



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

ROCKY MOUNT, N.C., (June 22, 2023) - 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 Cherokee 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 or economically distressed North Carolina counties are selected based on future career goals and an 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 1,700 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.”

Scholarship recipients may also apply for the [Golden LEAF Rural Internship Initiative](#). The Rural Internship Initiative provides Golden LEAF Scholars with professional work experience related to their career field in a rural North Carolina community. The Golden LEAF Foundation provides funding to pay interns \$15/hour for up to 400 hours of work. Internships take place over 8-10 weeks, between June and August.

“I am honored to recognize Jacob, Kristen, Baylee, Emily, Tate, and Lila from Cherokee County,” said Senator Kevin Corbin. “Congratulations on receiving a Golden LEAF Scholarship. This award symbolizes your commitment to your community and your future selves.”

“It is such a pleasure to offer congratulations to the Golden LEAF Scholarship recipients from Cherokee County,” said Representative Karl Gillespie. “Your willingness to pursue an education and return to your home county in the future is a strong indicator of future success for not only our rural communities but also our entire state.”

The newly selected 2023-24 Golden LEAF Scholarship recipients are as follows:

Cherokee County

Name	High School/ Community College	University
Jacob Christiansen	Hayesville High School	North Carolina State University
Kristen Mason	Hiwassee Dam High School	Western Carolina University
Baylee O'Brien-Prescott	Murphy High School	UNC - Asheville
Emily Parker	Hiwassee Dam High School	UNC - Chapel Hill
Tate Raper	Hiwassee Dam High School	Western Carolina University
Lila Roberts	Hiwassee Dam High School	Western Carolina University

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 67,000 jobs, over \$720 million dollars in new payrolls and more than 95,000 workers trained or retrained for higher wages. Golden LEAF has provided 6,466 scholarships totaling more than \$45 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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