

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 (receives \$500)**

**Jennie Allen**

**Union County High School**

**Union, SC**

Jennie created teacher and parent/student packets on medical homebound instruction along with a professional development presentation for faculty members at Union County High School. The purpose of the professional development presentation was to give the faculty ways to improve homebound for both the student and teacher and to expose those who had no experience with homebound instruction to this method of learning. The parent/student packet is available in the UCHS attendance office to make information readily available for those requiring medical homebound instruction.

“EPL was an incredible experience that taught me so much and gave me friends from all across the state. Working on this project solidified my choice to pursue a career in education and helped me uncover the passion I have for education.”

**Second Place (receives \$300)**

**Duncan Winburn**

**Westwood High School**

**Blythewood, SC**

Duncan created a special event called “Star Day”. For the entire day, arts students taught special education students how to dance, sing, sculpt, improv, and make and perform puppetry. The fun day took months of planning and logistics, but in the end, Star Day had over 100 participants. The school’s integrated arts board has voted to make Star Day an annual event.

“It’s always just an idea in your head until it happens. Seeing the smiles on everyone’s faces, especially the students in special education, made all the effort worth it. I think I might want to do things like Star Day as a career, and that possibility was really supported by the joy I felt. My favorite part came later, though, when the special education teachers told me that now the regular education students stop and talk to their students in the hallways and cafeteria, and that the smiles just continue on.”

### **Third Place (receives \$200)**

**Mary Laurel Patrick**  
**Greenville Senior High Academy**  
**Greenville, SC**

Over the course of her senior year, Mary Laurel helped create the Juanita Butler Garden. Her goal was to have neighbors working together to maintain a sustainable garden. From the beginning, volunteers, friends, family, and some very curious neighborhood children worked together to build raised garden beds. Soon after the winter harvest was over she was approached about starting a gardening club at the Juanita Butler Center. She now meets once a week with neighborhood children teaching them about gardening, composting, and the benefits of fresh produce. Together they have begun building their own compost bin and clearing the gardens for spring planting. Thankfully this project is far from over; the garden has become an important part of the Juanita Butler Center and the Greater Sullivan Neighborhood as a whole. With the enthusiastic Gardening Club and excited parents and supervisors, the future of the Juanita Butler Garden is extremely promising.

“Thank you Riley Institute and the Emerging Public Leaders program for encouraging me to make a difference in my community and finally bringing my vision for a community garden to reality.”

### **Honorable Mention (each receives \$100)**

**Farehaa Hussain**  
**Riverside High School**  
**Greer, SC**

Farehaa organized a dialogue event modeled after the TED organization at Riverside High School. She advertised the public speaking opportunity, auditioned speakers, and ultimately selected ones that were most engaging, informative, entertaining, and relevant. After the auditions, she communicated with her speakers to revise their speeches and she coached them in public speaking. On the day of the event, over 125 students attended to listen to the speeches and students were encouraged to talk with the speakers during the breaks about the topics discussed. The speakers were able to develop essential communication and critical thinking skills while the audience was able to broaden and shift their perspectives. This program will be continued at Riverside High School.

“EPL taught me the importance of not being the source of empowerment, but rather, leading the way to have others empower themselves.”

**Manning Snyder**  
**Porter Gaud**  
**Charleston, SC**

Manning’s EPL project was two-fold. His first project was a school book sale which had many layers. Books were donated from and purchased by the school community of Porter Gaud. The leftover books were collected and stored for delivery to Title 1 Schools in the fall. Over \$1,000 was raised for the Charleston Freedom School, an organization that helps combat the literacy issue in Charleston. His second project involved the Charleston Area Justice Ministry (CAJM). The CAJM is a group of 28 different congregations that come together to fight injustice. The focus for the most recent meeting was "housing for all". Manning attended their final meeting of the year and was inspired by the efficiency of the

organization and the extensive research conducted by the group which exposed the housing crisis in Charleston. Additionally, he has created a club in his school and inspired his classmates to attend next year's meetings and to become involved in the community.

"Attending EPL was a truly life-changing experience-- the leadership skills acquired in the program along with the relationships made with the EPL staff and participants will last a lifetime. Regarding my project, it was amazing seeing how much good can stem from a loving community inspired by selflessness and care for others. The book sale was a huge success and attending the CAJM assembly restored my faith in humanity and in the strength and power of active political participation."

**Erica Daly**  
**Fort Mill High School**  
**Tega Cay, SC**

Erica organized and moderated a panel discussion titled "Mentoring Future Women Leaders" with women serving in public office locally within my community. The leadership positions included town mayor, chair of the local school board, city mayor pro tempore, and county government council member.

The discussion was open to the public and advertised to high school students and the general public in newspapers, posters, and social media. The goal of this event was to spark interest and lay the groundwork for a pipeline of future women candidates who are needed to serve at all levels of government. South Carolina places within the bottom ten for women in elected office in the country. On a personal level, she has been interested in studying law and politics in high school and had not found many opportunities within the community to learn what it's like to run for office, what the day to day job is like, or what skills were needed to be successful in office. She decided to organize something herself to give teens in high school as well as women of all ages and opportunity to gain knowledge about leadership roles.

"It is important for women to have more equal representation in policy decisions, because every policy has an impact on individuals and families sooner or later, in some form. With more comprehensive input at the state and federal level reflecting population demographics, the quality and effectiveness of legislation should improve."