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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **HPARD Jr. WNBA Player S.T.A.R.'s On and Off the Court**

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department is proud to announce that Micaela Ortiz has been named one of thirteen winners of the Pledge to be a S.T.A.R. essay contest. The contest is sponsored by the Jr. NBA/Jr. WNBA, and over 700 entrants vied to win jerseys for the players in their leagues. Micaela is one of 500 children who play in the league administered by HPARD, and each of them will receive a jersey thanks to her efforts.

Presented by Gatorade and Nike, the Jr. NBA/Jr. WNBA serves existing recreational youth basketball leagues through support programs for players, coaches, parents, and officials. An emphasis on a mix of on- and off-court instruction fosters skill development, team play, and sportsmanship, resulting in a fun and rewarding basketball experience where players learn what it takes to be successful in the game and in everyday life. Striving to achieve goals while learning to respect teammates, officials, coaches, and opponents is important to character development in youth.

The Pledge to be a S.T.A.R. essay contest focused on the concepts of sportsmanship, teamwork, attitude, and respect. In her prize-winning essay, Micaela said "...I like to help my teammates when we play. Basketball has taught me to control my attitude. I don't get upset if I lose. It just makes me want to try harder..."

For more information on youth sports programs or on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (713) 845-1135 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).