



## **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 seven in Wayne 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.

“My sincerest congratulations to Natalie, Guillermo, Karina, Abbe, Riley, Caroline, and Randy for earning this award,” said North Carolina House Majority Leader, Representative John Bell. “This is an incredible achievement and a testament to your hard work and dedication. Our rural communities depend on future leaders like you who are committed to seeing them thrive.”

“I want to congratulate all of the Golden LEAF Scholarship recipients from Duplin and Wayne counties,” said Representative Jimmy Dixon. “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 the students from Wayne County for receiving this award,” said Senator Buck Newton. “Natalie, Guillermo, Karina, Abbe, Riley, Caroline, and Randy have already demonstrated leadership and strong commitment to the community. I look forward to hearing of their future success.”

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

**Wayne County**

<b>Name</b>	<b>High School/ Community College</b>	<b>College/ University</b>
Natalie Conley	Southern Wayne High School	Campbell University
Guillermo Estrada	Wayne School of Engineering	UNC - Chapel Hill
Karina Guzman-Cruz	Southern Wayne High School	UNC - Pembroke
Abbe Harris	Wayne County Day School	Meredith College
Riley Howard	Southern Wayne High School	University of Mount Olive
Caroline Jones	Wayne Christian School	University of Mount Olive
Randy Rojas	Wayne Community College	North Carolina State 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](http://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.