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## Teen wins national service award

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The BRICK Awards have been called the “Oscars of youth service awards,” and now one Palatine teen has nailed one.

During Thursday night’s first national telecast of the BRICK Awards, Kelly Voigt, 15, of Palatine was named one of 12 winners and presented with a prize of \$10,000, consisting of a \$5,000 scholarship and \$5,000 grant for her foundation.

“It was amazing, just amazing,” Voigt said of the filming, which took place Tuesday at Nokia Theatre in New York’s Times Square. “To be around so many great people was unbelievable.”

The telecast had all the earmarks of the Academy Awards, with red carpet interviews and celebrity presenters, and hosted by country singer Leann Rimes. Entertainment included performances by Mandy Moore and Dashboard Confessional.

Oscar-winning actress Susan Sarandon opened the show as the first presenter.

Voigt already had been feted on the all-star telecast on Tuesday and interviewed by Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira on “The Today Show” on Thursday.

Voigt was chosen from approximately 1,000 applicants for her work in promoting safety around dogs. She and her mother, Kathy, worked with school psychologist Nancy Skeffington to form “Prevent the Bite” after Voigt was seriously injured from an attack by a neighbor’s dog.

Since forming the foundation two years ago, Voigt has made roughly 100 appearances before schoolchildren and other groups to demonstrate safety strategies when interacting with dogs.

Voigt and her family watched the telecast at Lamplighter’s Inn in Palatine with friends and classmates from Fremd High School, where Voigt and her twin sister, Meghan, are freshmen.

The suspense built during the hourlong show as supporters watched to see whether she would win one of four Golden BRICK awards, which would have earned her an

additional \$15,000 for her cause.

Winners were determined by votes cast online for the last six weeks, and though Voigt was a finalist, it was another young woman, Ashley Rhodes Courter, who won the Golden BRICK in their category, for her work in promoting adopting hard-to-place kids.

“It was an awesome experience though,” Voigt says. “This will help so much in spreading the word, and helping us get sponsors.”

As it is, she plans to use the money to produce a training video for schools and groups to use. Voigt said she has drawn inquiries from around the world about the foundation and with the added visibility and funding from the awards, she can respond to the growing interest.

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