



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *108<sup>th</sup>* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY MAY 21, 2003

## *Senate*

### COMMENDING THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD HONOREES

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I recognize Sonide Blanchard and Jeffrey Lawson for being selected as two of the Nation's top youth volunteers in the eighth annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. This is an extraordinary honor. More than 24,000 young people across the country were considered for this recognition this year.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, NASSP, constitutes America's largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteerism. The awards are designed to emphasize the importance that our Nation places on service to others and to encourage young Americans of all backgrounds to contribute to their communities.

Sonide Blanchard of Seaford and Jeffrey Lawson of Newark have been selected as Delaware's top youth volunteers for 2003. As State Honorees, each received a \$1,000 award, an engraved silver medallion and a trip to Washington, DC from May 3, 2003 to May 6, 2003 for the program's national recognition events. I am proud that they represented the State of Delaware.

Seventeen-year-old Sonide, a senior at Seaford High School, devotes a significant amount of her time to tutoring Haitian students in the English as a Second Language, ESL, program at her school. She also serves as a translator for both students and adults. When she was younger, Sonide began translating for her mother and realized how much that helped her. She soon was translating for people throughout the Haitian community. "I feel that I am helping the community rise, and I am helping the Haitian people adapt to a new culture," she said. Later, she was inspired by her French teacher not only to translate, but to tutor other students as well. She now spends 2 hours a day working with ESL students to help them succeed in school despite their limited English skills. Dedication and a strong sense of responsibility have been key to her accomplishments.

Jeffrey Lawson, a 13-year-old seventh grader at St. Edmonds Academy in Wilmington, is a peer mentor to second-grade children who are in special education. He also volunteers with the Delaware Special Olympics. While attending elementary school, Jeffrey volunteered in a special education class by reading books to students and giving up his recess time to mentor the children. After Jeffrey transferred to a private school, he missed the

kids with whom he had worked and decided to go back and volunteer. Jeffrey was able to volunteer 20 days last year. "Volunteering is important because it teaches kindness and good citizenship," said Jeffrey. He receives much of his inspiration from the children he mentors.

Today, I rise to congratulate Sonide and Jeffrey. These two youngsters are fine examples of community spirit and leadership. They serve as role models not only to their peers, but to all of us, as well as to the people they've touched through community service.