



For Immediate Release – May 23, 2022
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Charter Institute at Erskine hosts fourth annual Awards Banquet

COLUMBIA, SC – On Thursday, May 19, the Charter Institute at Erskine hosted its fourth annual Awards Banquet at the Columbia Convention Center. This is the first Institute Awards Banquet that has been held in person since 2019.

Over 250 attendees from the Charter Institute at Erskine’s 26 charter schools statewide attended the event, including students, parents, volunteers, teachers, and school leadership. Charter School Ambassadors Christian DeWalk (Odyssey Online Learning) and Trinity Higgins (Gray Collegiate Academy) served as the hosts of the event.

Ms. Megan Patterson, a Kindergarten teacher from Belton Preparatory Academy in Anderson, South Carolina, was named the 2022-2023 Nathan Yon Institute Teacher of the Year. Superintendent of the Charter Institute at Erskine Cameron Runyan and 2021-2022 Nathan Yon Institute Teacher of the Year Ms. Laura Ferguson presented Patterson with her awards. Ms. Patterson received a trophy, a gift from the family of Nathan Yon, and several other gifts for receiving this honor.

“I am honored and thrilled to be representing the Charter Institute,” said Patterson. “This district is amazing at reaching children all over the state of South Carolina and I am excited to be a part of the innovation and strides we are taking for our future leaders!”

Ms. Makenzie Godfrey (Summit Classical School, Clinton), Mr. Terrance Heyward (Royal Live Oaks Academy, Hardeeville) and Mr. Jason Lin (Lowcountry Leadership Charter School, Charleston) were also announced as the Elementary, Middle, and High School Students of the Year. These students were nominated by their school’s staff and were selected as the winners by a panel of Institute judges. Senator Danny Verdin attended the Banquet and presented his constituent, Ms. Makenzie Godfrey, with her award, and Representative Chardale Murray sent a congratulatory certificate to her constituent, Mr. Jason Lin. The winning students received a special trophy for their accomplishments. All Student of the Year recipients were recognized at the Banquet and received a certificate and medal for being nominated. *Please see below for a complete list of winners and nominees.*

Mr. Keith Anderson from Gray Collegiate Academy was awarded the 2022 Lynn Higgins Volunteer of the Year award. Gray Collegiate Academy will receive a \$250 donation in honor of Ms. Lynn Higgins, a volunteer at Clear Dot Charter School. All Volunteer of the Year nominees were recognized and received a certificate for their accomplishments.

Mr. Pierce McNair, Director of Research for the Education and Public Works Committee of the South Carolina House of Representatives, was named the State Advocate of the Year for the Charter Institute at Erskine in recognition of his advocacy for charter schools and school choice in South Carolina. Superintendent Cameron Runyan presented Mr. McNair with his award.

“Accountability was demanded of the Institute when it was opened, and it was to our great benefit that it was,” said Superintendent Cameron Runyan. “We thank Mr. McNair for always holding us to the highest standards. We are honored to present him with this award in recognition of the numerous ways in which he helped us to grow.”

Additionally, the Charter Institute at Erskine staff announced eight Coordinator of the Year award winners for school staff members who went above and beyond in their roles at their respective schools.

Charter Institute at Erskine Director Vamshi Rudrapati closed the night out with an inspiring speech.

“Erskine came into the charter world to change a generation,” said Rudrapati. “Congratulations to all the winners and nominees!”

The Charter Institute at Erskine is the fastest-growing charter school authorizer in South Carolina. Serving 26 schools and 24,000 students across the state, the Charter Institute at Erskine is committed to innovative, creative, high-quality methods of education. For more information about the Institute, please visit www.erskinecharters.org.

2021-2022 Institute Student of the Year Winners

2021-2022 Institute Elementary School Student of the Year: Makenzie Godfrey, Summit Classical School

2021-2022 Institute Middle School Student of the Year: Terrance Heyward, Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School

2021-2022 Institute High School Student of the Year: Jason Lin, Lowcountry Leadership Charter School

Student of the Year Nominees

Belton Preparatory Academy – Kinsley Jenkins
Berkeley Preparatory Academy – Jace Bronniman
Brashier Middle College Charter High School – Morgan Hayes
Calhoun Falls Charter School, Middle School – Marquavius Turman
Calhoun Falls Charter School, High School – Omarion Bryant
Cherokee Charter Academy – Samantha Benson

Clear Dot Charter School, Elementary School – Scarlett Hamlin
Clear Dot Charter School, Middle School – Madison Cox
Coastal Leadership Academy – Cesar Giron
Cyber Academy of South Carolina, Elementary School – Ethan Pinkney
Cyber Academy of South Carolina, Middle School – Makayla Plemmons

Cyber Academy of South Carolina, High School – Jamal McDonald
Gray Collegiate Academy – Karla Gordon
Horse Creek Academy Charter School, Elementary School – Bella Tyler
Horse Creek Academy Charter School, Middle School – Kenleigh Standridge
Horse Creek Academy Charter School, High School – Tony Hodges
Legion Collegiate Academy – Reagan Hughes
Lowcountry Connections Academy – Hanley Greenwood
Lowcountry Leadership Charter School, Elementary School – Josephine Coryell
Lowcountry Leadership Charter School, Middle School – Isabella Bozard
Lowcountry Leadership Charter School, High School – Jason Lin
Mevers School of Excellence – Amiyah Gadsden
Midlands STEM Institute, Elementary School – Mandy Wang

Midlands STEM Institute, High School – Jasmine Vesselles
Oceanside Collegiate Academy – Chandler Usher
Odyssey Online Learning – Christian DeWalk
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School, Elementary School – Layton Busby
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School, Middle School – Terrance Heyward
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School, High School – Nikima Carter
South Carolina Connections Academy, Elementary School – Lucas Oliver
South Carolina Connections Academy, Middle School – Isla McCorkindale
South Carolina Connections Academy, High School – Mary Bate
South Carolina Virtual Charter School, Middle School – Faith Henry
South Carolina Virtual Charter School, High School – Teegan Meetze
Summit Classical School – Makenzie Godfrey
Virtus Academy of South Carolina – Ethan Shaeffer

2021-2022 Institute Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Keith Anderson, Gray Collegiate Academy

Volunteer of the Year Nominees

Berkeley Preparatory Academy – Paul & Margaret Nutt
Brashier Middle College Charter High School – Emilee Loewecke
Cherokee Charter Academy, Support Staff – Valerie McCluney
Coastal Leadership Academy – Anne Willoughby
Gray Collegiate Academy – Keith Anderson
Horse Creek Academy Charter School – Nicole Till
Legion Collegiate Academy – Crystal Carper

Lowcountry Leadership Charter School – Liz Reeder
Mevers School of Excellence – Maria Duval
Midlands STEM Institute – Diana Bond
The Montessori School of Camden – Suzy Smith
Oceanside Collegiate Academy – Doug Smith
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School – Ronak “Rick” Patel
Summit Classical School – Joe Baxter
Virtus Academy of South Carolina, Support Staff – Ron Brown

2022-2023 Nathan Yon Institute Teacher of the Year: Ms. Megan Patterson, Belton Preparatory Academy

Teacher of the Year Nominees

Bold font indicates teacher was a finalist for 2022-2023 Nathan Yon Institute Teacher of the Year

Belton Preparatory Academy – Megan Patterson

Berkeley Preparatory Academy – Gina Dippolito
Brashier Middle College Charter High School – Jeffrey Inman
Calhoun Falls Charter School – Sherika Hutchinson
Cherokee Charter Academy – Lori Cudd
Clear Dot Charter School – Kenyatta Washington
Coastal Leadership Academy – Ashley Salsberry
Cyber Academy of South Carolina, Elementary School – Shannon Cunningham

Cyber Academy of South Carolina, Middle School

– **Melanie Trusky**
Cyber Academy of South Carolina, High School – Taryn Garner
Gray Collegiate Academy – Sarah Zaengle
Horse Creek Academy Charter School, Elementary School – Erin Spears
Horse Creek Academy Charter School, Middle School – Edythe Thompkins
Legion Collegiate Academy – Gloria Masterton
Lowcountry Connections Academy – Iesha Burns

Mevers School of Excellence – Erin Coward
Midlands STEM Institute – Karen Smith
Oceanside Collegiate Academy – Alecia Robinson
Odyssey Online Learning – Tiffany Brinkley
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School,
Elementary School – Ced’Rica Johnson
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School, Middle
School – Romeo Ranera
Royal Live Oaks Academy Charter School, High
School – Kevin Wilson
South Carolina Connections Academy, Elementary
School – Jennifer Andrade
South Carolina Connections Academy, Middle
School – Nashwa Elkoshairi

South Carolina Connections Academy, High School
– Traci Hedetniemi
The South Carolina Preparatory Academy – Kara
Mallory
South Carolina Virtual Charter School, Elementary
School – Nicole Harmon
South Carolina Virtual Charter School, Middle
School – Erin Harrelson
**South Carolina Virtual Charter School, High
School – Jessica Mullinax**
Summit Classical School – Kate Cheeks
Thornwell Charter School – Cinda Ginn
Virtus Academy of South Carolina – Megan Bray

2022 State Advocate of the Year: Mr. Pierce McNair

Coordinators of the Year

Communications Coordinator of the Year: Allison Wilkins - Clear Dot Charter School
Federal Programs Coordinator of the Year: Mary-Greene Thomasson - Summit Classical School
Finance Coordinator of the Year: Kristie Crosby - Brashier Middle College
PowerSchool Coordinator of the Year: Rebecca Baker - Belton Preparatory Academy
Testing Coordinator of the Year: Lacey Shull - Cherokee Charter Academy
Student Services Coordinator of the Year: Lindsey Swygert - Gray Collegiate Academy
Rookie of the Year: Shemekia Nero - Virtus Academy of South Carolina
Board Member of the Year: Courtney Suber – South Carolina Virtual Charter School