

**REACH**...from Page 1A



**Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield explains to the students that the future is waiting for them. Photo/Lily Avery**

to making sure these students are successful. We pledge that today as a school system and as a community.”

The scholarship is part of a larger program, Gov. Nathan Deal’s Complete College Georgia initiative, which focuses on graduating an additional 250,000 college students across the state by the year 2020.

REACH (Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen) is Georgia’s first needs-based public/private scholarship program, and will be accepted at any post-secondary school in the state.

Some institutions in the area, such as Young Harris College and North Georgia Technical College, are matching or double-matching the scholarship amount, turning the \$10,000 award into a possible \$20,000 or \$30,000 school credit.

Scholarship funds are provided by private funds and donations from the area, and each school system involved can determine how many students can be brought into the program based on these resources.

The program begins in the eighth grade, including a mentorship and academic advisement throughout the scholar’s secondary school career. Students are matched with their mentors at the beginning of their ninth-grade year, allowing the mentors to fully invest in the student’s life, offering support and guidance when needed.

Scholars are also designated a school academic coach who will monitor the student’s progress and needs, providing additional academic and social support when needed as well as helping the scholar develop educational and career plans.

Through the program, students are given the

opportunity to participate in services to give back to the community, attend leadership seminars, and even include parents and guardians in program activities and events.

“I would like to share a quote with you from Aristotle,” said Dr. Rayfield. “You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

“It is very clear and very apparent that all the students who were recognized today have chosen for excellence to be a habit, a way of life, and a way that they approach everything in front of them.

“It’s not a random act. It’s not something that happens every six weeks or nine weeks or a year. These students have decided to excel academically, everyday. They have decided to handle discipline and responsibility the right way, everyday.

“They have decided that attendance is a priority. They have chosen excellence as a way of life. They have chosen to rise above the rest and be very successful. For that, my hat is off to you. Congratulations on that choice.”

While the scholarship is awarded to the students at the end of their high school careers, scholars are expected to maintain a 2.5 GPA and keep up attendance and a good behavior record throughout high school to stay in the program.

As the five lucky students with their parents and guardians signed the contracts, they agreed to put their best feet forward as they move into the rest of their academic careers, beginning the journey toward a lifetime of success.

The recipients of the award are as follows: Hannah Curry, UCMS; Ivey Garret, UCMS; Chloe Jump, UCMS; Russell Ponder, Woody Gap School; and Braden Snow, UCMS.

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