

# Destiny Watson wins \$20K award for entrepreneurial work

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Destiny Watson, founder and CEO of You Matter 2, won a \$20,000 award at the fifth annual LEGACY Awards Gala. The gala celebrates Black business owners and professionals in an evening of networking and opportunities. She won the Young Entrepreneur Award.

Watson, of Glenwood, founded You Matter 2 in 2015 as a student service organization at Homewood-Flossmoor High School. The group's mission is to provide opportunities for youth to serve and make a difference in their community. You Matter 2 has won the support of the Chicago Community Trust, a regional umbrella group that backs charitable and social service organizations.

The LEGACY Awards were established in 2015. The gala is hosted by WDB Marketing, a Black owned and operated print and marketing firm located in South Holland. LEGACY is an acronym for the seven categories of Black business recognized at the event: Leadership, Education, Growth, Advocacy, Community, Young Entrepreneur, and an additional award for a Visionary leader.



Provided photo

Destiny Watson, center, proudly displays her badge of honor as the \$25,000 Young Entrepreneur prize winner presented by Legacy Awards. With her are Keeana Barber, left, and James Wheeler.

This year, the event was expanded to a weekend, starting with a two-day conference, leading to the gala. During the conference, business owners received information on business subjects such as marketing, operations, financing, corporate procurement and personal development, to name a few. There also were special panels for young entrepreneurs under the age of 25.

Since graduating from the University

of Dayton, Watson has been working to expand You Matter 2. In the application process for the Young Entrepreneur Award, Watson explained more about herself, the organization, why it was started and how the award would help. Watson was one of four finalists for the young entrepreneur pitch competition.

The entrepreneurs worked with former winners to develop a pitch between two to three minutes to present to the audience. Watson recalls feeling a mix of confidence and nervousness. She was appreciative to have made it as a finalist, and was excited when she won.

"Just to be in the room and on the stage was the prize, but to win was the cherry on top," Watson said.

The prize reminds Watson that her work is paying off. She wants to continue to show others what is possible for entrepreneurs.

"I want to serve as an example not only for the community, but also the youth I work with in the program. To be able to have grown to this magnitude of running the organization has been very fulfilling," Watson stated.

The winners of the other awards were: Leadership — Alisa Starks of Inner City Entertainment; Education — Boyce

Watkins of The Black Business School; Growth — Merry Green of The Black Women's Expo; Advocacy — Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. and Akua Njeri of the Black Panther Party Cubs; Community — Jahmal Cole of My Block, My Hood, My City; and Visionary Leader — Corey Gilkey of FriiStyle, a restaurant in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood.

The recognition for winning has helped You Matter 2 gain greater exposure and more connections. In addition to the cash award, Watson will be featured on radio and television segments, work with mentors, receive free marketing and printing, and ongoing business planning.

Watson plans to use the money to expand You Matter 2's current programming.

"It's about investing back in the community and our youth to help us to continue to grow," Watson said.

You Matter 2 is hosting the second annual fundraising gala on Thursday, May 5, and the June 19 Juneteenth celebration.

For information on You Matter 2 and its upcoming events, visit youmatter2.org. For information on WDB Marketing, the program's sponsor, visit wdbmarketing.com.

# H-F students claim school inaction on alleged sex abuse

BY ERIC CRUMP  
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An estimated 200 to 300 students walked out of Homewood-Flossmoor High School at about 9 a.m. Wednesday, March 16, to express dissatisfaction with how the school handles cases of student-to-student sexual harassment and abuse.

The protest grew out of social media reports of a male student's history of inappropriate behavior toward a number of female students. Some of the victims and their friends asserted that reports of harassment and abuse had not been acted on by school administrators.

The students gathered at the corner of Flossmoor Road and Kedzie Avenue, and during the day marched to the H-F North Building. Several held signs, including "Girls are not tools" and "Strengthen our system!"

Flossmoor Police Chief Tod Kamleiter said the event went well from a public safety standpoint.

"Kids need some space. They want to be heard," he said. "Our primary concern is to keep people safe."

One sophomore, Gabby Raske, who arrived at the protest with her mother, said she was a victim of sexual assault



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

A group of students protesting sexual harassment and abuse shout "No means no" while gathered at the entrance to the H-F High School North Building on March 16.

prior to attending H-F and wanted to be there to support other victims.

"We're coming together to solve

something that has happened for a long time," she said. She and her mother, Valery Raske, agreed to provide

their names for publication.

"I'm here to support my daughter," Valery said.

Superintendent Von Mansfield and Superintendent-elect Scott Wakeley said the event was monitored by staff to ensure student safety.

"Throughout the day we listened and shared conversations with students about their concerns," they said in a letter to parents. "We want everyone to know that our students' voices were clearly heard and we understand their concerns."

The superintendents also explained why they are unable to specify what actions have been taken in reported abuse cases.

"These are some of the most difficult situations to process at a school, and — due to privacy laws and legal restrictions — we are limited in what we can share with students, families and the community," they said. On Thursday, March 24, a smaller group of students, with support from a number of area social justice organizations, held a second walkout. In addition to continuing their protest of perceived inaction by the school, they advocated a change in policy to include measures against sexual abuse. Current policy refers to sexual harassment.