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Palisadian Activist Kaitlyn Olson Represents 'Spirit of Community'

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Palisadian-Post Intern

Kaitlyn Olson, an 11th grader at New Roads High School, was recently honored with a Prudential "Spirit of Community" Award for her involvement in numerous community service organizations, including One Global Tribe, the Name Campaign, and Global Awareness in Action.

On March 4 and 5, the Palisades resident co-produced a charity benefit at the Knitting Factory, called "Share the Love," to raise money for One Global Tribe, a network of youth around the world, united in their joint effort to raise awareness and funds towards issues such as AIDS prevention, war-affected children, and the lack of clean water worldwide.

The concert featured six bands from West-side schools, as well as free-speech poets from South Central. It raised over \$6,000 and was covered by Fox and Teen Vogue.

Currently, as Founder and Executive Director of the Youth Division of One Global Tribe, Kaitlyn is focusing on AIDS prevention, and joined last month with PEP LA to organize an event to raise awareness. John Quigley of SPECTRAL Q, took an aerial image of students lying down in the park, their bodies shaping the AIDS symbol and spelling out the word "HOPE."

Kaitlyn and several students gave speeches of encouragement to kids who were directly affected, saying "We care, we're helping."

Kaitlyn participated in a similar action in October, 2004 right before the Presidential election where Robert Kennedy Jr. lead a group of 1,000 youth through the streets of Boulder, Colorado to the high school field, and they created an image of a tipping scale that Kaitlyn designed, saying, "November 2nd, We Decide. Are we going to choose \$\$ or the Earth?" It was a fantastic example of youth organizing to make a difference.

She is also involved with the Name Campaign, which sells dog tags with the names of Ugandan children. The profits go towards rehabilitation in Uganda, a country torn by rebellion.

Kaitlyn became involved with One Global Tribe after Amy Eldon, Founder and Executive Director of One Global Tribe came to New Roads High to speak about the travesties taking place in Africa.

"I had no idea that this was going on," she said. "It was tantamount to the situation in Darfur. Since we don't really learn about this in history, I decided to independently research the situation in Uganda."

She realized that very few people knew about or understood the extent of the violence, so decided to become part of the effort to raise money and awareness towards this cause.

This year, she also participated with The Youth Intelligence Panel at Fox Studios, where a group of teens were invited to participate and discuss trends and areas of



Kaitlyn Olson packs for her trip to Washington, D.C.

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

interest for youth.

Kaitlyn's efforts, however, do not stop at Los Angeles fundraisers. Last summer, she attended Global Awareness in Action, a youth panel on world issues, sponsored by Putney Student Travel. Kaitlyn met with the other participants for about four days before traveling to El Salvador with a small student group to learn more about the poverty-stricken country. She then returned to the U.S. and gave a presentation (one of several by different students) on her new knowledge at a panel at Yale University.

On September 13-16th, Kaitlyn will lead a delegation of US teens and students to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in The Youth Employment Summit, www.yesweb.org. She will present ideas and projects of One Global Tribe with Kathy Eldon, Chairperson of Creative Visions Foundation about entrepreneurship, media training and actions and how to direct the youth (18-35) to jobs and careers in the sustainable and restorative sectors.

She will hold two internships this sum-

mer in D.C., one for Hillary Clinton, and one for Media Matters, an organization she describes as "one of the few reliable media sources." She also hopes to spend a week in July at The Center for American Progress. When asked about a possible future in politics, Kaitlyn reflects and comments, "My great grandfather, Culbert L. Olson served as Governor of California in the late 30's, and he had huge challenges implementing any positive or meaningful policies 65 years ago, and today's political climate is even more complex and difficult. I think now, time is better spent focusing on campaigns and a 'call to action' for large corporations and the private sector to take responsibility and finance grassroots activists and programs, to develop new policies that must be implemented here in the U.S. and globally to effect lasting change and uphold a sustainable future. But who knows how I'll feel 10 or 20 years from now."

After her senior year in high school, Kaitlyn hopes to attend Barnard College or Columbia University in New York.