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Junior Achievement’s “Watch A Rising Star” Shines in the Spotlight

West Palm Beach, Fla./Feb. 24, 2011 — Five high school vocalists “wowed” almost 400 Junior Achievement supporters during the recent “Watch A Rising Star” competition at the Raymond F. Kravis Center’s Cohen Pavilion while competing for \$5,000 in award money. It was all part of a fundraising event that also included dinner along with silent and live auctions. The affair netted more than \$75,000 to support Junior Achievement’s in-school and after school student programs, which focus on work readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy.

The event’s proceeds were increased over last year’s event, thanks to the generosity of its sponsors, which included Lesser, Lesser Landy & Smith, PLLC, Attorneys At Law; PNC Bank; HSBC Bank; Kretzer Piano; NCCI; Cocuy, Burns & Co., P.A.; The Art of Printing; The Breakers; Schanel & Associates; Stiles-Nicholson Foundation; WFLX Fox 29; and Raymond James Palm Beach.

WPEC News 12 anchor Liz Quirantes served as mistress of ceremonies and welcomed the crowd before turning the program over to Kathi Kretzer, who produced the vocal competition and worked with the students. The finalists were showcased at various public events throughout the community leading up to the competition. Each student stood in the spotlight for up to 10 minutes while they performed their favorite songs. In the end, Mikah Adams of The King’s Academy won the hearts of the three judges and the audience, which all participated in the vote. She placed first, followed by runner-up Lauren Clark of Palm Beach Gardens High School. Philippe Arroyo of Martin County High School placed third while Kate Davis of The Benjamin School and Anna Wnukowski of The Craig Wich Studio of Performing Arts rounded out the scoring. Marina Hogue of Alexander W. Dreyfoos Jr. School of the Arts performed as an alternate.

Terry Barber, a former member of the multiple Grammy award-winning ensemble Chanticleer, served as one of the judges along with Natalie Kahn Toewe, president, Boca Talent Agency, and Debra Ball-Elderkin, national TV show host, professional voice talent, and producer.

Junior Achievement President Claudia Kirk Barto said, “Each year I am amazed by the outstanding talent that these young people display. We are proud of each and every one of them.”

Another one of the event highlights was an anonymous donation that gave each student an additional \$1,000 in award money. In addition, Junior Achievement awarded local high school students Emily Tran and Andrea Pedata with a \$2,000 college scholarship.

Ken Cunningham of Gold Coast Financial Group chaired the event and Brett Handler of Dreamstar Custom Homes was co-chair. René Friedman, executive director of Florida Atlantic University’s Lifelong Learning Society, was the night’s honoree.

For more information, call Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches at 561-242-9468 or visit <http://www.juniorachievement.com>.

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