

North Marion students meet the Challenge

By Angelee Wiley Times West Virginia | Posted: Tuesday, October 14, 2014 4:00 am

Program rewards

strong work habits in five

categories

RACHEL — Teachers in high school always preach about the importance of attendance. On Monday, students at North Marion High School found out just how important attendance can be, when some of the students won \$200 for having perfect attendance last year.

It's all a part of The Challenge Program Inc. This program was created in 2003 by a man named Dan Perkins. He wanted to do something to give back to the community, so he went in to a school in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and started The Challenge Program Inc. From that moment, the program took off and schools from all over the area wanted to get involved.

The Challenge Program Inc. is a nonprofit organization that partners with businesses to build strong work habits in students.

There are 123 schools from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland and Kentucky that are a part of the program, and 14 of those schools are here in West Virginia.

The Challenge Program is for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors. There are five categories within the program in which students can win awards: attendance, STEM, volunteer, academic improvement and academic excellence.

A winner from each of the three grades is chosen for each award, meaning that there are five sophomore winners, five junior winners and five senior winners.

Fifteen winners in total are chosen from each school, and each winner receives a check for \$200.

The Challenge Program partners with more than 100 local business partners. The business partners then choose a school they want to sponsor to be a part of the Challenge Program.



ENERGY

Madison Haught (from left, Mary Dreliszak, Amy Dobkin and Joseph Hartley gather around The Challenge Program Inc. banner during Monday's award assembly at North Marion High School.

Mary Dreliszak, director of program development at the Challenge Program Inc., said it's important to get businesses involved because students can see that there are people out in the community who care.

"It's important for students to not only see a company sponsoring them, but also see they could work with that company one day," said Dreliszak.

Dreliszak said she loves to go to different schools for Challenge Program assemblies, because she enjoys having the opportunity to inspire the students.

"You never know how many students you will impact, but if you can impact just one, you've made a difference," she said.

North Marion joined this program two years ago when it partnered with XTO Energy, which also sponsors six other schools.

XTO Energy decided to become a business partner, because of the success students were having from being a part of the program.

"XTO learned of The Challenge Program and learned of the success students were having around the state, and we wanted to get involved," said Amy Dobkin, community relations manager at XTO Energy.

Dobkin was at North Marion Monday to present the winning students with their checks. She was honored to congratulate the students for all their hard work.

"Today we had the opportunity to see some of the most outstanding students in the school, and we also got to see some true leaders," said Dobkin. "Being a part of a program that motivates students to do their best and be their best is incredibly rewarding."

Joseph Hartley, a senior at North Marion, received one of the awards given out Monday for volunteer hours that he completed as a junior.

Hartley completed 32 hours of community service last year by volunteering with the Preston County EMT, as well as helping the Leo Club at North Marion.

The Leo Club works with the Lions Club to help those around the community in need. Hartley loves being a part of the Leo Club, and he said he plans on using the money as an additional way to give back.

"As a person who likes to help the community, since I won the \$200, I am giving my \$200 to the North Marion Leo Club," said Hartley.

Hartley is currently the president of the Leo Club, and he said the \$200 he won will really give the club a boost, as well as an opportunity to expand.

Hartley said that he is glad North Marion is a part of The Challenge Program Inc. because it has really encouraged students to be more focused at school.

“I’m very grateful,” said Hartley. “I’ve seen kids not show up, and it really encourages kids to step up to the plate.”

Dreliszak hopes that The Challenge Program will get students excited and encourage them to work as hard as they can. She loves to see the potential each student possesses.

“It is such a pleasure to be able to come to the school and look at these students and see they have the potential to become what they want to become,” said Dreliszak.

Students who received awards during Monday’s presentation include: Teiyanna Bolyard, Bryce Denoon, Emily Doshier, Megan Haller, Hartley, Madison Haught, Lauren Higginbotham, Dominic Mullenax, Noah Redmond and Rachel Wiley.

Email Angelee Wiley at awiley@timeswv.com or follow her on Twitter [@AWileyTWV](https://twitter.com/AWileyTWV).