

“Heroic Girlz” win In Her Footsteps Award

Friends of Women’s Rights National Historical Park established the “In Her Footsteps” award in 2002 to honor young people who personify the spirit and efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and stand out among their peers as future leaders. Even as a young girl, Stanton had a burning desire to right the wrongs of society and found the courage and inspiration to make a difference.

This year’s winners of the award are four girls who provided the research and portrayed Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Bloomer, Amelia Earhart and Louisa May Alcott in the stage play and film *Heroic Girlz*. They are Elon Michaud (Stanton) of East Chatham, NY; Devyn Yurko (Bloomer) of Pittsfield, MA; Emma Parrish Post (Earhart) of Cherry Plain, NY; and Thea Ezinga (Alcott) of Canaan, NY..

Heroic Girlz began in 2004 as a 5th and 6th grade homeschooling project in conjunction with Mountain Road School in New Lebanon, NY and was designed to encourage the four girls to reflect on their own coming-of-age as young women in modern society. One day a week, the girls met to research, compose, and do artwork on their heroic subjects, and interviewed each other in character and conducted “round table” discussions about what it might have been like to have been one of these historic women at age eleven.

Cindy L. Parrish, a playwright and mother of one of the girls, then turned the girls’ materials into a one-act stage play, in which the four historic women meet in the afterlife and travel back as 11-year-olds to discover how they became heroic women. The play was eventually turned into the film *Heroic Girlz* and both the play and film won top awards in the children’s categories at the 2005 and 2007 Moondance International Film Festival respectively.

Friends of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park is a sponsor of the *Heroic Girlz* project, which includes a curriculum guide and documentary DVD on the making of the film. The film has been presented at the annual Convention Days celebration in Seneca Falls and director Parrish and assistant director Meg Agnew conducted a workshop for elementary and middle school teachers at the Women’s Rights National Historical Park on November 2, 2007.

The four girls will receive their awards at 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 19 at the Wesleyan Chapel of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, NY, during the ceremonies celebrating the 160th anniversary of the first women’s rights convention held on that very spot. The awards include a tribute page for each girl in the Book of Lives and Legacies at the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

Previous winners of the “In Her Footsteps” award were Clotilde Dedecker of Buffalo, New York (2002), who organized a fund-raising campaign to build schools in Afghanistan, and Florence Williams of Rochester, NY (2004), who organized a women’s studies program for the Girl Scouts.