

# 'Make an impact, believe and empower'

## Unified hosts annual minority achievement awards night

BY TERRY FLORES  
tflores@kenoshanews.com

Ever since she was little, Da'Lacey Hood has been on a mission.

This year, the 12-year-old who attends Lincoln Middle School played on the volleyball team, is on the cheerleading squad and was one of 541 students honored for achieving better than a 3.5 grade point average at the sixth annual Minority Academic Achievement Recognition Ceremony Tuesday night at the Bradford High School fieldhouse.

Da'Lacey, known as "Diamond," earned a 4.0 the first year in middle school.

"This is a very good program, because they try to encourage children to do well in school," said her mother Mary Hood, who has had other children receive the award.

Da'Lacey's mission isn't just to earn good grades, according to her mother.

"She wants to be a teacher. That's her ultimate thing. She has always had that in her, and she's always teaching all of us," Hood said.

The Kenosha Unified-spon-



KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO BY SEAN KRAJACIC/See more at [www.kenoshanews.com](http://www.kenoshanews.com)  
**Bullen Middle School sixth-grader Marissa Menchaca, left, walks across the stage to receive an award and to shake hands with school officials for earning a 4.0 grade point average during Tuesday's Minority Academic Achievement Recognition Ceremony.**

sored event has grown each year since its inception in 2004, according to district officials. Six years ago 321 minority students were honored.

Jasmine Braithwaite, the ceremony's student speaker, who will graduate from Indian Trail Academy on Saturday, said students must realize that often the "bigger the goal, the bigger the obstacle."

"Giving up is never the answer ... always the problem," she said.

But programs that recognize minority students who set

the bar high and achieve are worthy, according to Braithwaite.

Braithwaite told the students they must be part of the change that unlocks the doors for others. She said they had the ability to "make an impact, believe and empower."

"What separates us from the rest," she said, "is the decision to not only meet those expectations, but to exceed them as well."

Darryl Morin, chief executive officer of Advanced Wireless Inc. of Milwaukee and

state director for the League of United Latin American Citizens, said it wasn't until he was in college that a teacher recognized he had the aptitude for business.

Morin, the event's keynote speaker, said students are growing up in a time of "tremendous opportunity."

He said bilingual students have an advantage in the global economy. He encouraged them to take Spanish or Chinese and other languages.

"If you speak more than two languages you can have

almost any job out there," he said.

Morin said his father, who picked fruits and vegetables, wanted him to do well in school and get a job where he used his mind.

"Each and every one of you has something unique and special inside," Morin said.

Morin said he has met his share of successful people of color, including President Barack Obama and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and Alberto Gonzales, the former attorney general.

"There's opportunity no matter your cultural or racial background," he said. "I look forward to the day one of you can invite me to the White House."

Morin said he was proud of the students' achievement and their promise for the future.

"You are capable. You are unique, and you can change the world," he said.

Crystal Lee of Kenosha, whose two daughters Kaylee Connor, 11, and Karina Lee, 13, attend Kenosha School of Enhanced Technology Curriculum, said she is also proud of her daughters' achievements. She said Karina, who also wants to become a teacher, earned a 3.9 grade point average. Her younger daughter, honored for the first time, earned a 4.0.

"Kaylee thinks it's just great ... just to be acknowledged," Lee said. "I think it's a great opportunity."