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Section: CENTRAL TAMPA

Kids Are Heroes To Families, Hospital And Community  
NINE YOUNGSTERS HONORED

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By BECKY RICHARDS

The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA - A Carver City boy and a Beach Park girl are among nine winners of the 2006 Kids Are Heroes campaign sponsored by St. Joseph's Children's Hospital.

Eugene Thomas placed first in the ages 9 to 12 category for discovering a fire, waking up his family and calling 911.

"I owe him a lot," said his grandmother Ella Mae Williams, who was in bed in her Nassau Street home when the fire started in a back bedroom.

She said Eugene, who was leaving for school at Robles Park Elementary, came back inside for some lotion, saw the fire and alerted his grandparents, uncle and younger brother. The fire, in December 2005, was blamed on faulty wiring.

Sosthenna Brown said she's happy her son "had the sense to help his family. Most 9-year-olds would have run and left." The fourth-grader stays with his grandparents during his mother's workday.

**Emily Sasso**, 12, placed third in the same age category for making art kits for patients at All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg. Each Creative Kids Club bag contains materials for a project, such as a wand, treasure chest or valentine's card.

"I am so proud of the wonderful person that she is," Karen Sasso wrote of her daughter, a sixth-grader at St. Mary's Episcopal Day School, in a nomination letter. "Emily is my hero and I believe that she makes our world a better place."

The heroes are chosen by children hospitalized or receiving outpatient treatment at St. Joseph's.

"We have kids judging kids," campaign coordinator Amy Gall said. "We wanted to make a difference."

Tampa Bay Lightning player Nolan Pratt helped judge the 10th annual campaign.

The 87 youngsters, who were nominated by schools, law enforcement agencies and other sources, were recognized at a dinner in December. Eugene was nominated by his Boys & Girls Club coach.

All nominees received gift bags and the winners got trophies.

Reporter Becky Richards can be reached at (813) 835-2106 or rrichards@tampatrib.com.

Photo credit: Tribune photo by JAY CONNER

Photo: **Emily Sasso**, who creates art kits for patients at St. Petersburg's All Children's Hospital, was among the nine children honored.

Photo credit: Tribune photo by JASON BEHNKEN

Photo: Eugene Thomas, 10, woke his grandparents, Preston and Ella Mae Williams, when a fire broke out. He was named one of nine children honored.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ---

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