



Hancock junior named Akshar All-Star

Surprise, Thomas Schoonmaker ... you're an Akshar All-Star!

Thomas Schoonmaker is the latest recipient of the coveted red T-shirt from New York State Senator Fred Akshar, who stopped at the Hancock Central School District on Wednesday to honor the junior for making a difference.

"Thomas, I struggled just to get through high school," Akshar said shortly after walking into the high school Spanish classroom of Danielle Gross, who taught the Senator at Afton in the 1990s. "You'll be leaving here as a member of the Honor Society, yes? As well as leaving here with a college degree? And that's on top of everything else you do. That's a pretty big achievement and you should be incredibly proud of yourself.

"You're a leader and you're clearly focused and driven," Akshar continued. "I think those traits will help you significantly as you move through your adult life. Don't rush it, but continue to do the things you're doing and I know that you'll be successful."

Thomas also participates in the Yes! Leads program and earned Scholar-Athlete and First Team all-conference honors from the Midstate Athletic Conference for bowling this past winter.

The son of Heather and Jamie Schoonmaker of Hancock, Thomas became the 24th student from New York State's 52nd District honored by Akshar's student-recognition program, which started this past October. Akshar went on to recognize students in Waverly and Spencer-Van Etten later Wednesday.

According to the Republican Senator's website, www.nysenate.gov/senators/fred-akshar, Akshar visits three-to-four district All-Stars each month, giving each a red T-shirt, a framed certificate and a challenge coin for showing "great leadership, compassion, school spirit or improvement amongst their peers."

After the presentation, Akshar took part in two question-and-answer sessions with HCSD high school students. Superintendent Terry Dougherty, High School Principal Lori Asquith, Board of Education President Terry Whitt and BOE Vice President Rebecca Smith were among the HCSD representatives who attended Akshar's visits to Gross' Spanish Room and Matt Davis' United States History Room.