

## Duncan Praises All-American Volunteers

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*(Official Department of Education Photo By Leslie Williams)*

Excelling in sports is no longer the only way to become an All-American. On August 9th, *Parade* Magazine announced the “starting line-up” of its second annual High School Service All-America Team, which it created in conjunction with the GenerationOn initiative of the Points of Light Institute. Secretary Duncan, who was a member for the blue-ribbon panel that selected the winners, addressed the 15 Service All-Americans and commended them for bringing hope and inspiration to their communities.

“I think we all know that when young people are actively engaged in the community doing great service, they’re also engaged in the classroom,” Secretary Duncan said in his remarks.

“Young people who are doing real service—they’re not dropping out of high school,” Duncan added. “They’re successful in the classroom. When our young people see the ties between their academic work and the real world, when they’re engaged, great things happen.”

Citing the inspiring work of the volunteers, as well as his own experiences working on community service programs in Chicago’s South Side, Duncan took the opportunity to call for America’s school districts to increase their support for youth community service opportunities.

“The more we can provide these concrete opportunities for all of our young people—rich, poor, black, white, Latino, urban, rural, suburban—the more young people have these kinds of

opportunities, the better people they're going to be, and the better our country will be," Duncan said.

Three of the All-American Service Team members were commended for exceptional service in the field of education. Grace Li, 16, co-founded the We Care Act nonprofit, which has organized disaster relief efforts with students and faculty at 80 schools across the country. Dylan Mahalingham, 16, used social media to help the Under the Acadia foundation build a school in rural Kenya. And Mary-Grace Reeves, 16, created the American Girl Book Club in the wake of Hurricane Ivan, which has provided over 900 students in Pensacola, Florida, with lessons in reading and history. Accepting her award, Reeves told a story that exemplified the innovative spirit Secretary Duncan deemed "inspirational" in his remarks.

Said Reeves, "When the manager of the children's department [of the local library] said 'We can't do it,' I said four words that would change my life forever: 'I will do it.'"

More information on the 15 *Parade* Service All-America Team can be found in last Sunday's edition of *Parade* magazine.

<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/08/duncan-praises-all-american-volunteers/>