



# Columbus Scholars, Inc.

JANUARY 7, 2015

\*\*\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*

10 ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE HONOR STUDENTS TO BE AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS; CEREMONY SATURDAY JANUARY 24 AT RICHARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL BRINGS TO 50 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF 'COLUMBUS SCHOLARS'

STUDENTS TO BE MATCHED WITH MENTOR AND MONEY FOR COLLEGE

COLUMBUS, Ga. – Ten academically talented but economically disadvantaged fifth-grade students have been selected to receive a college scholarship and a long-term mentor through a collaboration with the Columbus Scholars Project (CS) and Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Chattahoochee Valley (BBBSCV), CS Chairman Ben Holden announced Wednesday.

**A scholarship “signing ceremony” and celebration for the new scholars will be held Saturday January 24, 2015 at 10 a.m. at Richards Middle School, 2892 Edgewood Rd. The winning Scholars will be personally notified at their schools by CS board members today.**

CS, in partnership with BBBSCV, raises \$7,500 per selected scholar and transfers those privately raised funds to the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley. BBBSCV then matches the students with a local mentor who supports the dream of college education. The newest scholars bring to 50 the total number of children who are admitted to the program regardless of race or gender. CS is in its sixth year.

The Scholars, who will be honored at Richards Middle School Saturday January 24 are:

Yakeeyia Gainous, J.D. Davis Elementary  
Markayla Marshall, J.D. Davis Elementary  
Jonathan Powell, J.D. Davis Elementary  
Keshuan Winebush, Wesley Heights Elementary  
Tru Sequin, Hannan Elementary Elementary  
Ashley Sajous, Dorothy Heights Elementary  
Chelzi Williams, Lonnie Jackson Elementary  
Jamie Jackson, Jr., Lonnie Jackson Elementary  
Taylor Wardlaw, Dorothy Heights Elementary  
Zaria Smith, Key Elementary

1661 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite B; Columbus, Georgia 31901

●Where mentoring meets hope●

These students, selected from among applicants in the Fall of 2014 from all Muscogee County School District elementary schools, join 40 previously selected 5<sup>th</sup>-grade scholars who currently attend MCSD high schools and middle schools across 5 classes between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

The goal of Columbus Scholars is to make college possible for Muscogee County fifth graders who have outstanding academic records but come from difficult family circumstances. “We try to identify these kids before life beats them down. We give them a hand up not a hand out,” said Holden.

Each student is matched with a mentor who provides support and guidance from the fifth grade through college. The BBBSCV screens the Big Brothers and Big Sisters and provides ongoing support to the mentoring relationship. Marquitta Williams, Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Chattahoochee Valley, noted that Columbus is different from other scholarship programs because it recognizes “the impact a mentoring relationship can have on the long-term success of a child.”

The students and their mentors attend monthly enrichment sessions where they learn about everything from the criminal justice system to etiquette.

The Columbus Scholars Fund is administered and controlled by the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley. Funds will be provided to help meet the needs of each student during the college years. Traditional scholarships provide an award to a student who is already going to college. Columbus Scholars sets aside funds to motivate and help more students reach college.

To date, more than \$450,000 in cash and stock-market appreciation has been raised and directed to the Community Foundation by the Columbus Scholars board. In addition, Columbus State University has guaranteed two students from earlier classes \$10,000 each in scholarship funding. 100% of all donations received to date have gone directly into the Columbus Scholars Fund at the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley. All administrative expenses of CS have been borne by board members or friends of the program, who contribute to a separate administrative fund. Donations can be sent and made payable to Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley/Columbus Scholars Fund, 1340 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Columbus, GA 31901.

Additional information can be found at [www.columbusscholars.org](http://www.columbusscholars.org). You may also contact Marquitta Williams at 706-888-3701 or Ben Holden at 706-332-8426.

**6th Annual Columbus Scholars Induction Ceremony**

**Saturday January 24, 2015 at 10:00 AM**

**Richards Middle School**

**Opening Remarks**

Ben Holden, Chairman, Columbus Scholars

Lisa Scrivener, CEO, The Family Center

**Keynote Speaker**

David Lewis, Superintendent MCSD

**Commitment Letter Signing of Class of 2026**

Carl Brown, CS Board Member, BBBS Board Member and Former Family Center Chair

**Columbus Scholars**

Yakeeyia Gainous, J.D. Davis Elementary

Markayla Marshall, J.D. Davis Elementary

Jonathan Powell, J.D. Davis Elementary

Keshuan Winebush, Wesley Heights Elementary

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Zaria Smith, Key Elementary

**Columbus Scholars Creed**

6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade Columbus Scholars

**Benediction**

Reverend J.H. Flakes III, Pastor, Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church