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Three Gwinnett seniors to receive scholarships

Three Gwinnett County seniors will be honored during Thursday's school board meeting with scholarships from Gwinnett Federal Credit Union.

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SUWANEE — Three Gwinnett County seniors will be honored during Thursday's school board meeting with scholarships from Gwinnett Federal Credit Union.

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This year's scholarship recipients are Dacula High student Deserea Jones, Mill Creek High student Alex Reed and North Gwinnett High student Eric Wright. The students are the recipients of the 2010 Louise Radloff Scholarship, the 2010 Alton C. Crews Scholarship and the 2010 J. Alvin Wilbanks Scholarship, respectively.

The Louise Radloff Scholarship, a \$2,500 award, was established to honor longtime school board member Louise Radloff, who has served on the board for nearly four decades. The scholarship is awarded to a student who has overcome a significant personal challenge to graduate and is pursuing postsecondary study.

"I've never been happier in my life," Jones said of the moment she found out she won the scholarship. "I said, 'Stuff like this doesn't happen to people like me.'"

At age 4, Jones' father attempted to kill her mother by setting their Detroit home on fire. Jones said she remembers hearing her mother scream her name from the bedroom. When she went to the bedroom, she saw her mother lying on the bed, but her father told her that her mother was sleeping and told her to go outside to the car. Jones said she sat in the car for hours.

Her mother survived the murder attempt but endured a long, painful recovery. Jones testified against her father at his trial, and he is serving a 33-year sentence in prison.

After the incident, Jones said her family moved to Gwinnett County because her uncle lived here.

Jones said she plans to attend either Brenau University or Georgia Gwinnett College. She wants to study nursing. She'll be the first in her family to attend college.

"I never thought I would be the one to pursue my dreams and make it," she said. "My love for (my mother) and her pushing me is what helped me succeed academically."

The other two scholarships are reserved for students who are planning to become teachers.

Reed, the recipient of the \$1,500 Crews Scholarship, also overcame a major life obstacle. During his junior year in high school, he was involved in a car wreck that left him paralyzed from the waist down.

Because of his hospitalization and rehabilitation, Reed missed almost two months of school. During his absence, his teachers and coaches visited him and provided him with study material so he could stay on course academically.

"One of the biggest reasons I have decided to become a teacher is because of the impact that teachers can have on a student's life," Reed wrote in his scholarship essay. "Because of the encouragement and support from these teachers, I was able to learn two months of material in a short time and make good grades on my final exams. Some of my teachers have left lasting impressions on me because of all the help they gave me."

Reed said he's interested in teaching high school math. He plans to attend the University of Georgia.

Wright, the recipient of the \$2,500 Wilbanks Scholarship, wrote in his scholarship essay that he wants to become a teacher because he has the desire to work with children. Additionally, he wrote, pursuing a career in education will allow him to use his natural leadership skills.

The school board meeting begins at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Instructional Support Center, 437 Old Peachtree Road NW, in Suwanee.

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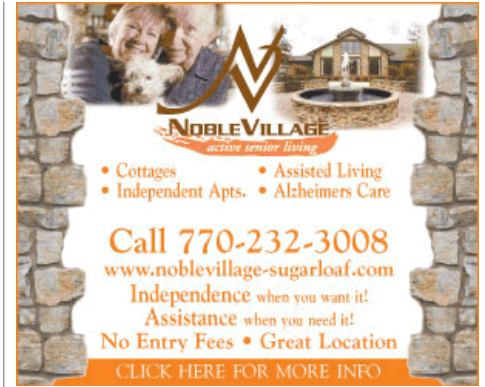
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