

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY  
RECOGNITION**

**2009-10 MARYLAND DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR AWARD**

**November 23, 2009**

**Background Information:**

The Maryland Distinguished Scholar Program honors Maryland high school juniors for superior academic achievement, for exceptional talent in the arts, or for achieving finalist status in the National Merit/National Achievement Scholarship Program. Students earning Distinguished Scholar Program Scholarships are those who are attending Maryland colleges or universities. The award amount is \$3,000 per year and is renewable three times for a total value of \$12,000. Three hundred-fifty new scholarships are awarded annually to Maryland residents. Students are selected for this scholarship after meeting several criteria. High school guidance offices distribute applications/nomination forms for the Maryland Distinguished Scholar Program to Maryland juniors in their fifth semester of high school. Completed forms and documentation of academic credentials are sent to the Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) Office of Student Financial Assistance by the March deadline.

**Discussion:**

The MHEC recently announced the finalists for the 2009-10 Maryland Distinguished Scholar Award, including three students from Harford County Public Schools (HCPS). The finalists from HCPS were Alex Hutcheson, senior at C. Milton Wright High School; Drew Thatcher, senior at C. Milton Wright High School and Jacob Silverman, senior at Patterson Mill High School. Both Mr. Hutcheson and Mr. Thatcher were recognized for the achievement category. In the academic achievement category, students are evaluated on two scales: by their cumulative unweighted grade point average (GPA) in academic courses and by their SAT, PSAT or ACT scores. Students are then selected in rank order and identified as Maryland Distinguished Scholar finalists, semifinalists or honorable mention students.

Mr. Hutcheson has a 4.2 GPA and is ranked second out of 402 students in his class. He is an AP scholar with distinction, having taken six advanced placement courses and scoring five out of five on all six exams. He is a member of the National Honor Society, the Student Government Association, the Senior Class Council, the Concert Band/Marching Band/Pep Band, the Cross Country team, the indoor and outdoor track teams and the German National Honor Society. Mr. Hutcheson is also very active in the community, currently serving as Junior Assistant Scoutmaster in the Boy Scouts for America. In addition to his impressive resume, Mr. Hutcheson is described as having an excellent attitude and aptitude for learning and as one of the most cooperative and courteous students in his senior class.

Mr. Thatcher holds a 4.2 GPA and is also ranked second out of 402 students in his class. He is an AP Scholar with Distinction and is a member of the Academic Team, the National Honors Society, the Spanish National Honors Society, the Tri-M Honors Society and the Concert Choir. When Drew graduates, he will have earned superlative marks in seven honors courses and eleven advanced placement classes, a noteworthy accomplishment. In addition to earning finalist status in the Academic Achievement category of the Maryland Distinguished Scholar program, he also received honorable mention in the Talent in the Arts portion and is an accomplished vocalist. Mr. Thatcher is passionate about chemistry and engineering and his math teacher identifies him as one of the most naturally gifted students she has ever taught.

Mr. Silverman earned his award in the talent category for instrumental music. Students considered for the talent in the arts category for areas in visual art, instrumental or vocal music, dance or drama must audition or undergo a portfolio review before a panel of professional judges. Mr. Silverman began studying piano at the age six and continues to study classical piano with the same instructor. At 13, Mr. Silverman expanded his study to include jazz improvisation. To date, he has played with the Peabody Preparatory Jazz Ensemble, the Eastman School of Music Summer Jazz Ensemble, the Patterson Mill Jazz Ensemble and the Harford Community College Jazz Ensemble. Mr. Silverman also plays with the Braxton Cook Quintet at Twins Jazz Club in Washington, D.C. The Maryland Music Educators Association selected Mr. Silverman as the 2008-2009 all-state jazz pianist. After high school, Mr. Silverman plans to attend a music conservatory to study jazz performance.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education of Harford County commend Alex Hutcheson, Drew Thatcher and Jacob Silverman for their significant achievements. The Superintendent further recommends the Board wish them continued success in their educational careers.