



LOCAL STUDENTS SELECTED FOR \$14,000 GOLDEN LEAF FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C., (June 8, 2022) - Today, the Golden LEAF Foundation announced that 215 rural North Carolina students were selected to receive up to a \$14,000 Golden LEAF Scholarship, including six in Johnston County.

High school seniors entering college as first year students are eligible for a \$3,500 scholarship each year for up to four years of undergraduate study at a participating four-year North Carolina college or university. Community college transfer students are eligible for \$3,500 a year for up to three years of undergraduate study.

Recipients from rural, tobacco-dependent or economically distressed North Carolina counties are selected based on career and educational goals, a review of school and community service activities, academic performance, length of residence in the county and expressed intent to contribute to the state's rural communities upon graduation from college.

The Golden LEAF Foundation established the Golden LEAF Scholarship Program to broaden educational opportunities and provide support to students from rural counties with the goal that after graduation recipients will return and contribute back to rural communities. The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) administers the program and selects students for awards.

"We are proud to award scholarships to hardworking and bright students with deep roots in their rural communities," said Scott T. Hamilton, Golden LEAF Foundation President, Chief Executive Officer. "These students were selected out of a pool of more than 1,600 applicants. We look forward to the future success of these scholarship recipients as they follow their education pursuits and develop into North Carolina's next generation of rural leaders."

"I always love hearing about young people who strive for greatness," Senator Brent Jackson. "I hope you all will build on all you have been recognized for and already accomplished. You have represented your schools and your fellow citizens admirably. Again, I want to congratulate you all for your hard work and for being recipients of this deserving honor."

"Golden LEAF Scholarship winners represent all things that make rural North Carolina great! They are selected on academic excellence, strength of character and commitment to serving their home communities which helps all of North Carolina prosper," said Representative Donna White. "The Golden LEAF Foundation supports young scholars with not only educational opportunities but also with leadership and professional training that helps ensure their success. Congratulations to the Johnston County scholarship recipients and their families."

“Congratulations to all the students on receiving this prestigious award,” said Senator Jim Burgin. “It is an honor to represent dedicated and hard-working individuals like Sophia, Anna, Gracie, Nicole, Lucas, and Madison. I look forward to the many successes of your future!”

“I want to congratulate all of the Golden LEAF Scholarship recipients,” said Representative John Bell. “These students should be proud of their great accomplishment and having their hard work and dedication recognized. I wish them the best in their bright futures ahead.”

“Congratulations to each student that received this prestigious scholarship,” Representative Larry Strickland. “Earning this award is a testament to the hard work and dedication that you displayed throughout your educational career. I am especially proud of the students from Johnston County that have shown tremendous focus and have stayed on track to further their education. I wish you the best in your future endeavors.”

“My sincerest congratulations to Sophia, Anna, Gracie, Nicole, Lucas, and Madison for earning this award,” said Senator Lisa Barnes. “I’m sure you will work hard to accomplish your goals. We need students like you to help our rural communities thrive!”

The newly selected 2022-23 Golden LEAF Scholarship recipients are as follows:

Johnston County

Name	High School	University
Sophia Debonis	Princeton High School	Meredith College
Anna McKenzie	South Johnston High School	Meredith College
Gracie Moore	South Johnston High School	East Carolina University
Nicole Neal	West Johnston High School	NC Agricultural and Technical State University
Lucas Turecky	Neuse Charter School	North Carolina State University
Madison Valadez-Montenegro	Clayton High School	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

About Golden LEAF Foundation:

The Golden LEAF Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to receive a portion of North Carolina’s funding from the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers. For more than 20 years, Golden LEAF has worked to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina’s rural and tobacco-dependent communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship as an independent and perpetual foundation.

The Foundation has provided lasting impact to tobacco-dependent, economically distressed and rural areas of the state by helping create 66,000 jobs, over \$700 million dollars in new payrolls and more than 90,000 workers

trained or retrained for higher wages. Golden LEAF has provided 6,251 scholarships totaling more than \$42 million to students from rural communities attending North Carolina's colleges and universities.

For more information about Golden LEAF and our programs, please visit our website at www.goldenleaf.org.

About North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority:

North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) administers the program on behalf of the Golden LEAF Foundation. Established in 1965, NCSEAA is the State agency that promotes access to higher education by administering financial aid and savings programs, informing students and families about paying for college, teaching educators about financial aid administration and advocating for resources to support students.

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