

# Nickelodeon honors LI teen

BY BETH WHITEHOUSE

beth.whitehouse@newsday.com

The homecoming pep rally in the gym at Smithtown High School West Friday already was boisterous when a surprise celebrity guest sent things whirling into even more of a frenzy.

Actor, rapper and TV personality Nick Cannon — who is married to singer and Long Island native Mariah Carey — strolled in wearing a tux, bow tie undone and slung casually around his neck and white handkerchief poking out of the pocket.

"I came out here to put somebody in the spotlight," Cannon said to the amazed teenagers. "She took a negative situation and made it into a positive."

Smithtown West senior Leah Stoltz, 17, was shaking and crying and holding her hand over her face as Cannon called her out. School cheerleaders brought out a podium with "Halo Awards" on it and rolled out a red carpet.

Stoltz has scoliosis and had to wear a full-torso, hard plastic brace and have surgery to correct the curving of her spine. When she was 13 she started a support group on Long Island called "The Curvy Girls" to help affected girls feel less self-conscious. Eight "Curvy Girls" emerged to place a tiara on Stoltz's head and present her with red roses.

"Don't pass out, Leah," Cannon said. "Deep breath, deep breath."

Nickelodeon filmed the event for its "TeenNick Halo Awards," a one-hour special that will air later this year recognizing four teenagers for "Helping and Leading Others." He presented Stoltz with a \$10,000 check for her organization and another \$10,000 for her to use for college.

And there was more.

"This is a secret ticket to a secret location," Cannon said, handing Stoltz an envelope. "I can't tell you where you're going, but you're going to have an amazing time."

Where is she headed? Stay tuned.



PHOTO BY ED BETZ

Leah Stoltz, a Smithtown High School West senior, is embraced by actor Nick Cannon at the school after being presented with a TeenNick Halo award Friday.