Afework, John has successfully secured a summer job and is exploring college or other opportunities. Both young men, who are exemplary ambassadors for the Oak Lane Home, are in the process of evaluating their future plans for after departing from GUIDE.

Ellen Torres a volunteer mentor at GUIDE's Barrington Road Home and member of the Barrington Home's Community Advisory Board, had been nominated by Jennifer Carberry, the Program's Director, for the Volunteer of the Year Award this year. According to Ms. Carberry, "Ms. Ellen" has been an incredible asset to the child she mentors. In addition to being his educational surrogate, Ms.

Ellen also visits weekly and provides opportunities for service learning hours, recreational activities, guidance, and support. Ms. Ellen's positive spirit and energy help keep the child she mentors focused, and perhaps most



importantly, "she gives him hope for the future." Ms. Ellen refers to herself as "the gum stuck under his shoe." According to Ms. Carberry, "she is no less than a miracle in his life, as she has become a surrogate family who is always available to assist the youth in meeting his goals and taking personal responsibility for his choices."

The Annual MARFY Awards Ceremony provides an opportunity for member agencies like GUIDE to recognize and honor program participants who have made exemplary progress toward meeting their goals, as well as recognizing community volunteers, and others whose unbounded energies and good will so often make the critical difference for the success of children and youth. According to GUIDE's Executive Director, Scott Birdsong, "although GUIDE's nominees did not win the top prizes this year, they are true 'winners' in our hearts. We're honored to be associated with Dale and John and are sincerely proud of them. Ellen Torres' fidelity to service and her sustained mentoring activities are a wonderful gift, and she's a person we all should do well to emulate."



In addition to John, and Dale, Ellen Torres, Jennifer Carberry, Endrias Afework, and Scott Birdsong, GUIDE guests attending the MARFY dinner included Kevin from the Oak Lane Home,

Amanda Findley, Oak Lane's Clinical Coordinator, Michael Marable, Oak Lane Residential Supervisor, Teresa Garcia from the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteering, Lynn Birdsong, and Michael Jones, one of GUIDE's Assistant Directors and member of the MARFY Board of Directors. Before departing for the evening, the assembled GUIDE guests joined together in a spirited chorus of "Happy Birthday" (with other MARFY agency guests joining in) and birthday cake was served in recognition of John's birthday that just happened to coincide with this year's Awards Ceremony.

