



For Immediate Release
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Media Release

Wando culinary students collect multiple honors at national FCCLA Conference

Wando High School

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Mount Pleasant, SC – Culinary students and staff from Wando High School made the most out of their recent trip to San Diego, CA for the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) 2022 National Leadership Conference. One graduating senior won a gold medal, and several others brought home silver medals from their competitions. In fact, Wando is the only school from South Carolina to have a top-3 finalist (gold medal) at this year's conference, one of a handful of schools where every competitor earned a gold or silver medal.

Wando's culinary students participated in the national competition (June 29 through July 3 in San Diego) thanks to [excellent performances at the state level](#).

Leading the way in the FCCLA STAR (Students Taking Action for Recognition) Events was Taiye Akinjobi. She earned a gold medal and placed third in the country with her Chapter Service Project Display. Akinjobi (Class of 2022) executed a trifold presentation on how she founded and opened Warriors United Food Pantry, which is a grocery store-style food pantry now available for Wando families.

"It's not always about the win; it's about the passion," said Akinjobi. "My passion was to stop the food hunger crisis at my school. From day one of this project, I had a vision: to help the students and families that needed aid. When you can relate to some of the students who have been through the same problems and tribulations, it hits home and makes my heart ache. Warrior United Food Pantry will still be the most amazing project I've ever done in the 12 years I attended school! Placing in the top three in the nation means that I didn't just place for myself, my school, or my family. I placed for the students that needed extra support. I can't wait to see where this project goes."

"This was the first year National FCCLA recognized a 'top-10' in each STAR Event category, so Taiye is the first ever SC Student to be in the top three," said Wando Chef Instructor Molly Gordon (who also serves as the school's FCCLA adviser). "Taiye said that no matter the medal color she received, she was happy to be a servant leader to help food insecure students at Wando."

Alex Henderson and Darya Zlati both earned silver medals in the Culinary Arts STAR Event. They prepared a sautéed chicken breast with an herb sauce, rice pilaf, and garlic green beans in 60 minutes.

M.J. Miller received a silver medal in Career Investigation. She researched and completed a portfolio outlining the career of an executive chef. Miller job shadowed, conducted self-assessments, and described how Career and Technology Education classes prepare her for the future.

Maggie Newton won a silver medal in her Baking and Pastry STAR Event. She made chocolate chip cookies, cream puffs, blueberry muffins, and decorated a cake within two hours and 45 minutes.

The students and staff enjoyed opportunities outside the conference as well. They saw sea lions at La Jolla Cove, visited the San Diego Zoo, and tried the local cuisine in area restaurants.

“FCCLA is such an amazing organization and truly builds leaders in local youth,” added Gordon. “It is so fun to see timid students grow into themselves as powerful, confident, and inspirational leaders. These students will be able to take their new leadership skills and excel in life in and out of the workplace.”

FCCLA is a student-led Career and Technical Organization that promotes greater understanding between youth and adults and democracy through cooperative action in the home and community.

For more information, email Molly Gordon at molly_gordon@charleston.k12.sc.us.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.