Richard Dang, an eighth grade student at Curtis Middle School, is one of the outstanding students of the South Wichita GEAR UP program.

In 2015, Richard participated in South Wichita GEAR UP summer camps where he enjoyed the Legacy Camp sponsored by The Kansas African American Museum (TKAAM). He made new friends, listened to amazing speakers, acquired new skills, and learned about different cultures. His only regret was that the camp itself was not long enough, because he felt that there was so much more he wanted to learn.

Last fall, TKAAM held its annual “Tribute to Trailblazers” banquet. This event recognizes the perseverance and achievements of outstanding pioneers who helped shape a positive culture in the community. Richard was invited to speak about his experiences with the Legacy Camp. He did a tremendous job.

Richard’s closing statement was a plea for people to avoid treating one another badly just because they are different. He silenced the crowd in amazement and brought everyone to their feet with a roaring standing ovation. But most of all, he was applauded for his bravery and genuineness.

Richard demonstrates courage, confidence and commitment to his role as a young leader on a daily basis. He is an amazing student who has already learned to overcome so many obstacles in life.

Baisha Jackson is 14 years old and in the 8th grade at Stucky Middle School. She is enrolled in honors classes which she sarcastically describes as “very exciting”. She hasn’t decided where she will attend high school, but she knows that she will go to either Heights or Northeast. Baisha says her family has always been there for her even through the tough times.

Baisha is mostly a straight A student. School has always been a big deal for her family who stressed the importance of good education. She wants to go to college and major in aerospace engineering. She believes engineering is a good field because there are not a lot of women in the field, and it is a field where one can earn a pretty decent salary.

Baisha likes the Homework Assistance Program (HAP) because it is helpful, and it makes her feel better about the future. She usually has a lot of homework because she is enrolled in honors courses. She finds HAP beneficial because she can receive help from the teachers and tutors on duty.

The HAP program has improved Baisha’s study skills and made her feel better about attending college. As a participant in HAP, she has had the opportunity to be involved in other TRIO programs. She recommends HAP to anyone who plans to go to college and wants to develop good study skills.