

**YouthLaunch**

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**May 30, 2007****Local Student Wins Statewide Service Honor**

Omar Chavira, a 2007 graduate of John Jay High School, was awarded the YouthLaunch Scholarship for Outstanding Service for his exemplary community service. Presented with the honor on Friday, June 1, at a the YouthLaunch Annual Service Awards Luncheon in Austin, Chavira said that his volunteer work has convinced him “to be the one to open the door to a better tomorrow.”

Accumulating over 2000 service hours, Chavira explained that after his mother passed away and his father suffered a serious stroke, he knew that he had to “stop being the troublemaker and become a new man. I was determined to lead and stand out, so I could eventually get a good career and take care of my dad,” he said.

In addition to holding down a job to help with family bills, Chavira was class president, in the National Honor Society and a varsity athlete. But he says he’s most proud of starting the Big Brothers Big Sisters program on his school campus.

“I put together pictures and stories of area children living in violent neighborhoods and convinced my peers to become their mentors,” Chavira said. “I had an interview process to find the best fits, and the program took off from there.”

Chavira also organized Christmas toy drives and campus clean-ups “to give the custodians a day off.

“My service has made me think outside the box and helped me push myself to be a leader,” Chavira said. “I have faced numerous obstacles and now I know what it takes to face the real world.”

Chavira will use his YouthLaunch scholarship towards tuition at UTSA, where he will study medicine in the fall.

YouthLaunch awards three service scholarships each year to Texas high school seniors, based solely on their service, leadership and character. YouthLaunch is an Austin-based nonprofit agency that provides and promotes meaningful service opportunities for teens.