

Four high school seniors receive funding for service projects

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.— A group of high school students participating in the Riley Institute at Furman's® Emerging Public Leaders program have been working over the past year to create service projects across the state. After presenting their projects to a panel of business and community leaders, four students received cash prizes to expand or replicate their projects, and three students received honorable mentions.

Projects are judged on vision, planning, execution, program impact, presentation skills, and project sustainability. The prize winners are:

Blanton Newman, J.L. Mann High School

First Place (receives \$1,000)

Blanton organized a "Festival of Friendship" to bring together the "abled" and "differently abled" in the Greenville community which took place on Sunday, April 7th at J. L. Mann High School. The proceeds from the event benefitted the J.L. Mann S.P.E.C.I.A.L.S. program.

Newman hoped to raise awareness regarding a large gap he feels exists between the "abled" and "disabled" in our community. His goal was to help bring the Greenville community together to learn more about and befriend one another in an effort to bridge that gap.

"Emerging Public Leaders will always be a defining moment from my high school career. Through my participation in EPL, I was blessed to be given the opportunity to learn so many new and important things about leadership," said Newman.

Bayan Abunijem, Greenville Tech Charter High School

Second Place (receives \$600)

Abunijem organized two self-defense workshops to raise awareness about domestic violence in South Carolina and help women achieve certainty in their ability to protect themselves. The events were open to the public and targeted female college and high school students.

Abunijem partnered with The Raja Academy to provide the training events. Participants in the workshops learned basic self-defense moves that will help them protect themselves from domestic relationships and/or sexual assault.

"Seeing South Carolina rank so high for deaths caused by domestic violence was not something I could ignore, so I decided to create this project in hopes of teaching women that they can fight back," said Abunijem.

Andrea Kimpson, Richland Northeast High School

Tied for Third Place (receives \$350)

Kimpson's Midlands Postcard Project aims to educate, inspire, and engage younger generations of Midlands residents to know the Columbia area and its fascinating African American history.

The project created postcards featuring important locations in Columbia and brief snippets of their history. Kimpson distributed the postcard to various groups of students in the Midlands to inspire them to visit the locations and understand how they fit in the rapidly developing city scene. To see the locations and postcards, visit: <https://midlandspostcardproject.weebly.com/>

**Olivia Reichenbach, Hilton Head Christian Academy
Tied for Third Place (receives \$350)**

Reichenbach organized a group that organized a group of juniors and seniors with three or more years of Spanish language classes from Hilton Head Christian Academy called “Planting Seeds.” The group tutors native-Spanish-speaking, elementary and middle school students in English, Science, and Math.

The following students received honorable mentions:

Lauren Garrison, River Bluff High School

Garrison’s project helps senior citizens who cannot afford their pets. She implemented a two-part service project to support Paw Pals, a program run by the South Carolina Office on Aging, which provides pet food at no cost to qualifying senior citizens.

Lillian Holland, Porter-Gaud School

Holland created “Cookies and Karaoke,” a project which helped elderly people who suffer from cognitive illnesses enhance their cerebral aptitudes.

Reilly Arford, Ridge View High School

Arford increased the awareness of human trafficking in the state of South Carolina by speaking with members of his local government.

Emerging Public Leaders is a program designed to impart public leadership skills and knowledge to high school seniors. Over the summer, participants spend a week at Furman University where they investigate topics such as engaging in the community, analyzing critical issues, and practicing ethical leadership. They also develop communication and presentation skills, and plan for the implementation of service projects that address needs in their communities.

The Emerging Public Leaders program is made possible in part by State Farm, Spinx, The Riley Institute at Furman, Walmart, and the Pazdan Family.

For more information about Emerging Public Leaders, contact Melanie Armstrong at melanie.armstrong@furman.edu or 864-294-3688.

About the Riley Institute at Furman University

The Riley Institute at Furman University broadens student and community perspectives about issues critical to South Carolina’s progress. It builds and engages present and future leaders, creates and shares data-supported information about the state’s core challenges, and links the

leadership body to sustainable solutions. It is committed to nonpartisanship in all it does and to a rhetoric-free, facts-based approach to change. For more information, visit riley.furman.edu.