

D-C students living life like it's golden

May 7, 2008

By Charity Bonner Staff Writer

CARPENTERSVILLE -- Two Dundee-Crown High School seniors are ready to make a difference in the education world.

Courtnee Gonzalez and Sonalia Ramirez are recipients of the 2008 Golden Apple Award, which gives them the opportunity to attend a DePaul University summer program that combines classroom study with real-world experience by placing them as teaching assistants in Chicago schools.



*Sonalia Ramirez (left) and
Courtnee Gonzalez*

Gonzalez and Ramirez will join the ranks of more than 125 high school and college students who were named Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois on March 31. They are active members of the Boys & Girls Club of Dundee Township.

The nonprofit Golden Apple Foundation prepares students to become teachers and encourages recognition of teachers already in the field.

Golden Apple Scholar nominees are asked to provide ACT scores and a written application with essays and transcripts.

Once chosen as a Golden Apple Scholar, the student will receive \$2,500 per year to be applied to tuition at a university and \$2,000 per summer for participation in the Summer Institute, which requires the student take a five-week summer program at DePaul University that includes courses as well as the

opportunity to work as an assistant teacher at an at-risk school. Students are obligated to attend one of 53 Illinois universities that participate in the program, obtain their Illinois teaching certification and agree to teach for five years at an Illinois school of need.

Gonzalez, 18, hopes to be a third- or fourth-grade teacher someday. She was chosen for the award based on her academic standing, personality and her experience with children and teaching, officials said.

Gonzalez said she made the decision to be a teacher when she was 10 years old. She was inspired by her grandmother, who was a volunteer teaching assistant at Perry Elementary School in Carpentersville.

"My goal is to get the most out of this experience that I can and apply it to my teaching career. ... My goal is to be a student teacher by 19 or 20," she said.

Gonzalez plans to stay in the Chicago area after graduation because her family and friends are here, she said. She will attend Illinois State University in the fall.

Ramirez, 17, used to assist her mother, who is a teacher, in the classroom. Soon, she plans to have one of her own. Ramirez credits the Boys & Girls Club with helping her form leadership skills; she served as president of the Keystone Club and as a basketball coach for fourth-grade boys. She also coaches cheerleading.

"My goals are to take as much advantage of these opportunities offered to me," Ramirez said.

Ramirez plans to attend Northern Illinois University in DeKalb in the fall.