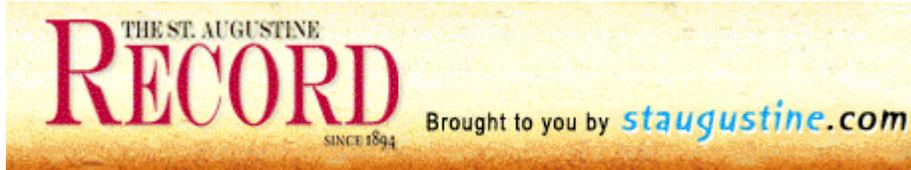


http://www.staugustine.com/stories/032909/community_032909_013.shtml



St. Augustine Record
Student chosen for town hall meeting

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Abbey Gooden, an 8th grader at Pacetti Bay Middle School, has been selected from a statewide pool of applicants to participate in the 14th Annual Children's Week "Kids Only" Town Hall Meeting Tuesday at Tallahassee's City Hall.

Joining Abbey will be other middle, high school and freshman college students from around the state who are ready to drill members of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet on issues they care about. The 12-member panel will have a chance to ask questions, discuss key issues of concern and express their ideas related to the future of Florida's children.

Through her experience as president of the student council at Pacetti Bay Middle School and extensive involvement with school and community groups as a volunteer, Abbey has developed a unique perspective on issues facing children in the Sunshine State. In her application to participate in the "Kids Only" Town Hall Meeting, she wrote that her main concerns center on education and school programs, and children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

"I am most worried about my high school education," said Abbey. "With all the budget cuts that have been occurring, changes in our schools are becoming more obvious. The little things that do not appear to matter within a district actually can actually challenge a school, its staff and students greatly. Also, it is important for me to speak up about the effects that emotional bullying can have on a child, and how to stop it early on. "

This year's Children's Week events mark the 14th year of efforts to promote the health, safety and well-being of children and families across the Sunshine State. Tuesday Children's Week will begin with the "Hanging of the Hands," where hundreds of volunteers from across Florida will gather to hang more than 100,000 paper cut-outs of children's hands in the Capitol Rotunda.

More than 80 statewide partners and corporations, including Comcast, Tobacco Free Florida Nemours, Tallahassee Democrat, Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, Publix Supermarkets, Inc., Salter Mitchell, Department of Children and

Families, Prevent Child Abuse Florida and other non-profit organizations, have joined together to host the statewide events.