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High school student starts a nonprofit

By **KAYLA WASHKO**
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Kayla Washko File
Photo

JOHNSTOWN — Not many high school students include founding a nonprofit in their list of accomplishments.

But that's exactly what Daisytown resident Breanna Lincoski did seven months ago.

Lincoski works in tandem with Albert Gallatin Hospice to operate Kid-to-Kid Connection, a bereavement program for kids coping with the loss of a loved one.

She said the idea for the program came through personal experience with bereavement.

"I lost my grandpa to lung cancer, and during that time I relied a lot on my friends," said the California Area High School sophomore.

"I thought kids might want to talk with other kids in difficult times, and the hospice didn't have a bereavement program for kids yet."

Lincoski estimates there are 88 families in the Washington County Area with a child that could participate in Kid-to-Kid Connection. She said she and her team members, who come from five school districts in the county, initiate contact with these children by writing letters to them to explain the purpose of Kid-to-Kid Connection and provide the child with a team member's contact information.

"I assign a student that has similar interests so they have something in common to talk about," Lincoski said.

"We correspond with the kids using letters, phone calls, Facebook, and texts – whatever works," she added.

Lincoski's impressive civic engagement – which includes more than 1,000 hours of volunteerism with the Pennsylvania Institute of Conservation Education, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Wildlife Society, and the Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation – earned her the sophomore community service award from The Challenge Program Inc.

Lincoski said she heard about The Challenge Program through her older brother, Ron, a two-time community service award winner at California Area High School. Ron was recognized for refurbishing the World War I, World War II, Korean and Vietnam Memorials in Daisytown.

"I really look up to my older brother," Lincoski said.

"I've seen the difference he's made in the community, and I want to make a difference, too."

Lincoski hopes to use her \$250 Challenge Program award money to fund events for Kid-to-Kid Connection.

"I would like my team to be part of Camp Shining Star, where the child can come for a day of fun activities and remember his or her loved ones," Lincoski said.

The Challenge Program Inc. awards at California Area High School are sponsored by Progeny Systems Corp.

Mark Flitton, operations specialist for Progeny, said he is impressed by Lincoski's commitment to her local community.

"The fact that she is willing to take her award money and put it back in the community shows her initiative," Flitton said. "She's willing to take the chance to make a difference."

Flitton said that students like Lincoski are the reason Progeny supports The Challenge Program.

"The Challenge Program, Inc. is a vehicle to help students become successful and give back to their communities," Flitton said. "The light comes on for some of these kids as the result of the program."

"That's really what the future is all about – the students. I applaud all the students who make a change in their communities or make a change in themselves."

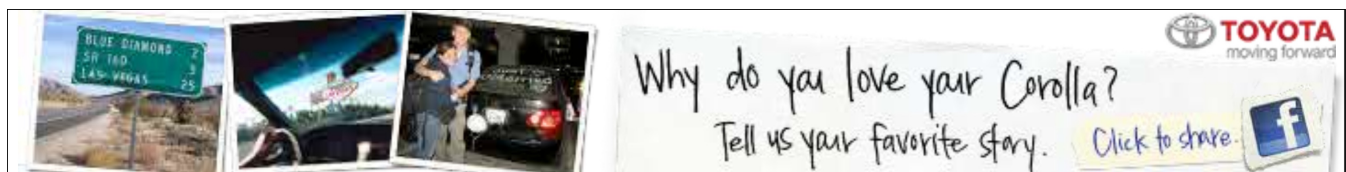
Lincoski plans to operate Kid-to-Kid Connection during her remaining time at California Area High School.

She hopes Kid-to-Kid Connection will play an important role in Albert Gallatin Hospice's bereavement program.

"Not only will children benefit from this program, but the families and the student volunteers that give their time and their hearts to this program," Lincoski said.

"If this helps one child, then the program is a success."

The Challenge Program Inc. is a nonprofit that partners with business to motivate students in and out of the classroom. This partnership creates good habits in students and provides businesses with tangible results for their contribution. For more information, visit www.tcpinc.org.



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