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- Local News
- Sports
- Business
- Editorials
- Tempo
- Home Style
- Travel
- Health
- Technology
- Weather
- Back Issues
- Search
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- Bearcats
- Bengals
- High School
- Reds
- Xavier

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- Columnists
- Opinion

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- Movies
- Dining
- Horoscopes
- Lottery Results
- Local Events
- Video Games

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- Giveaways
- Maps/Directions
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- Coupons
- Visitor's Guide

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- Jobs
- Cars
- Homes
- Obituaries
- General
- Place an ad

Monday, December 20, 2004

Youths find ways to help others

By Anna Guido
Enquirer contributor

Two local teens are getting an assist to showcase their leadership skills.

Anderson High School senior Abby Elsener wants to help freshman girls make good choices.

A group she calls "Girls Gone Real" will have social events, community service projects and talks with experts about dating, eating disorders, peer pressure and other teen issues.

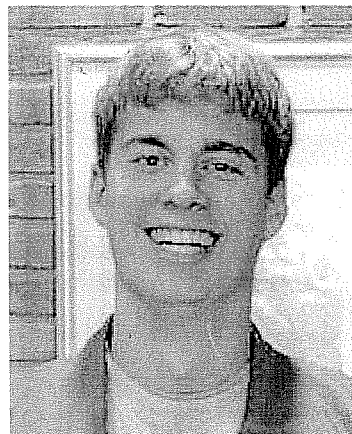
"Some kids don't have confidence and positive guidance," said Abby, 18. "My goal is to provide them with good role models in hopes that they'll be inspired to make good choices."

Mariemont High School senior Will Alsfelder, 18, wants U.S. soldiers to have necessities and comfort items while serving in Iraq.

He's collecting what he thinks would help fill the void - blankets, Nerf footballs, shampoo - and already has shipped boxes full of the items overseas.

"Some of these soldiers probably weren't going to get anything for Christmas," Will said.

To fund their community projects, Abby and Will each were given \$500 at a student leadership conference this summer at Furman University in Greenville, S.C. In March, they will return to Furman to give presentations on their



Alsfelder
Zoom

ABOUT KNOWLEDGEWORKS

KnowledgeWorks Foundation provides funding and leadership for education initiatives in Ohio. The Cincinnati-based foundation partners with public and private entities - such as the Richard W. Riley Institute of Government, Politics and Public Leadership at Furman University - that share the goal of removing barriers to education for all.

The foundation was created in 1998 through the reorganization of the Student Loan Funding Program. With more than \$200 million in assets, KnowledgeWorks Foundation is one of Ohio's largest philanthropic partners in education.

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work, which will be judged against the work of 10 other teens.

4777, or visit the foundation at www.knfdn.org.

Winners will receive money for their school social science department.



Elsener Zoom

The summer conference, called Emerging Public Leaders, is co-sponsored by KnowledgeWorks Foundation of Cincinnati and is open to high school seniors in Ohio and South Carolina.

"We want some diversity, but it's hard to make it wide open all over the country," said Furman University professor Dorianne Norwood, program coordinator.

The goal of the third-year program is to offer students with leadership potential experiences that will enable them to gain confidence, motivation, information and skills needed to become public leaders in domestic and international policy areas, Norwood said.

There is no cost to students involved in the program. It features local, state and national governmental leaders and political science faculty at Furman, a private liberal arts college with 2,700 students.

In their applications, students must provide an assessment of needs in their communities and their projects must address some of those needs.

"We spend a good bit of time with them on how to carry out community projects and how to leverage their \$500," Norwood said.

Abby's hope is that Girls Gone Real "grows to become a bigger part of Anderson High School."

Principal Diana Carter said Abby's project is unique in that it addresses the issues facing young freshman women and, if successful, could lead to the development of a similar student-run group for boys.

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