

Michelle TAVAREZ
2007 Volunteer of the Year
Nominee

Growing up, Michelle TAVAREZ was quiet and shy. But today, like most teens her age, she's outgoing and talkative. Michelle credits the blossoming of her character to volunteering, as it has allowed her to express herself in a newfound way.

This past year, 18-year-old Michelle volunteered as a customer service representative with at a local thrift store, raised money for the annual Rogue Festival, and provided day care services for neighborhood children. "Volunteering has given me something positive to do in my community and an opportunity to meet new people," explains Michelle.

As a child, Michelle and her family moved often and she found it difficult to make and keep friends. She describes these difficult years as "unstable". Finding her high school years to be just as challenging, Michelle dropped out her freshman year. Feeling defeated and alone, Michele decided to re-enter school at SOUL. She struggled to fit in but eventually found a support system among the caring and supporting staff and peers at SOUL. With constant encouragement, Michelle quickly bounced back and set out to change her life's path. She found comfort in giving back to others and enjoyed the benefits of meeting new people and overcoming her shyness.

Last summer, Michelle volunteered at a popular thrift store and worked very diligent in sorting out donations, stocking used merchandise, and waiting on customers. For two months, Michelle volunteered over 80 hours of service and assisted countless customers.



This determined teen also volunteered in the community, helping raise funds for the Rogue Festival, an annual event that celebrates independent performance and arts. She learned the value of money and the importance of good communication skills. For

one month, Michelle contributed valuable volunteer hours helping raise money for the festival and benefited by developing good people skills.

Moreover, Michelle has donated countless hours in providing day care service to her grateful neighbors. She especially enjoyed this experience and time spent with the younger children.

Lastly, Michelle served as a volunteer with the Sanctuary Safe Place Outreach program. There, she helped organize a Halloween event for neighborhood children, participated in numerous outreach activities, and served as a youth organizer. This volunteerism earned her an additional 50 hours of service.

Michelle's future goals include graduating from high school, becoming a mortician, and possibly attending college.

Michelle credits her success by stating, "I am not volunteering for the money because I do not get paid for what I have done. I volunteer because it is an investment in me."