



Pinecrest Grad Recognized for Community Service

Casey Suglia, Staff Writer 10 min ago 0



Throughout her high school years, recent Pinecrest graduate Imani Jones worked to make her school a safer place for everyone — a place where students could be themselves, without fear of or judgment by others. It was this devotion to her school that led to her being recognized by the organization Students Against Violence Everywhere, or SAVE, as their Shining Star for the month of January.

“I was very surprised when I got the phone call telling me I was chosen as a Shining Star,” Jones said. “It was really nice to be recognized by the club.”

SAVE is a national club started in Charlotte 26 years ago, and which has more than 2,200 chapters in the United States today. Each month, SAVE recognizes a member from one of their chapters and features them on their website, nationalsave.org. Members must be nominated to become a Shining Star.

Jones, 17, joined SAVE as a freshman after taking interest in the club's message.

"I really liked that one of the motives of the club was to make school a safe place where everyone could feel comfortable," she said.

As past president of SAVE, Jones is still working with the club, applying for grants so the group can spread its message through student assemblies at Pinecrest. They currently distribute fliers in the school informing students how to recognize and report threatening behaviors.

"We live in the community, and we continue to choose to build our lives here. We want our friends and family to feel safe and accepted, and make them feel like it is OK to be themselves," Jones said. "We focus on making everyone feel that school can be a fun, comfortable place, regardless of their race, gender and orientation."

Since she has been involved in the group, Jones has noticed a change in her peers and environment.

"I see people my age being more involved," Jones said. "People are becoming more open and tolerant to everyone no matter who they are."

Jones was nominated for the award by her club adviser, Tamra Chamberlain.

"Mrs. Chamberlain had nominated multiple people in our club for the award, but did not tell any of us until after I had won," Jones said. "It was definitely a surprise."

"I nominated Imani Jones for the Shining Star Award because as chapter president, her leadership on campus and in the community allowed teen voices to be heard in a positive fashion," Chamberlain said. "Imani is passionate about SAVE's message and humanitarian efforts that have made an impact locally and globally."

As part of being an advocate for campus safety, Jones has met with the Southern Pines Police Department to provide a younger perspective on local issues and crimes that teenagers might not normally report, like sexual assault.

"It is nice to speak to adults and have them respect your opinion and take your advice, especially when it comes to major issues in the community," she said.

Jones, who took advantage of Pinecrest's early graduation program, plans on working during her semester off and hopes to attend Western Carolina University. She wants to study biology, but also intends to keep her mind on community service.

"I know that I want to be involved in whatever community I end up in, wherever I end up being in the fall," Jones said. "It is my dream to open an adult literacy center."

Jones hopes that she has left a legacy for herself at Pinecrest.

"I hope to be seen as a good person," Jones said. "I hope to leave my community better than it was before and have it grow and flourish for everyone in it after I'm done."

Contact Casey Suglia at (910) 693-2478 or casey.sug@gmail.com.