

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY  
RECOGNITION**

**2016 HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS HOLIDAY CARD**

**AMORY JONES, JOPPATOWNE HIGH SCHOOL  
DOMINIC NELSON, PATTERSON MILL HIGH SCHOOL**

**December 19, 2016**

**Background Information:**

Each year, the Harford County Public Schools Communications and Art offices combine to conduct a contest seeking artwork to be used as the official school system holiday greeting. Art teachers are invited to have their students create artwork displaying a winter scene that would be appropriate for use by the school system during the holiday season. The student whose artwork is chosen is honored by being invited to attend a Board of Education meeting where he/she receives a framed copy of the card and is publicly commended. An electronic holiday card is posted to the HCPS website (hcps.org) and is emailed to HCPS stakeholders to bring greetings to those who have assisted the school system during the past year.

In addition, HCPS reaches out to student musicians to submit music to be part of the electronic holiday card. Aspiring composers were invited to share their talents with the school system by submitting original material written by the student, representing a winter theme and no longer than one minute 30 seconds in length.

**Discussion:**

During the 2016 contest, pieces of artwork were produced by students at all school levels, identified by art teachers as being outstanding, and submitted to the HCPS central office to be judged. The artwork of Joppatowne High School senior Amory Ranelle Jones was selected as the official HCPS holiday greeting based on its warm message of the holiday season. Amory's drawing, which features an HCPS mug of hot cocoa in the warm embrace of fuzzy mittens, impressed the judges with its representation of the joy of the holiday season and appropriateness as artwork for the school system greeting. Amory's art teacher is Cynde Hendrick.

In addition, original compositions produced by students at all school levels were submitted this year. The original piece by Patterson Mill High School 10<sup>th</sup> grader Dominic Nelson was selected as the official music to accompany the electronic holiday card. Dominic's song, "Snowy Morning," was selected because it exhibited great creativity and musical talent, and its mellow but happy beat was perfect for the holiday image. Dominic's music teacher is Katie Romano.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education of Harford County congratulate Amory Jones and Dominic Nelson on their outstanding submissions that were chosen for the 2016 official HCPS holiday greeting card. The Superintendent further recommends the Board congratulate Amory's art teacher and Dominic's music teacher for the support of their efforts and wish both Amory and Dominic continued success in their academic and artistic endeavors.

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**2016 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD  
THOMAS DENNISON, HAVRE DE GRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**December 19, 2016**

**Background Information:**

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards program provides public recognition and financial awards to elementary and secondary teachers, principals and other education professionals exemplifying excellence in education. The program, which awards individual winners with \$25,000, was established to recognize, attract, motivate and retain excellent educators throughout the nation. Initiated by education reform pioneer, Lowell Milken, the Milken Awards program was founded on the belief that an effective way to advance the teaching profession is to reward educators' achievements, enhance their resources and expand their professional interests. The awards are announced each year at surprise notification ceremonies across the country.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Thomas Dennison believes in transformation and welcomes all students into his class. Creating an energetic, positive atmosphere to inspire learning, he uses music during transitions or to boost student excitement. Throughout the day, kids high-five, clap, and bang drums when classmates offer correct answers, showing their appreciation for each other and recognizing their peers' successes. The approach garners impressive results. Last year, Mr. Dennison's class scored in the proficient or advanced range on Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessments—and Havre de Grace Elementary ranks in the top 1% for reading and top 10% for math among Maryland's Title I schools. Mr. Dennison also encourages qualitative measures of success in his students: persistence, curiosity, compassion, creativity, motivation, leadership and courage. Teachers and administrators from around the state visit Mr. Dennison's classroom to observe how the emphasis he places on student engagement motivates colleagues while also improving student behavior and achievement. A fixture in the Havre de Grace community, Mr. Dennison, who has four children of his own, goes to students' sporting events, sees them at the park, and attends church with many of them. Parents often request that their children be placed in Mr. Dennison's class, and because he has taught multiple grades, he has had many students more than once. He visits each student's home at the start of the year and holds homework help nights for both students and parents. Former students have described Mr. Dennison as the teacher who changed their lives. Unflaggingly positive, Mr. Dennison praises students and reminds them that they are unique, special and a gift to the world. Mr. Dennison earned a Bachelor of Education in early childhood in 2002 and a Master of Education in computer technology in 2003 from Ohio University. It is his dedication and commitment to students and his profession that has earned him the distinguished honor of becoming a 2016 Milken Family Foundation Award Winner.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education of Harford County congratulate Mr. Thomas Dennison on having been named a 2016 Milken Educator Award recipient, indicative of his excellence and innovation in teaching elementary students. The Superintendent further recommends the Board wish Mr. Dennison continued success in his career.