

April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007



The screenshot shows the Delaware Online website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with categories: News, Business, Sports, Opinion, Entertainment, Life, Video, and Mobile. A search bar is located below the menu, with the text "SEARCH/Delaware" and a dropdown menu set to "All". To the right of the search bar is a "Go" button and a sponsored advertisement for "DELAWARE WOMAN".

The main content area features a weather widget showing "51°F. Cloudy". Below this is a "Subscribe" section with options for "Email Story", "Print Story", and "Discuss Story". The main article is titled "Activist from Del. honored" and is categorized as "HOME > LOCAL". The sub-headline reads "Kimmie Weeks works to help children in Africa". The byline is "By ROBIN BROWN, The News Journal" and the post date is "Posted Friday, April 13, 2007".

The article text begins: "Kimmie L. Weeks watched himself win a televised national award Thursday night in the comfortable living room of his sister's home near Bear." A small photo of Kimmie Weeks is visible. The text continues: "The 25-year-old international youth advocate who considers Delaware his second home once was a child".

On the right side of the article, there is an "Advertisement" placeholder.

<http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200770413001>

# Activist from Del. honored

## Kimie Weeks works to help children in Africa

By ROBIN BROWN, The News Journal

Posted Friday, April 13, 2007

Kimie L. Weeks watched himself win a televised national award Thursday night in the comfortable living room of his sister's home near Bear.

The 25-year-old international youth advocate who considers Delaware his second home once was a child in the civil war-torn African nation of Liberia. There, he was starving, sick, eventually declared dead and tossed on a pile of corpses.

A world away and three days ago, Weeks – a youth rights activist – and his older sister Cherrine Smith attended the awards show taping in New York City. He was one of a dozen winners of national Brick Awards, called the young adults' Oscars of public service.

A top Golden Brick Award winner in each of four categories was announced during the show's production – based on online voting with more than 36 million votes cast.

Weeks joked that his main voting blocs were Delaware and Africa.

“We didn’t know who was going to win until they called my name,” Weeks said. “In that moment, I knew what the Oscars felt like.”

His Golden Brick Award for Global Impact carries a \$25,000 prize, which he said “will go very, very far.”

Weeks’ nonprofit organization, Youth Action International, will split the money among its programs, for ventures such as building playgrounds and rescuing children from prostitution in the postwar African countries of Liberia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Rwanda and Burundi.

Weeks can recall the moment when he decided to commit his life to humanitarian work.

“I was 10, and my mother and I were in the civil war,” he said, adding that his father had died and his siblings had left Liberia. “The supermarkets closed, we lost our food supply. Electricity and water were out. We were eating roots and leaves. I got very sick and kept going unconscious.

“Some people were suspicious that I was dead, and my mother was hiding it,” he said. “Someone felt my pulse and said they felt nothing. I was pronounced dead.”

He was taken from his mother, she later told him. “They wrapped me in a blanket and put me out on a pile of corpses, there were so many people dying,” he said with a sad shake of his head.

He later would learn that his mother had spent hours, searching through the piles of bodies, trying to find him.

“All I remember is waking and seeing my mother, the tears on her face,” he said.

“That was actually when I made the commitment that I would spend my life making sure no other child would go through that.”

He became a child crusader to disarm kids as young as 6 who were being armed and told to shoot enemies in the civil war.

“We were the first school children ever to protest in Liberia,” he said. “It became a national movement.”

And it became dangerous.

Because he was marked for death by President Charles Taylor – and survived an assassination attempt – he was granted asylum in the United States, with help from the late Delaware Sen. Bill Roth.

Suddenly, he was a 17-year-old student at Glasgow High School.

“It was a bit strange when I met other students and all of them thought people in Africa were still living in trees and battling lions ... waiting for food drops. They had a complete misimpression.”

Weeks, who lived with his sister who settled here after studying in Philadelphia, formed Youth Action International partly as a way to empower other young people to help in such efforts as improving children’s rights and building orphanages.

On his last visit to Africa, he saw toddlers left to beg on streets and young children working as prostitutes to feed their families and pay for school – about \$100 a year, he said.

Knowing that an effective treatment for cholera costs “a few cents” helps young people understand that one person’s impact can be great, Weeks said.


He hopes to have more impact as his organization expands existing programs including scholarships and an education-empowerment effort for women that awards business loans. He also aims to expand this year, establishing new programs in Angola, Mozambique and Haiti – each to be tailored to the country.

And that’s not all he has planned.

Weeks, a graduate of Glasgow High School and Amherst College in Massachusetts, starts this fall studying for his master’s degree at the University of Pennsylvania. He plans to earn the degree before he returns to Liberia.

In about a dozen years, he said, he will have another decision to make.

“Either I will stay in humanitarian aid,” Weeks said, “or I will run for the presidency.”

Copyright ©  2007, The News Journal.