

# YOUTH PROGRAMS NAMES Youth of the Year

**A**T THE AGE OF 17, AL MONTRICE NELSON, may seem like a typical teenager with his love of drawing, listening to music and working on his car. But the North Pulaski High School junior is far from typical, and it's his hard work ethic and volunteer spirit that earned him the title of Little Rock Air Force Base Youth of the Year.

Youth of the Year is the highest honor a member of Youth Programs can receive at the installation level. The honor is modeled after the National Boys & Girls Club of America Youth of the Year program, which was founded more than 60 years ago. To compete locally, nominees submit personal essays and information packages describing their involvement with home and family, moral character, community, school, service to club and life goals. Installation winners compete in both state and Major Command competitions.

Nelson's love for service comes from his parents Al and Ute Nelson, who both work within the 19th Force Support Squadron – Al as assistant Youth Center

## vol•un•teer

n: A person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking.

director and Ute as a USDA & resource referral clerk with Family Child Care. His attitude is the epitome of the Air Force's core value, "Service Before Self."

As a young child in Germany, where his father served in the U.S. Army, he was one of the youngest Youth Programs members at Darmstadt, Ute said. He enjoyed participating in the fundraisers and base-wide events there.

Nelson's love for Youth Programs and community service has continued at Little Rock Air Force Base during the last four years. He is a former member of the Torch Club, a group of 11- to 13-year-olds who focus on recreation and community services, and now serves as the Keystone Club president,

a club for 14- to 18-year-olds seeking to develop character and leadership skills through community involvement.

Through his involvement in Youth Programs, Nelson has put in countless hours of volunteer service ranging from serving as the Easter Bunny during the annual Easter egg hunts on base and assisting with the 4th of July festival, to, most notably, using the time he was out of school due to tornado damage to serve at the Tornado Assistance Center after an EF-2 tornado caused significant damage to homes and facilities at Little Rock Air Force Base in April 2011.

"I went out the night of the tornado and handed out towels and batteries, shuttled people and collected and handed out donations at the TCAC," Nelson said.

In addition to his volunteer service with Youth Programs, Nelson worked as a summer hire for Outdoor Recreation on base this year.

"He was willing to give anything a try. He definitely learned a lot this summer," Jeremy Adams, Outdoor Recreation director, said. "He is learning a lot about life and is willing to do anything."

While balancing his summer job and volunteer duties, Nelson traveled twice during the summer to attend Air Force-level conferences, including the Youth of the Year Conference in Washington, D.C. and the Caring for People Forum in Arlington, Va. As the Air Mobility Command's appointee on the Air Force Teen Council, he participated in the teen working group, prioritized installation issues and briefed Air Force leadership using his active voice to shape the future of local programs.

Alana Myers, 19th FSS Airman and Family Services flight chief, values his dedication to community service, but also sees him as someone who will go far in life with his mature attitude.

"He exhibits his professionalism when interacting with the teens and organizations," Myers said.

Nelson has an entrepreneurial and

giving spirit, helping neighbors on base who are in need with babysitting, lawn services and errands. Fluent in German, English and some Spanish, he is already planning for his future career goals, even taking high school marketing classes that focus on sports and entertainment.

"All of my life goals are widely education-based," Nelson wrote in his essay. "I want to graduate high school with the



highest GPA out of my graduating class, and I plan on receiving a full scholarship to the college that offers the proper curriculum and the courses that I desire. I want a degree in business management and marketing."

Nelson said his involvement in Youth Programs has positively impacted his life and he plans to be a lifelong contributor to the Boys and Girls Club of America.

"The club itself has instilled a certain level of pride in me ... It taught me to be a hard worker and to set high goals for myself. The club is a chance to give back to the communities that have given so much to me. I want to help those less fortunate, and help those who have the opportunities stay focused," Nelson wrote in his essay. "... This to me is what the club is all about – joining, learning, living and helping others. This is why I am and always will be a member." ■

**To find out about the Youth Centers Torch and Keystone Clubs call 987-6355.**