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College student honored for outstanding volunteer activities

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By JOANNE McKNIGHT

At age 21, Katie Allsup of Hurley has already established herself as a dedicated and award-winning volunteer.

Her mother, Frances Allsup, is executive director of Youth Corps of the Jackson County CASA Court-Appointed Special Advocate Association. And Katie, a full-time student at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College majoring in elementary education, also works part time as both volunteer and volunteer coordinator with CASA.

CASA volunteers, Katie Allsup explained, "are like an extra pair of eyes and ears for the abused and neglected children of Jackson County" who have been referred to the association by the court system or Department of Human Services.

"I got involved in CASA about 2005," she said, but because of her mother's position with the organization, had always been interested and an unofficial volunteer.

But it was her work at Biloxi Regional Medical Center that garnered for her an Outstanding Volunteer award and a \$1,000 scholarship in 2005.

Though the award was bestowed in her last year of high school, Allsup had been what she called "something like a Candy Striper" there for three years. She said she enjoyed it because "I liked the happiness we could bring to other people."

She remembers one particular lady who, Allsup said, "was always so excited to see me when I brought around the juice cart. She'd say, 'You are just so sweet, I want to go downstairs (to the gift shop) and get you a toy or something.'"

Allsup likes volunteering in an official capacity and helps with such events as the Coastal Cleanup, which removes litter and debris from waterfront areas. "I've done that in the past," she said, "and I just really like that I can help make our Mississippi beaches beautiful."

She said she feels that her desire to volunteer just runs in the family.

"My parents and my uncles and aunts, even my great-aunt, have always volunteered," she said.

Allsup also likes to visit patients in convalescent centers. "My grandmother is in a nursing home, and I like to visit with the other patients when I go to see her."

But, Allsup said, volunteerism does not have to be an organized activity. "Making other people

happy can come from the simplest things," she said. "I hold the door open for everyone people love that."

Allsup originally set out to become a nurse, but changed her college major to teaching, because, she said, "I just felt something calling me to teach."

She sees that profession almost as an extension of volunteer service.

"I want to teach kindergarten through second grade," she said. "I want to get my master's degree and then, someday, I'd like to teach in college. Teaching," she said, "is very rewarding."

Allsup said that she doesn't have a lot of hobbies. "I'm not really into sports that much, but I do exercise and I like to swim," she said.

One activity that might qualify as a hobby is that "I am a shoe fanatic," she said. "I have at least 100 pairs, everything from flip-flops to gym shoes to high heels. I think it's because of (television show) 'Sex and the City' that did it for the high heels for me."

Allsup was born in Hokes Bluff, Ala., near Gadsden. Her father is Jimmy and she has one brother, Adam, and four little nephews she loves, she said.

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