

Edison Tech student sees brighter future

Awards

Council lauds breakthrough

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Kianna Scott, 17, is going to graduate next spring from Edison Tech High School. That seems clear now, but just a few months ago, her outlook wasn't so bright. It's not that she suffered any terrible trauma — no one died, and she wasn't homeless. She was just a teenager doing stupid things.

It started in her junior year of high school, when her group of friends blended with another group of friends who, she said, didn't have their heads in the right place. They became her friends, too. Before long, her head wasn't in the right place either.

“You start to get in with a little clique and you start doing crazy stuff,” she said. “Skipping class, not doing my work. Smoking, drinking.”

Kianna had always gotten A's and B's, but her grades started to drop. She was an 11thgrader and should have been thinking about postgraduation plans. She wasn't.

“As far as my future — last year I would have told you, ‘I don't know. I'm not really thinking about it,’ ” she said. “I was thinking about what I

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was going to do with my friends after school.”

A lot of teenagers think that way. The important thing is to have adults to set them straight. Kianna is lucky that she did.

First was her mother. After she went out to smoke with her friends one night, her mother caught wind of it and grounded her. No more going out.

“When you're grounded and have no plans, you my act together.” Second, her slipping performance in school landed her in Hillside's Reinvesting in Youth program. Its goal is simple: to identify students like Kianna and help them get back on track. “You have to allow them not to like you before they like you, because you're pushing them to be better,” said Valerie Wright, Kianna's case manager in the program. “With Kianna, she made a night-and-day change.” First, she stopped hanging out with the friends who weren't good for her, and she found new friends who were. It's not that her old friends were bad people, though — they ask her questions sometimes about applying for college. They'd like to do something positive, too.

She got good grades in summer school and got back on track to graduate. It's only been a few months since

she left her old ways, but it feels longer than that, and she doesn't miss them. Kianna plans to attend Monroe Community College then the University of Rochester and wants to become a midwife. Tuesday, she was one of three Rochester students to receive a Breakthrough Award from the Metro Council for Teen Potential.

To repeat: There was no terrible trauma or dramatic escape from peril. Kianna is just a teenager who needed some help and got it. There are countless others like her.

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Kianna Scott, left, receives a Metro Council for Teen Potential Breakthrough Award from Caswell Smith of the city of Rochester.

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