

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 23, 2014

Six Harford County students head to Annapolis to serve as student pages

Six high school seniors were recently selected to serve as student pages for the 2015 Maryland General Assembly, including Alex Poniowski of Edgewood High School, Grace Brett of Bel Air High School, Tyler Ziegler of North Harford High School, Justin Hawkins of The John Carroll School, Ashley Harley of Edgewood High School and Kevin Williams of C. Milton Wright High School.

Pages were hand-selected following a grueling application process that included a written test and an extensive oral interview before a 12-person committee, consisting of peers and educators from around the county, who tested the applicants on their knowledge of politics and other various topics. Based on a published rubric, the five highest scorers have the honor of being a page in Annapolis; the sixth highest score on the rubric is the alternate who will replace anyone who cannot serve due to illness.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime, behind-the-scenes experience for prospective future law, government and policy students to experience first-hand the inner machinations of state government and politics,” said J. Patrick Whitehurst, coordinator of the student page program in Harford County and Fallston High School government teacher.

A Student Page Breakfast was held December 4 at Patterson Mill High School, and the newly-named pages spent the morning getting to know each other and the elected officials they will assist during the session. They were afforded the opportunity to ask questions and exchange contact information. The pages’ parents, as well as school and elected officials, were invited to the breakfast.

Keynote speaker Ms. Kate McComiskey, a 2006 student page from Fallston High School, took a moment to share her insight about the experience of serving as a page and offered her top five tips for the pages, ending by saying that *all* the people the pages will meet in Annapolis will be important to them. “You each will go on to do great things,” said Ms. McComiskey. “Take this time to make new, lifelong friends.”

Delegate Richard Impallaria, chair of the Harford Delegation, also addressed the pages, assuring them, “If you have any questions or concerns, we are there for you. We are looking forward to working with each of you.”

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In addition to Del. Impallaria, other elected officials in attendance were Delegates Glen Glass, Susan McComas, Wayne Norman and Mary Ann Lisanti.

Board of Education of Harford County Member Alysson Krchnavy and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Susan Brown brought greetings from the school system and commended the pages for having been selected for this opportunity.

Mr. Alex Poniatowski is in the International Baccalaureate Program at Edgewood High School and is a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society and is captain of the Varsity Soccer Team. Mr. Poniatowski volunteers at Luna House: Animal Care and Education Center and for the Greater Excellence in Education Foundation. He hopes to major in Computer Science and Cybersecurity at University of Maryland or Towson in the fall.

Ms. Gracie Brett has been a member of the varsity golf, swimming and tennis teams and volunteers for the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society. She has completed an internship as a political consulting trainee and has worked on campaigns for the Board of Education, Congress, governor and the president. Ms. Brett plans to major in Political Science at University of Maryland, American University or George Washington University in the fall.

Mr. Tyler Ziegler is co-captain of both the Speech and Debate teams and is a member of the Academic Team. He is also very active in his church's youth group. Mr. Ziegler plans to attend University of Maryland in the fall.

Mr. Justin Hawkins is captain of the Academic Team and the Tennis team. He is president and founder of The John Carroll Chess Club and is a member of the National Honor Society, the Speech and Debate Team, the Student Government Association and the Quill and Scroll International High School Journalism Society. Mr. Hawkins also serves as the opinion editor for The Patriot and jcpatriot.com. He hopes to attend William and Mary, Wake Forest or University of Virginia in the fall.

Ms. Ashley Harley is active in her school's drama productions, the Literary Magazine, Destination Imagination, the Feminism Club, the Academic Team and the Science Olympiad. She plans to attend Stony Brook University or Duquesne University in the fall.

Mr. Kevin Williams is Senior Class Council President and a member of the National Honor Society, the Student Government Association, the Cross Country team, the Baseball team, and the Academic Team. He plans to attend Princeton in the fall.

The pages will serve in the 2015 legislative session that will begin in early January and continue through April. They will spend two, non-consecutive weeks with host families in Annapolis while serving in either the House of Delegates or the Maryland Senate. The pages are paid a stipend to cover their living expenses.

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The statewide Student Page In Annapolis Program has been ongoing for about 35 years. Every high school in the county is urged to participate in the program, and each school has an equal chance of having its candidate(s) score in the top five to become a page in Annapolis.

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