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Willie J. Williams Middle School host Social Media Celebrity Service Dogs Noah and Lincoln

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA – September 27, 2021 – Colquitt County High School graduate and Retired Master Sergeant Palace Harris, Jr. visited Willie J. Williams Middle School on Monday, September 27, to collect cards and letters that students created for other veterans and active-duty military members. Harris brought Noah and Lincoln, rescued pitbull service dogs trained to assist with PTSD, and spoke to about 150 seventh grade students at the middle school about careers in the military, working with service animals, and supporting veterans. He shared his personal military experiences, motivational tips on working toward one's goals, what PTSD is, and how service dogs are working dogs.

Palace Harris, Jr. was born in Moultrie and attended Cox Elementary School, Willie J. Williams Middle School, C.A. Gray Junior High School, and Colquitt County High School. His friends and teachers knew him as "Popal." Harris graduated high school in 1997 and enlisted in the Marines heading for boot camp, July of 1997. He served in the U.S. Marines for twenty years and retired in May 2017.

Retired Master Sergeant Harris lives in Jacksonville, FL, with his wife, former U.S. Marine Vivian Harris, and their two rescued/service dogs, Noah (10) and Lincoln (4). The family has been featured on Good Morning America, Inspire More online, and Operation Warrior Wishes programs and events. Palace and Vivian met with Craig Steichen, CEO of Operation Warrior Wishes to collaborate and bring attention to the emotional needs of retired or discharged military men and women. The three were featured at a Jacksonville Jaguar game and assisted in raising the U.S. flag during the singing of the national anthem. They have been using social media platforms to share their message about military service, the long-term effects it can have on a stable civilian life, and how service dogs can make a difference in the lives of veterans. The couple and their fur babies have over two million followers on TikTok.

"I was born and raised in Moultrie, GA, and I will always call Moultrie home. I want to change the misconceptions about pitbull dogs and people," stated Harris. "I struggled to adjust to civilian life, and my dogs, Noah and Lincoln, saved my life. Noah senses your energy. When I am not at my best or having a bad day, he will lay his head on my lead to cheer me up or calm me down. Some of my troubles go way back; I was stereotyped as a young boy. Noah and Lincoln have taught me just to let it go, to shrug it off."

Six students invited the family of four to Williams. The students have been working on designing a service project plan in their language arts class. Brenda Arnold, 7th grade English Language Arts teacher, gave students the assignment to "plan" a community service project. The students are Connor Causey, Aden Hinson, Kam'Ron

Holloman, Hayden Huff, Joshua Sanders, and Darien Stancil. They initially planned "Sending Christmas Joy Cards to Soldiers" to active military men and women. Their original plan was to write and mail Christmas Cards before December. The students collaborated on the assignment using who, what, where, when, why, and how. The "why" required a brief narrative to be used as a sales pitch to gain approval to conduct the project and promote involvement. The group had concerns about "where" to gather names and addresses to mail the cards.

They went to Helen Farrell, the Discipline Office Clerk at Williams, to ask about three pictures of her children in military uniform on the bulletin board in her office. Their goal was to get ideas for obtaining addresses. They found out that three out of four of her children had served in the military. The inquiring students discovered more about her oldest son Palace and his current employment in the Human Resources Department at Fort Black in Jacksonville, Florida. The students got excited about the possibility of meeting him, learning more about service dogs, and providing some cheer to others by creating cards to be mailed. During their conversations with Ms. Ferrell and her networking with Palace Harris, the possibility of hosting a guest speaker evolved and became a reality. The six students invited their entire team, "Zulu Company 7" and the "Alpha Company 7" team located in the same hall, to participate in the event.

The committee of six obtained permission from Principal Jim Horne, and the meeting for the guests to arrive and speak was arranged. Students found pictures on social media about Harris and his service dogs and designed a promotional flyer that was used before the presentation. According to their teacher, several ELA standards were covered, including reading, research, writing, grammar and conventions, presentations, listening, and speaking during the development of this project.



"We are very thankful to Mr. and Mrs. Harris for their service while active and their continued service in retirement," stated Principal Horne. "It was an honor to have them visit our school today and to present to the students. Partnerships and guests speakers like this help us connect our academic lessons to careers and service

Left photo: Left to Right: Darien Stancil, Kam'Ron Holloman, Hayden Huff, Retired Master Sergeant Harris, Vivian Harris, Noah, Lincoln, Joshua Sanders, and Connor Causey (Not pictured Aden Hinson was part of the group project.)

Right photo: Kam'Ron Holloman, Hayden Huff, Connor Causey, Joshua Sanders with Lincoln and Noah.

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