

Join us in supporting a local student

Two weeks into the new year, we're all normally focused on sticking to, and moving forward with our new year's resolutions. While for many of us, that means getting back to a regular schedule at the gym, but for others, it can also mean being freshly motivated to explore new ideas, work on new projects, and embark upon new experiences.

One Bed-Stuy teenager who is involved with the National Honors Society and is co-captain of the swim team the Bedford-Stuyvesant YMCA Piranhas, recently shared her own new year's resolution with fellow YMCA members – in the form of a flier in the women's locker room – with the hope that a few kind souls might help her attain one of her goals for 2011 – attending the National Student Leadership Conference (NSLC) on Engineering and Business.

Lailah Y. Thompson is 16 years-old, and attends Medgar Evers College Preparatory School in Brooklyn, and the list of her accomplishments and activities on that flier makes it clear she intends to be going places: she maintains a 91 GPA while taking Advanced Placement classes in World History, Chemistry, Calculus BC, and English Literature; she participates in Student Government, Journalism Club, and The National Honors Society; and she even has a part time job as an after school counselor for middle and elementary

students in Harlem. Last year, she received notice in the mail that she had been nominated by her school to attend the National Student Leadership Conference this coming summer in Berkeley, California. Prior to that letter, she had no idea anyone had considered her for a slot at the conference. During a phone conversation I had with Ms. Thompson, she said the notification “was so unexpected, and I was so excited to be nominated.”

The catch is, the cost of flying out to the west coast and attending the conference will be \$5000.00, and Thompson states: “unfortunately my family cannot afford the entire amount.” She has displayed her flier requesting assistance from the community to help cover the costs of the program, and says “financial support in any amount will make a big difference in helping me attend the NSLC.” If she is able to participate in the conference, she will have the chance to explore the many disciplines of engineering, while living and working on a college campus. She will be able to choose between workshops in mechanical, robotic, chemical, electrical or civil engineering, and will also go to interactive lectures and small-group workshops meant to teach students how to work as a team, build leadership skills, and work on their professional communication skills. She hopes to use the conference as an opportunity to explore her career options and interests further, as well as to enjoy “seeing new things and being on my own for the first time.”

If you would like to make a donation to Ms. Thompson, please write a check, payable to “The National Student Leadership Foundation,” and write her name, Lailah Y. Thompson, on the Memo line of the check, and mail to: 598 Kosciusko Street, Brooklyn, NY 11221. For more info on the NSLC go to <http://www.nslcleaders.org/> or call (800) 994-6752. If you would feel more comfortable speaking with Lailah and her family before mailing a check, please contact Lailah at lailahthompson@gmail.com and her mom, Veronica, at m99roni@aol.com.