

Key honored as ‘Hero’ by Auburn University

Posted: Sunday, August 4, 2013 12:00 am
By Lisa Singleton-Rickman Staff Writer

For Pete Key, being honored with the Hero Award last month at Auburn University’s Anti-Bullying Summit was confirmation that his efforts to help young people aren’t going unnoticed.

The Florence resident and owner of Ole Pete Key, Inc., has been providing health and educational seminars since 2002, domestically and internationally. Key, who also is an HIV-AIDS awareness advocate, said his topics have expanded, driven mainly by his passion to provide understanding in various areas of health and education.



“I’ve never been in this for the money; I’ve just always wanted to help people,” Key said. During last month’s summit in Mobile, Key was the event’s keynote speaker and led one of the sessions during the conference. Auburn University officials had more in mind for Key — they acknowledged him for the work he has done around the country to help eliminate school bullying.

“This year was our third summit, and Pete Key was one of five Hero Award winners,” said Cindy Reed, director of the Truman Pierce Institute, a research and outreach unit in Auburn’s College of Education that focuses on ways to improve schools and communities by creating partnerships, conducting research and providing programs to meet the needs of schools and communities.

“We receive nomination materials including a video nomination and rate them using a scoring rubric that lists the criteria,” Reed said. “We were thrilled with this year’s winners.” This fall, Key will start the Friends Against Bullying Behavior program in schools around the country. Key and his team will train students on how to address school bullying without demoralizing the bully.

“These students will go back into their schools and provide the training themselves of other students,” he said. “If a child isn’t in a safe culture to learn, then learning isn’t going to happen. Bullying is heavy. No one deserves it, and that’s my message.”

Key, whose resume includes extensive work with the Alabama Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, provided HIV and AIDS training for resource officers in all 50 states. He said he has a message of hope for all his audiences. “There is no hopeless situation,” he said. “What drives us all is the fact that there’s always hope. I speak to kids and sometimes see such hopelessness on their faces, but I make it my goal to make them know that their life is valuable and it’s not hopeless, no matter what.” Key said he got serious about his anti-bullying messages about five years ago, on the heels of a rash of deadly school shootings around the country.

“Older kids were obviously my focus for these years, but now I’m also appealing to elementary kids because it’s vitally important that getting to kids early will allow these coping mechanisms to become a way of life for them and they can better deal with bullying issues,” he said. Key’s energetic presentation uses drama and music. “People enjoy it because I’m more than a speaker,” he said. “I’m a leader striving to instill those leadership principles in kids. They know the difference.”