

Teen of the Week: Rachel Roth

By WENDI WINTERS, For The Capital Published 10/15/10



Artists aren't always renowned for their political acumen, much less for being savvy about business. Still, artists from Michelangelo to Andy Warhol were not naive: They became famous because they promoted their talents, sought the patronage of the powerful and knew exactly how much their works were worth.

Rachel Roth, 17, of Harwood is on a similar wavelength as she spends her senior year at Southern High School tying her disparate skills into one Rachel-sized package.

Home-schooled by her mother, along with her three younger sisters, Rachel decided three years ago she wanted to finish up her high school years at Southern High.

"Public school offered a lot of opportunities. They have sports and art, drama and dance programs," she explained. "It was a big change, a big jump. It was like switching spheres. I wanted a broader base and a chance to expand and broaden my horizons."

The teen jumped in with both feet. She currently has a weighted grade point average of 4.56, is on the principal's honor roll and a member of the National Honor Society. In June 2009, she was the math department's Student of the Month.

She is a student commissioner for the Anne Arundel County Commission on Women. As a result of her experience on the Commission, Rachel founded and directs Aspire, a series of monthly seminars for teen girls to help improve their self-esteem. Currently at Southern High, Aspire is rolling out to Southern Middle this fall.

"She has a lot of enthusiasm and is genuinely selfless of her time to help other young women to seek out their potential," said Lee Ann Blazejewski, chair of AACCU. "We have witnessed the hard work and determination that Rachel has devoted to the Aspire program. Rachel developed, planned and implemented the program independently."

Her right brain also gets a workout. Rachel has plugged into the art, dance and drama scene at school and in the community.

"She is one of the top 36 artists in this county, which is all-county for art," said a visibly proud Michael Bell, chairman of Southern's Art department. "Rachel is one of the few juniors to submit her portfolio for AP art last year. Junior year, she also won an honorable mention award at the Quiet Waters Student Art Exhibit and is a Maryland Distinguished Scholar. We're expecting big things from her this year."

Rachel has studied ballet for a decade at Ballet Theatre of Maryland. Currently, she's taking adult classes. At Southern, she's used her training to choreograph two musicals and appear in other school musicals and dramatic productions.

Her longtime dance instructor Anmarie Toulomis noted: "A characteristic that Rachel has, and has had since she was little, is her determination to follow her heart and her dreams.

"She is such an authentic young woman, and I truly admire this about her and I feel so happy that she is this way as she begins the next chapter of her life."

Rachel is involved in service activities through the school and through her church Grace Evangelical Presbyterian Church. She is a church youth discussion leader, a three-year participant in the annual World Vision 30 Hour Famine charity event, has worked on mission trips in New Mexico and Tennessee, and assists with other church community charitable projects.

Her dedication to charitable groups also lends itself to her political interests.

"Rachel has been in my U.S. government class and AP U.S. history, where she has been an outstanding student and very successful. She seems to have a keen mind for politics and is able to converse on all manner of current events with a degree of sophistication few high school students can attain. I really enjoy having political conversations with her because of her ability to exercise a mature level of discourse," said Todd E. Smith, social studies department chair.

He continued: "I was most impressed when she came to me and said she wanted to restart our moribund mock trial team. She took the ball and ran with it - organizing students, finding an attorney coach and leading the charge. I am excited by her excitement and cannot wait for the new mock trial season to begin."

From July 11 to Aug. 4, Rachel was a page at the U.S. House of Representatives, sponsored by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, of Maryland's 5th congressional district.

"I worked in the Democratic Cloak Room with six other teens," she said. "We memorized all the Democratic representatives using flash cards with their names and photos. Reps would call the Cloak Room and asked us to bring stuff to them on the House floor from their offices or to do other errands. It was an exhausting three weeks!"

While friends at home were boating on the bay, Rachel attended school each morning from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at the Library of Congress, taking courses in political journalism, government leadership and international relations. She lived in the page dorm, which had a strict 10 p.m. curfew and a buddy system.

"It was so fun, like camp, but not really camp," she said.

Plus, she received about \$700 in her after-tax paycheck.

Her enthusiasm for involvement could be in the genes. Her father, David Roth, works for the Clerk of the House of Representatives. Her mother, Sonya, home-schools two of Rachel's sisters - Camille, a seventh-grader, and Virginia, a third-grader. Her sister, Anna Margaret, is a sophomore at Southern. Sonya also teaches a tutorial course for other home-schooled children.

"I learned how people in power aren't perfect. They're human, too!" Rachel said. "They can spend a lot of time and money on needless things. The government does affect everyday life and the rampant apathy among high school students about their government bothers me."

"Voting is important. I wish more people would care and get involved. Voting is the biggest form of participation and most people don't vote. It's an opportunity to change things," she said. "If people don't take the opportunity to vote, don't come whining to me!"