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Youth Presented Award for Overcoming Obstacles Making a Difference in NJ

EATONTOWN, NJ – Violence has had a big impact on Shyheim Manning’s life. It took his father’s life when Shyheim was only three months old. Years later, it almost took Shyheim too. But unlike some of his peers, he was determined to do whatever it took to break the cycle of violence that he had known since birth. Because of this, and many other reasons, he was awarded the Outstanding Youth of the Year Award at Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) and the state Department of Child Protection and Permanency’s (DCP&P) annual recognition awards.

The award was presented at the Pacific Concord Hotel in front of a crowd of more than 100 foster, adoptive and kinship parents and children, as well as dozens of FAFS and DCP&P staff members.

When Shyheim first went into foster care in Somerset County, he had a hard time reconciling the tough exterior he wore at home with his innate desire to do good in this world. Things were going very well for him, but on Christmas Day, the violence that he had worked so hard to escape caught up with him. While visiting his family in Newark, NJ, he was shot in the abdomen. It took time to overcome his injuries, but when he did, Shyheim began fulfilling his purpose.

Shyheim is now a role model for every student in his program. He’s the captain of the basketball team and a member of student council. His report card is full of A’s and B’s, and in just one more month, this blossoming young man will be graduating.

FAFS Chief Executive Officer Mary Jane Awrachow said, “Shyheim exemplifies what is so remarkable about thousands of children in foster care across the state – the ability to thrive after some of the most challenging circumstances. We applaud Shyheim for his resiliency and courage which are the building blocks for a future of hope and promise.”

To earn the award, Shyheim met criteria set by the FAFS Board of Directors, which includes community involvement and contributing to a positive impact on the foster, adoptive and kinship community in New Jersey.

For more than 20 years, FAFS, in cooperation with DCP&P, has recognized individuals and families for outstanding achievement in supporting children in foster care.

The mission of FAFS is to provide support, training and advocacy to meet the special needs of foster, adoptive and kinship families who provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for children in foster care in New Jersey. FAFS is a federal 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, with headquarters on Route 1 in Monmouth Junction. Simply stated, FAFS is the voice of foster, adoptive and kinship families in New Jersey.