

Schussler champions healthy lifestyles

March 30, 2009 @ 08:55 PM

KYLA ASBURY

The Herald-Dispatch

MILTON -- A local teen has been recognized as West Virginia's Teen Wellness Leader, as part of a national contest to acknowledge teens that are encouraging health and wellness in their communities.

Michelle Schussler, 17, is a junior at Cabell Midland High School, where she is a member of the student council, honors program, the track team and cross-country team. She is also a member of St. Stephens Catholic Church and a number of community organizations and enjoys playing the piano, camping, backpacking and running.

Schussler was one of 44 teens selected by Amway Global and the YMCA of America because of her efforts to encourage physical activity among parishioners at her church.

Father Jim Sobus of St. Stephens Catholic Church said Schussler has been a very active member of the church. Schussler, along with her family, are very involved in the church's youth ministry, Sobus said.

As a state winner, she received a \$1,000 scholarship and a \$1,000 donation was made to her local YMCA.

Schussler said after reading about the Teen Wellness Leaders Scholarship, she began thinking of ways she could encourage health in her own community.

"West Virginia is known for high obesity rates, so I thought the cause was important, so I submitted a plan of ways to support health in my community," Schussler said. "I started by getting my teammates involved, and not only do we run every day, we have all made efforts to promote proper diets for athletes."

The plan also included ideas about getting youth activities started.

"Since learning about the scholarship, I have started encouraging others to lead happy, healthy lifestyles," she said.

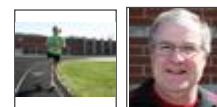
Schussler and other members of her congregation created a wellness curriculum that has been implemented into the Sunday school program at her church, said Bethany Johnson, of Amway Global's Public Relations.

"Physical activities are incorporated into the class lessons, and it's their goal to eventually involve



Chris Jackson/The Herald-Dispatch
Cabell Midland High School junior Michelle Schussler, 17, warms up before track practice on Monday, March 30, 2009. Schussler was recognized as West Virginia's Teen Wellness Leader.

[Purchase this photo](#)



all parish members in church-led physical activities after Sunday masses," Johnson said. "She always has been actively involved with her church and volunteers at the Vacation Bible School, acting as a positive role model to younger children."

According to the Amway Global Wellness Index, a survey of more than 15,000 Americans regarding their health and wellness, 29 percent of West Virginia residents are not exercising for at least 30 minutes or more at a time on a regular basis.

"It takes local teens like Michelle Schussler to take action and educate her peers and the community about the importance of physical activity," Johnson said.