

WAY TO DRIVE STUDENT WITH PERFECT ATTENDANCE GETS A CAR

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Headline: WAY TO DRIVE STUDENT WITH PERFECT ATTENDANCE GETS A CAR

Byline: CHANDRA BROADWATER

cbroadwater@wvgazette.com

Before she drove away in her new car, Melannie King said she didn't think she was so deserving of the gift.

"There are people less fortunate than me," she said.

On Wednesday morning, the Good News Mountaineer Garage gave Melannie a 1986 Plymouth Horizon. The Riverside High School senior was one of two county students to have perfect attendance this year.

Melannie has lived on her own since her grandmother died from cancer about a year ago. She supports herself with what she earns from her job at the Kroger in Marmet.

Since her story appeared in the Gazette almost a week ago, nearly \$3,000 has been collected to help send her to college.

Earlier this week she also received a \$1,000 scholarship from a Riverside High School fund, and another \$500 from a Kanawha County school sponsor for her perfect attendance.

With loans, Melannie plans to attend West Virginia University Institute of Technology in the fall to study printing. But she may switch to journalism because she loves to write.

The Nitro Wal-Mart started a collection for Melannie last week. The store plans to donate proceeds from a car wash and bake sale next weekend - both Saturday and Sunday at the store - to her for school.

Money from umbrellas turned upside down at registers will also be put toward the fund.

"Hopefully, we'll have several thousand dollars to give her when it's all said and done," said Danny Meadows, co-manager of the store.

Former Charleston City Councilman Bill Huffman, who now lives in Braxton County, started a collection at the Bank of Gassaway. On Wednesday, he had 40 checks totaling \$2,650.

He hopes to see the fund grow.

"I feel that the best is yet to come,"

Huffman said. "I'd also like to see someone help her manage the money, like a financial manger or someone with expertise in that area."

And though he's happy to see Melannie with a car of her own - before she wasn't sure how she was going to get to college - he hopes that a newer, safer car can be given to her.

Smith Co. Motor Cars has agreed to sell a 1997 Honda Civic with 80,000 miles to someone willing to buy the car at \$4,800 for Melannie. The car has a value of more than \$7,000.

"She's such a sweet kid, and it's such a good story," Bayes said. "Maybe this will inspire kids to do something like that. I could take my kids to school in a limo everyday, and they still wouldn't get perfect attendance."

Riverside Principal Paula Potter said Melannie has been an inspiration. Teachers didn't find out that she lived alone until they were notified of her perfect attendance.

She told them because she needed a ride to a school board meeting to get her award.

"She's so excited," she said. "We were on our way to pick up the car and she said, 'You think there's all this bad in the world, and then all these good things happen.'"

To make a donation, send checks to the Bank of Gassaway for Melannie King. The address is P.O. Box 40, Gassaway, WV 26624.

Smith Co. Motor Cars can be reached at 746-0887, or call Huffman at 533-7979.

To contact staff writer Chandra Broadwater, use e-mail or call 348-5194.