

THE AMBLER GAZETTE

01/29/2008

Local woman receives grant for community service

Amanda Rittenhouse , Staff Writer

Johnson & Johnson awarded a \$7,500 grant to Philadelphia nonprofit Chosen 300 ministries in honor of Volunteer Recognition Award winner Taira Bell. Bell is a project manager for Fort Washington's McNeil Healthcare LLC and volunteers with Chosen 300's afterschool Youth Dance Outreach program.

Johnson and Johnson spokesman James Caverly said the Volunteer Grant Program awards range from \$2,500 to \$10,000 and are given to about 20 to 30 organizations each year. This year about 27 grants will be given out all over the United States, he said.

Bell, of Souderton, has served as a board member, assistant director of youth programs, auditor and recording secretary for Chosen 300. Bell has also volunteered in food distribution to the homeless through Chosen 300 and helps to raise funds through the organization's Employee Giving Drive and annual Walk Against Homelessness.

"Bell played a vital role in the afterschool program teaching dance and overall providing values to the youth in that program," Caverly said.

Bell, a volunteer with Chosen 300 since 1996, found out she was nominated in November.

"I really enjoy supporting the ministry. I don't do it for the recognition, but it's a good feeling especially because the company that I work for is supporting the ministry that I supported," Bell said.

Co-founder and Executive Director of Chosen 300 Brian Jenkins nominated Bell for her outstanding work with Chosen 300, he said. Jenkins started the organization in 1996 by passing out lunches around Center City Philadelphia once a week with co-founder, corporate secretary and wife Shandai Jenkins. The two later opened a center on Spring Garden Street in Philadelphia as part of an Evangelic outreach project. The organization has grown to about 700 volunteers and a network of about 35 churches. The organization's mission is to bring different Christian denominations together to help the homeless and needy.

The organization distributes about 60,000 meals per year to the homeless and holds classes on personal banking, resume writing and interviewing skills, Jenkins said.

Chosen 300 also conducts Evangelic services, youth basketball programs and international missions. Jenkins is thrilled that his organization received the grant and said the funding will go toward establishing programs and providing food for the homeless. The organization spends about a half- million dollars per year on assisting the homeless and those in need, he said.

"I think it is an excellent avenue for a corporation to really get engaged with meeting the needs of people and motivating them to move toward a life of self-sufficiency. I think Johnson & Johnson has really stood up and made a statement by helping out," Jenkins said.

For more information check out Chosen 300's Web site at www.chosen300.org



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