



photo by Laurie McN...

*Boima Kanneh, Paris Johnson and Aaron Brown speak to the public and dignitaries about their learning experiences and involvement in the Emlenton community.*

## Youth Find Community Service and Involvement Rewarding

On Wednesday, October 15, 2008 a group of individuals from Western PA Childcare were honored in an emotional ceremony at the Crawford Center in Emlenton.

Approximately five years ago, The Western PA Childcare facility met much criticism as area residents voiced their concerns over the type of individuals that would soon become their neighbors. Western PA Childcare would become "home" to nearly 100 juvenile delinquents who were sent to the facility by way of the courts.

Five years later, the Emlenton

community has been honored to experience first hand what rehabilitation is all about.

The Emlenton Borough in conjunction with the Western PA Childcare adopted a work program in which the juvenile youth and the Emlenton community have benefited beyond expectations. Dan Patterson, Assistant Director of Western PA Childcare spoke with conviction as he expressed how proud he was of the individuals who not only took part in the program, but also of their respect of the citizens and the Emlenton community. "This is the greatest mo-

ment in my professional career", stated Patterson. "This has been a win-win situation for both the individuals of Western PA Childcare and the Emlenton community as a whole".

Since January of 2008, twenty-one participants have logged in over 602 hours of service to the community service. Nearly 1/3 of those hours were garnished by Paris Johnson. Paris is currently enrolled in online classes at Clarion University and plans to attend Clarion University in the future.

A Powerpoint presentation was presented by Paris Johnson, Boima Kanneh and Aaron Brown. Each spoke about working in the community, being accepted and what it has done for them as individuals.

Each thanked Dave Wilfong and Rick Cornelius of the Emlenton Borough Maintenance Department for their patience as they learned and experienced cutting grass and driving a tractor for the first time. "I was a little skeptical about bringing kids into the work program, but I can

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*Western PA Childcare Community Service Award Recipients with Nancy Marano of the Emlenton Borough.*

honestly say that these kids, have worked really hard and I couldn't be prouder. I looked at them as kids at first but they are men in every sense of the word."

In recognition of their hard work, Nancy Marano, borough manager, planned and organized the ceremony to honor all for their efforts. Nancy was instrumental in getting the work program up and running. Seventeen candidates were interviewed for the jobs by borough council. After the initial screening process, two individuals were chosen as well as one alternate. "I felt it very important to let the Emlenton community know what a great job these kids have done, Marano stated. The kids deserve all the credit for making this program successful".

Senator Mary Jo White and State Representative Scott Hutchinson were on hand and

presented awards to Mr. Mike Cummings, the Executive Director of Mid-Atlantic Youth Services/Western PA Child Care.

Amy Whitehill of the Emlenton Borough Council along with Dan Homberger of the Western PA Childcare presented the Community Service awards to each participant. Those receiving awards were; Sterling Spence, Paris Johnson, Saïto Cruz, Traver Jones, Raheem Jackson, Chad Ostrosky, Walter Taylor, Daniel Hocker, Demetrius Graham, Anthony Franklin, Seriaj Cerdan, Josh Neighoff, Fernando Hernandez, Aaron Brown, Tevin Hester, Boima Kanneh, Clarence Berry, Kevin Broadnax, Jeremy Hudson, and Naguib Mahammad.

A meet and greet reception followed at the Oil Rig Lunch Depot compliments of Judy and Dave Wilfong.