

HIGH SCHOOL CANDIDATE

Jada Copeland

Age: 15

Club: Asylum Hill Unit

School: Global Communications Academy

10th Grade

Club Tenure: 5 years



Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

1. How has SMART Girls impacted you and your life?

Being a S.M.A.R.T. Girl has impacted my life in so many ways. The one that I am most proud of is becoming more confident in myself and becoming a role model for younger S.M.A.R.T. Girls. Being involved with Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, S.M.A.R.T. Girls, and the staff I have learned other important skills such as how to dress appropriately for interviews, work, and other settings. This has also allowed me to feel comfortable and more confident when dressing business casual. S.M.A.R.T. Girls has also taught and reminded me that it is important to make friends with people who have similar goals and to always set a standard for others to respect me. All of these are life lessons that I learned at the Club and that the staff have had many conversations with me about. I appreciate that the staff care about me and take the time to talk about these kinds of topics.

2. What is your favorite community service project?

I love volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club and genuinely appreciate when I can be a role model to younger members because I was once a younger Club member. My favorite way to give back is to help run the Snack Shop at the Club. Even though it is a lot of work to run the snack shop, I love doing it! I have improved my skills when it comes to budgeting by being involved in the planning and selling of items. I also really enjoy being with my peers and being able to cook food. With the money that we raise we use it to help the community by supporting different service projects, pay for field trips and conferences for teens, and other things that the Club needs. It feels really good to be able to make a difference. I also love how everyone who volunteers in the snack shop works together and we have all built a friendship!

3. Tell us about an obstacle you've been faced with and how you overcame it.

I wasn't born in the United States and when I came to the U.S. it was challenging for me because I spoke with an accent. Many of my classmates picked on me and bullied me because of it. The bullying got so bad that I decided it would be better to just not speak up at all to avoid their comments and laughter. This unfortunately made me not really want to go to school and to not do as well in school because I wasn't participating. However, as I listened closely and learned how to pronounce certain words better, I was able to stop speaking with an accent. Now that I am older, I think back and wish that I wasn't so eager to "lose my accent" because it was who I was and where I came from. I have learned through some great teachers, supportive staff and friends at Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford that I shouldn't be ashamed of my uniqueness and where I come from but embrace the obstacles and journey I have travelled. Now, when I hear others being made fun of or bullied, I am usually the first to step in and support them because I know how it feels.

4. What does the Club and the S.M.A.R.T. Girls program mean to you?

I have been a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford for over five years. I started when my school provided a school bus to the Northwest Unit as a safe option for students afterschool. I am so glad that my school Principal and Unit Director, Mrs. Monique helped to connect me to the Club because it really changed my life for the better. I immediately became involved in every program at the Northwest Unit and continued attending there for three years until Bowles Park renovations started. When the Northwest Unit closed, I transferred to the Asylum Hill Unit. At first, I was nervous to come and didn't think I would enjoy it like I had while at Northwest. I was completely wrong! I knew a lot of the staff who work at this location and they recognized me from all of the different Club events. This made me feel comfortable, welcome, and most importantly safe. Slowly, I began to get involved again in programs like Keystone and volunteering for the snack shop. The Club is my safe place and it is where I go when I need to get away from school and my home. It is also a place where my mother and I know that I will be safe while I'm there. A S.M.A.R.T. Girl is what I am. Becoming a S.M.A.R.T. Girl means I'm a leader and I can encourage all girls to stand up for what they believe in and to always be strong.