

# Blind musician, 11, a national award finalist

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VOORHEES

Is there anything 11-year-old Rocco Fiorentino can't do?

The Voorhees resident is a professional jazz musician and composer, who performed Jan. 21 on NBC's "Today" television show.

He's an educator and an activist who, on Jan. 25, was one of 28 residents to receive Camden County's 2008 Freedom Medal for his efforts to improve the community.

Rocco is also blind, the result of being born prematurely, but he has turned blindness into a vehicle to champion the needs of others who are blind or sight-impaired.

His work has helped him become one of three national finalists for the Volvo Car Corporation's Alexandra Scott Butterfly Award, which is awarded annually to a child hero.

"I'm really excited about it and proud – I feel great," Rocco said.

The Butterfly award was created to honor Alexandra Scott, who died from cancer in 2004 at age 8. Before she died, Alexandra raised \$15,000 by selling lemonade at her stand. She donated the money to a fund for a friend who also had cancer.

"Rocco exemplifies the determination and concern for others that Alexandra had," said Pam Edwards, the corporate communications manager for Volvo, based in Irvine, Calif. "He's shown that through sheer gumption, anything is possible, and that you can make a difference."

She said that the public voted for Rocco and the other finalists on the Volvo for Life Awards Web site. The voting ended Jan. 7.

Edwards said the winner will be selected in February by judges from Volvo and by Alexandra's parents.

Rocco and the other finalists are guaranteed \$10,000 from Volvo, which the finalist donates to a charity.

If he's selected the winner, the award will increase to \$25,000 for a charity of his choosing, and he'll be Volvo's guest at its Volvo for Life awards ceremony March 19 in New York City.



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Rocco Fiorentino, 11, plans to donate whatever money he receives from being a Volvo award finalist to Camp Little Rock in Medford, which is for visually impaired children.

### **ROCCO FIORENTINO**

Age: 11

Residence: Voorhees

School: Fifth-grade honors student at Signal Hill Elementary School, Voorhees

Noteworthy: Performed on NBC's "Today" show Jan. 21; earned Camden County Freedom Medal; is a finalist for Volvo's national Butterfly award

Activism: Addressed state legislators at age 8 about the lack of Braille services in the state; N.J. Department of Human Services then received \$900,000 for Braille services for children.

### **ON THE WEB**

Volvo for Life Awards – [www.volvoforlifeawards.com](http://www.volvoforlifeawards.com)

Rocco Fiorentino – [www.musicbyrocco.com](http://www.musicbyrocco.com)

Little Rock Foundation – [www.thelittlerockfoundation.org](http://www.thelittlerockfoundation.org)

No matter how much he wins, Rocco already knows which charity will receive his prize.

He's the ambassador for The Little Rock Foundation, a nonprofit that helps the blind and visually impaired. It was founded in 1997 by his parents, Rocco Sr. and Tina.

"The foundation operates Camp Little Rock, a weeklong summer camp at the YMCA Camp Ockanickon (in Medford) for blind and visually impaired kids," Rocco explained.

"I want to use the money to build a log cabin for kids at the camp and to help expand Camp Little Rock from one week to eight weeks."

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