

Program rewards doing right thing

CAREacter awards go beyond athletics

BY MARK BURGESS
burgess@knews.com

It happens in every school.

Glorified are the touchdown makers. Often forgotten are the good-grade makers.

The strong-armed quarterback gets star treatment, while the third-string, 5-foot-8, 135-pound defensive back who delivers food to the needy works in obscurity.

Lenoir City High School teacher Dave Moore has seen it happen too often in his 31 years as an educator and coach.

That's why he's spearheading the CAREacter Star Athlete of the Week program.

Through Moore's program, coaches and schools are given a chance to recognize the "other" stars, the players who simply "do right."

"That's the basis of the program," Moore said. "What about the kid who may not play much? He may be on special teams or just rest the starters, but he practices every day and he's on time and he's in class. He's a good kid and he's trying hard to do things the right way.

"We've kind of missed that kid. Those are the kids we want to reward."

The program has branched out from its start in Loudon County a year ago to include nine Knox-area counties, four schools in Virginia, one in Kentucky, one in Georgia, the University of Tennessee, UT-Chattanooga, Carson-Newman and Maryville College.

"We're getting slammed with positive response and feedback from coaches and parents," Moore said. "It's everything and more I thought it would be."

CAREACTER STAR ATHLETES

High School

Anderson County
Clinton
Oak Ridge
Alcoa
Heritage
Maryville
William Blount
Campbell County
Jellico
Austin East
Bearden
Catholic
CAK
Carter
Central
Farragut
Fulton
Gibbs
Grace
Halls
Karns
Powell
South Doyle

Athlete

Cody Seiber
Weston Hazelhurst
Jeremy Vaughan
Randell Cobb
Michael Lindsey
Jeremy Sands
Alex Holley
Open
Travis Sowders
Josh Hinch
Shawn Cunningham
Matt Pfeifer
Trevor Brown
Jake McDaniel
Jermain Kirkland
Alex Encarnacion
Phillip Bates
Brandon McMahan
Brandon Lipps
Wesley Kitts
Briar Fritts
Kenny Cruze
Derek Wilcox

High School

TSD
Webb
West
Greenback
Lenoir City
Loudon
Coalfield
Oakdale
Sunbright
Wartburg Central
Harriman
Kingston
Midway
Oliver Springs
Rockwood
Oneida
Scott
Gatlinburg-Pittman
King's Academy
Pigeon Forge
Sevier County
Seymour

Athlete

John Darr
Ward Farmer
Larry Hurston
Bunkie Van Skiver
Sam Keener
Josh Hawkins
Chris Lowe
T.J. Ruppe
John Watson
Matt Rose
Travis Gann
Josh King
Seth Lyle
B.B. Bailey
Ronnie Dyer
Shay West
Stephen Kries
Hunter Turner
Lane Beam
Cody Fleming
Will Hewitt
Tyler Gamble

"When people see these kids out on the street, or a Wal-Mart, or at Red Lobster, if they're wearing that T-shirt, I'm hoping people will go give them a pat on the back because it's a complete, total person award," Moore said. "They've been singled out as a person who is doing right in a time when so many aren't doing right."

Possible donors, sponsors and volunteers can reach Moore or Vaughn at care365star@yahoo.com, by calling 865-966-CARE, or writing them at 12235 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN, 37922.

Coaches select players based on five criteria — attitude, character, grades, community service and performance.

"Performance isn't just based on how they play for two hours on Friday or Saturday," Moore said. "It's how they perform all week in practice, on and off the field.

"He may be a 5-foot-2, 115-pound twig his freshman year, but eventually by doing right and doing the things that make up a successful person in the game of life, that kid will eventually succeed."

Every award winner — from UT to the smallest high school in East Tennessee — gets the same award.

Each week coaches nominate a player who receives a certificate and T-shirt featuring the five points of criteria pictured interlocking in the five points of a star.

"I think everyone appreciates what it means and what it stands for," Moore said. "You want that solid individual. As coaches and

teachers, we want to develop those solid people.

"To do that, we need to start basing their recognition on seven days a week, not just those two hours."

Cissie Vaughn, Moore's partner in organizing the CAREacter program, had an eye-opening experience when she delivered an award recently to Tennessee School for the Deaf.

"I witnessed a very special, emotional moment between coach (Dick) Henley and his player Dakota Thompson," Vaughn said. "It was then that I realized how deeply this program was touching the hearts of student athletes and coaches in a very positive way."

The program will continue with boys and girls basketball in the winter and baseball and softball in the spring.

As funds and volunteers become available, Moore has a vision of the program spreading to every sport in as many Tennessee counties as possible.