

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Four CCSD students receive \$2,500 scholarships from NMSC

Office of Strategy and
Communications

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Charleston, SC – For the second year in a row, four Charleston County School District (CCSD) students earned \$2,500 National Merit Scholarships from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). Academic Magnet High School’s Josephine R. Drake and Robert K. Gourdie, as well as Molly M. Bynum and Gillian L. Richard of Wando High School, are part of the second wave of winners in the 65th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

The 2,500 Merit Scholar designees were chosen from a talent pool of more than 15,000 outstanding Finalists in the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program.

National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship winners are the Finalists in each state judged to have the strongest combination of accomplishments, skills, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. The number of winners named in each state is proportional to the state’s percentage of the nation’s graduating high school seniors.

“Among the record-breaking class of 2020, Josephine and Robbie stand out as superstars,” said Academic Magnet’s principal, Catherine Spencer. “Their academic achievement is at the top of the class and their contributions to our school community are palpable. We congratulate them and continue to be proud of their considerable accomplishments, which assuredly will continue in their bright futures.”

NMSC finances most of these single-payment National Merit \$2,500 Scholarships. Corporations and company foundations that sponsor awards through NMSC also help underwrite these scholarships with grants they provide in lieu of paying administrative fees. Scholars may use their awards at any regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

“We are pleased to congratulate two Wando seniors on being offered scholarships from NMSC,” stated Principal Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer. “Both Molly and Gillian have been dedicated, serious students who are highly respected by their classmates and their teachers. I am confident that each one will be highly valued members of their chosen university communities.

The Wando community stands proud of their academic accomplishments, and we look forward to hearing of their continued success.”

According to the NMSC, over 1.5 million juniors in approximately 21,000 high schools entered the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program when they took the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

Semifinalists first had to advance to the next round by fulfilling additional requirements. Each semifinalist was asked to submit a detailed scholarship application, which included writing an essay and providing information about extracurricular activities, awards, and leadership positions. Semifinalists also had to have an outstanding academic record, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, and earn SAT® scores that confirmed the qualifying test performance. From the semifinalist group, some 15,000 students met finalist requirements.

By the conclusion of the 2020 competition, about 7,600 Finalists will have been selected to receive National Merit Scholarships totaling over \$30 million. Winners are finalists who have, according to evaluators, the strongest combination of academic skills and achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

NMSC, a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance, was established in 1955 to conduct the National Merit Scholarship Program. The majority of National Merit Scholarships offered each year are underwritten by some 400 independent corporate and college sponsors that support NMSC’s efforts to honor the nation’s scholastically talented youth and encourage academic excellence at all levels of education.

For more information, contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.