

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.—The Richard W. Riley Institute at Furman University has announced winners of its service project competition for high school seniors participating in the institute's Emerging Public Leaders program.

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 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 which address needs in their communities.

Over the course of their senior year, students plan and implement projects, and then present completed projects the following spring.

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.

This year's winners are:

First Place (each receives \$700)

**Travis Dias
Wilson High School
Florence, SC**

Travis developed a mentoring program called "Tiger Tutors" in which students teach students. He sent invitations to become a tutor to members from the National Honor Society, Academic Challenge Team, and Math Team at Wilson High School. He partnered with Girls University and the East Florence Mission to provide tutors for at-risk students. He continued to recruit additional members throughout the year and formed a partnership with Florence School District One to provide tutors to the local intermediate students. He focused on the 5th-8th grade in STEM based subjects. Overall, over 100 students were tutored. Tiger Tutors will continue next year.

Travis Quote: "As I near the conclusion of my senior year it has occurred to me that we were all participants in a cycle of knowledge through school. The education we received was never ours to own. It was our duty to pass it on to others; doing anything else would be advocating selfishness. By collaborating with peers, it is possible to bridge the disparity in education."

**Caroline Farrell
James Island Charter School
Charleston, SC**

Caroline created *New Links*, which is a program where senior citizens are taught how to operate their own technology. The classes were run by high school students and addressed the individual needs of each participant. For example, one was learning how to use social networks on a desk top and another was learning how to take a picture on their smart phone. The classes were not only intended to help them use the technology that surrounds them every day, but also to create new links and relationships between senior citizens and teenagers.

Caroline Quote: “New Links has provided me an opportunity to meet members of my community that I would otherwise not interact with and get to know. It has taught me a lot about the difference in learning methods between my generation and previous generations.”

Second Place (receives \$300)

Elizabeth Armstrong
St. Joseph’s High School
Greenville, SC

Elizabeth enhanced the charity she started over five years ago called The Love of Giving. She worked to help children in two of her local hospitals (Shriner’s Hospital for Children and Greenville Children’s Hospital) by making monthly donations of stuffed animals, handmade blankets and books to help ease the stress of being in the hospital. As of today, The Love of Giving has helped change the lives of over 1,700 pediatric patients in the Greenville area. Going forward Elizabeth plans to branch out and work with other pediatric hospitals (while continuing to support the two other hospitals in Greenville) as she starts Wofford College this coming fall. For more information or to make a donation please visit theloveofgiving.org

Elizabeth quote: “After finishing this project I am not more positive than ever that this is something I want to continue as I get older and bring to college with me, and branch out to other hospital systems and other local high schools.”

Third Place (receives \$200)

Elizabeth Dunn
JL Mann High School
Greenville, SC

Elizabeth created the Christmas Book Project at the Frazee Dream Center. Over the course of four weeks during December, she worked with the first through third grade girls class at Frazee in Friday sessions lasting for an hour and a half. During the sessions, each girl was paired with a volunteer from JL Mann’s National Honors Society or other friends/family. These volunteers mentored the girls on their reading and writing skills in order to strengthen their skill sets in English, while each girl made their own short story. The short stories were based on the girls’ favorite memories with their family. The stories were then converted into books that were wrapped and given to their families for Christmas. The goal of the project was for the girls to have more confidence in their reading and writing skills, which will help them in furthering their education and other life goals.

Elizabeth quote: “The biggest lesson that I learned is that leadership is a chain reaction that encourages those who are exposed to it.”

Honorable Mention (receives \$100)

**Olivia McGuirt
Mauldin High School
Mauldin, SC**

Olivia held a book drive the last two weeks in March. All of the books collected were donated to Title 1 schools in South Carolina. This goal of this project was to promote literacy across South Carolina. Any type of book (gently used or new) was accepted. Olivia collected books in a number of ways. Mauldin High School had a book tree, where students could take a book title off of the tree and purchase that book. Mauldin High School, the University Center of Greenville, Hillcrest High School and Mauldin Middle School were all designated locations where books were collected. Chick-fil-A on Woodruff Road also handed out flyers about the book drive and was a donation location. Furman students from the Heller Service Corps. also contributed books and implemented drop off stations around Furman. Overall, Olivia collected and donated over 3,000 books.

Olivia quote: “It was so rewarding sending all of the books to the Title 1 schools and knowing that we are helping promote literacy all over the state!”