

# Emerging Public Leaders winners announced

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High school seniors from around the state are being recognized for creating service projects that help children in foster care, elementary school students and adolescents from low-income families and people experiencing homelessness.

The seniors are winners of the Riley Institute at Furman University's Emerging Public Leaders (EPL) service project competition.

The Emerging Public Leaders program imparts public leadership skills and knowledge to high school seniors, with a particular focus on leading in diverse communities. The summer before their senior year in high school, participants spend a week at Furman where they explore topics related to 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.

Over the course of their senior year, the students plan and implement projects and then present completed projects the following spring. Due to COVID-19, this year's students prepared online presentations that were submitted to the judges.

Student projects are judged on the basis of vision, planning, execution, program impact, presentation skills and project sustainability. Winners are awarded cash prizes to expand or replicate projects. EPL wishes to thank its generous sponsors: State Farm, Spinx and Walmart.

This year's winners are:

First Place (Each project receives \$700)

Rund Abdelnabi, Greenville Tech Charter High School, Piedmont, S.C.

Abdelnabi's "Pillowcase Project" provided children who are in foster care with personalized pillowcases and supplies that they can take with them as they move from place to place.

Natalie Geiger and Ellis McLarty, Next High School and Wade Hampton Fine Arts Center, Greenville, S.C.

Geiger and McLarty's project, "Bulldogs Achieving Creative Happiness," provided free 30-minute weekly music lessons, taught by music students at the Fine Arts Center, to low-income students at League Elementary.

Second Place (Project receives \$500)

Ariel Meriwether, Strom Thurmond High School, Johnston, S.C.

Meriwether's project, "The Red Badge," collected and distributed menstrual products to individuals experiencing financial hardship and homelessness.

Third Place (Each project receives \$300)

Nayha Hussain, Riverside High School, Greer, S.C.

Hussain's project, "Cooking for a Cause," taught cooking classes to low-income adolescents in Greenville County. Her classes focused on preparing healthy, affordable, delicious meals.

Ellie Toler, Spartanburg Day School, Spartanburg, S.C.

Toler's project, "Positivity Pouches," assembled care packages, which contained hygiene and menstrual products, for women at a Spartanburg food pantry.

Honorable Mention (Project receives \$100)

Madison Pollock, Dutch Fork High School, Irmo, S.C.

Pollock's project, "Girls Fighting Back," organized a self-defense class for young women at her school. SASS Go volunteered their defense training services.

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