

Board honors HCHS's 2017 Kentucky Governor's Scholars

Three Harlan County High School seniors were honored by the Harlan County Board of Education for their selection to and completion of the 2017 Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program.

Autumn Dunaway, Breanna Epperson and Emma Pinkley received awards during the board of education's August meeting.



"This is a program that I hold very dear to my heart," said Superintendent Brent Roark. It is a huge honor for all three of these young ladies to be chosen to represent Harlan County as they went out to the various universities for their five week period. My son went through this last year. I know what they went through. I think some may use the words 'life changing.' For a lot of the people who go to Governor's Scholars it is the first time they've ever been exclusively around other kids that were so academically orientated and so much like them."

"It was really life changing. The experience was incredible. I made lifelong friends," said Dunaway, who attended Northern Kentucky University with the assigned focus area of engineering.

"I could have never imagined all that I would gain from this amazing experience," said Dunaway. "My field of study was engineering, but I gained so much more than just academic knowledge. I developed new confidence and independence, made incredible life-long friends, and strengthened my desire to go out and experience all this big world has to offer."

Epperson attended Morehead State University and was assigned to the focus area of math. She said Governor's Scholars provided her a great opportunity and exposed her to new things while allowing her to make many new friends.

“GSP created a free learning environment that I know I will not be able to experience again. From learning about the history of horse racing to learning how to throw a tomahawk at Fort Boonesboro, I will never forget the memories and friends I made at Morehead GSP,” said Epperson.

Pinkley attended Murray State University. Her focus area was music theory and performance.

“I had a great experience,” said Pinkley. “It was really nice to see what Kentucky has to offer as far as all of the other scholars who were there.”

“The main reason I hold my time at GSP so close to my heart is based on how different events made me feel,” she said. “Discussing ideas and issues with other scholars made me feel hopeful for our future, petitioning the administration and succeeding to extend curfew made me feel heard, as if I truly had a voice that people wanted to hear, and leaving Murray State University made me feel truly prepared to start college next year. Overall, as cliché as it is, GSP genuinely changed my life for good.”

Roark said the scholars program is “a whole group of very intelligent, highly motivated young people. That is the purpose of it if you read through their program. That is the whole mission of it.”

Dunaway is the 2017 recipient of the University of Kentucky Book Award. She won second place in the Kentucky Lt. Governor Entrepreneurship Challenge, and has received recognition for her PSAT scores. She is active in school clubs and has earned numerous school class awards and academic team competitions. The daughter of Jay and Stephanie Dunaway, she also plays softball.

Epperson is a two time member of the HCHS International Community Problem solving Team finishing as runner up, the 2017 State community Problem Solving Team champion, a member of the two time cross country regional champion team, a member of the seven time Area 9 District cross country team champion and the 2016 state and international individual Future Problem Solving finalist. She is the daughter of Clarence and April Epperson.

Pinkley is a member of the high school choir, academic team and placed in various academic competitions. She was selected for the 2017 All-State high School Chorus and for the All National Honor Mixed Choir. She will perform at Walt Disney World in Orlando in November with her peers from across the country. She has portrayed several starring roles in HC’s dramatic productions, including Glinda the Good Witch in the “Wizard of Oz” and Sally in “Nightmare Before Christmas.” She frequently sings the National Anthem at various community events.

Pinkley scored a distinguished in the 2017 Solo Festival of the Kentucky Music Educators Association. Currently, she is serving her second term as president of the Harlan County High School Choir. She is the daughter of Jim and Vickie Pinkley of Lynch.

For more information on the Governor’s Scholars program, visit a high school guidance counselor or <https://gsp.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>.