

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Angela Hobby
Chief Communications Officer
(229) 890-6200 ext. 10073
Angela.hobby@colquitt.k12.ga.us

First Cohort of REACH Scholars Graduating

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA – January 24, 2022 – Colquitt County School District will see its first cohort group of REACH Scholars graduate high school this school year. REACH (Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen) is a program that began under Former Governor Nathan Deal as a key initiative of Complete College Georgia. REACH Georgia is the State of Georgia's first needs-based mentorship and college scholarship program. The mission is to ensure that Georgia's academically promising students have the academic, social, and financial support needed to graduate from high school, access college, and achieve postsecondary success. The scholarship is in addition to any other grant or scholarship.

School systems partner with REACH and identify academically promising eighth-grade students to receive REACH Scholarships. Scholars are paired with a mentor and an academic coach through high school and must maintain good grades (2.5 GPA), behavior, and attendance. Upon graduation from high school, scholars are awarded up to a \$10,000 scholarship to be used at a Georgia HOPE-eligible two- or four-year college. Some Georgia colleges and universities have pledged additional funds for REACH scholars that doubles or triples the total scholarship amount.

This first cohort group of REACH Scholars from Colquitt County School District began the program during the 2017-2018 school year. The scholars are (seated) April Castaneda, Da'Naiza Williams, (standing) Miguel Escobar, Sonji Hargrove, and Pershaun Fann, Jr. Each student has set a goal for after graduation in part thanks to this program. Da'Naiza stated, "I am a first-generation college student, so everything about the process of getting into college is new to me. The REACH Program provided me with additional support and the push I needed to be successful." Da'Naiza plans to attend Georgia State University, majoring in biology or chemistry. She plans to pursue a career as a physician assistant in an OB/GYN practice.



Two of the REACH students are seeing their hard work pay off sooner than expected. Pershaun Fann, Jr. and Sonji Hargrove graduated early. Pershaun received a full-ride scholarship to the University of Buffalo (NY) to play football, where he plans to study psychology. "The REACH Program helped me with my determination to be successful," stated Pershaun. "It made me feel like I was doing the right thing and focusing on the right things to make me successful." Sonji

plans to pursue a law degree with an emphasis in entertainment law which aligns with her passion for film production and editing. Sonji shared, "the program allowed me to connect with people who advocated for my education and success. It gave me the motivation to go above and beyond the personal goals and standards that I set for myself."

The REACH program is for students seeking all types of education and training. Miquel Escobar plans to pursue a career in welding. He has been in the welding program at the Colquitt County High School and sees a great future in expanding on that skill set. "The program helped me to expand my connections and feel more comfortable with making new connections that will help me be successful." April Castaneda plans to enlist in the military first before attending college. She wants to pursue a career as a veterinary technician after leaving the military. "Before the REACH program, I had no intentions of attending college," stated April. "The REACH program made me realize there is a college for me."

The program not only provides a financial incentive to stay the course to graduation and to pursue a higher education degree, but it also provides mentors. The mentors for this group include Troy Hobbs, Todd Myrick, Avis Sutton, Amy Dalton, and Lisa Hill. The academic coach for this group is CCHS Counselor Shatarra Brown. One student had this to say about the mentorship part of the program, "If I could give other REACH scholars a piece of advice, it'd be to utilize every aspect of the program, especially the mentorship program. The mentorship program not only gives students a sense of accountability, but you are also gifted with someone who is solely there to assist and to cheer you on during your journey through high school and beyond."

This may be the first group of REACH scholars to graduate from Colquitt County High School, but they will not be the last. The program now includes students from each year since this inaugural group and adds a cohort each fall.

###