

Local student wins national recognition for essay

An Eastside High School student is one of just a handful of winners of a nationwide essay grant competition for student-athletes.

Senior Nylee Alston's essay was among ten chosen for top honors out of more than 1000 entrants to the United States Tennis Association Foundation's National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) competition. Her selection includes a \$5000 award.

For the last five years, Nylee has been involved with Aces in Motion (AIM), a free after-school program for middle and high school students that according to its website "promotes academic achievement, life skills development and healthy lifestyles," primarily through tennis, but also through such activities as college trips, tutoring, and other enrichment activities. AIM is a chapter of the NJTL Network.



"The program and the coaches really push you to be the best you can be," said Nylee. "It's helped me feel more confident."

"We are so proud of Nylee, not only for winning such a prestigious award but for being the first AIM participant to do so," said Executive Director Addison Staples.

The prompt for this year's essay competition was "Everyone measures success differently. How do you measure success in your academics, tennis and character development?"

In her essay, Nylee talks about using a 'tennis mindset' to achieve success. That includes working with people, patience, leadership and pushing herself. Her essay also stresses the importance of education.

"Success is more than being famous or having money, because you can lose it at any time," she wrote. "But education is something that you will always have and you could take that and be something better with it."

Nylee and her fellow national award winners were recognized at a special virtual ceremony in late September that included such guest speakers as 18-time Grand Slam champion Chris Evert, Daymond John of ABC's Shark Tank and WWE star and former Gator Thaddeus Bullard.

Four other AIM students were state level winners in the essay competition. They include: Howard Bishop Middle 8th-grader Jadah Clark in the 14 and Under Female category; Eastside High senior Audrianna Mosley in the 16 and Under Female category; Eastside High junior Javon Marshall in the 16 and Under Male category; and Eastside High junior Jeffery Hamilton in the 18 and Under Male category. Nylee was also the state winner in the 18 and Under Female category.

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