

## Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – 2010 Essay Contest

# Winner: High School Third Place



**by Kayla Rugg**

*11<sup>th</sup> grade*

*Fuller Performance Learning Center, Cumberland County Schools*

This year, I came back into public school. Ms. George, the teacher coordinator, knowing that I was skeptical of coming to this school, introduced me to the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Ever since then, my whole life has changed for the better. Altogether, I feel as though we learned from each other. In truth the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been the best thing that has ever happened to me.

The feeling I get when I walk through the door to my classroom is just so amazing. It's as though I am going home, and these children are my own brothers and sisters. One of the most incredible things ever is the look on their faces when they finally understand something that they had been struggling with for a while. It's the best feeling in the world when I walk into the classroom, and everyone tells me how he or she received an A on a test they would have normally failed. The smiles on their faces are just priceless. I just feel so privileged to have the chance to make a difference in these children's lives.

This program is a definite confidence booster. In my experience, it has helped me

remain more focused in school. I have discovered that when my tutees see that I am doing well in school, they also strive to do well. This has been an extremely good motivator for me. I never dreamed that I could possibly make a 3.8 grade point average. Thanks to those young children, I am a much better person than ever. It makes me feel as though anything is possible. The feeling of accomplishment is almost too much to hold on to.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Ms. George for allowing me to have the privilege to work with these amazing students. I could not have asked for a better gift than the ability to change the lives of some children when the world is telling them that they are never going to amount to anything. Thanks to them, my future is brighter and hopefully so is theirs. I could not have asked for better tutees if I had wished it upon the North Star.

