ORANGEBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School Senior Patrick Hubbard Jr.

Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School Senior Patrick Hubbard Jr. Named 2027 Coca-Cola Scholars Semifinalist

Nationally Recognized Youth Leader Among Top One Percent of More Than 113,000 Applicants Nationwide

ORANGEBURG, S.C. – Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) proudly announces that Patrick "PJ" Hubbard Jr., a senior at Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School, has been named a semifinalist for the prestigious 2027 Coca-Cola Scholars Program, adding another remarkable distinction to an already impressive record of academic achievement, leadership, and community service.

Hubbard is among just 1,227 students selected from more than 113,000 applicants nationwide, placing him among approximately the top one percent of students advancing in the highly competitive scholarship selection process. His selection recognizes his commitment to academic

excellence, leadership, and service, qualities he has demonstrated both inside and beyond the classroom.

At Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School, Hubbard serves as student body vice president and is the founder and president of the OWHS Bruins Business Club. He also serves as president of the Fearless Individuals Reaching Excellence (FIRE) Squad. His leadership extends statewide and nationally through his roles as a South Carolina Junior Achievement Ambassador and National Youth Ambassador for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. He served as the South Carolina Association of Student Councils District One vice chair during the 2025–2026 school year and was selected as a Palmetto Boys State delegate.

For Hubbard, leadership is more than a title. It is a commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. Through the FIRE Squad, a regional youth coalition dedicated to substance-use prevention and youth advocacy, he has helped champion initiatives that are making an impact across Orangeburg County and throughout South Carolina.

His leadership has earned national attention. In 2026, Hubbard was among the student representatives of the FIRE Squad when the organization received the National Group Youth Advocates of the Year Award from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The prestigious honor recognized the coalition's efforts to reduce youth tobacco use, educate communities about the dangers of vaping and nicotine addiction, and advocate for policies that protect young people.

Among the organization's most significant accomplishments was its successful advocacy before Orangeburg City Council, which resulted in the passage of an ordinance restricting tobacco retailers near schools, childcare centers, recreational facilities, and other youth-centered locations. FIRE Squad members gathered community survey data, presented their findings to local leaders, and demonstrated the power of informed youth voices in shaping public policy.

The coalition also helped organize *Escape the Haze*, South Carolina's first statewide youth-led conference focused on vaping prevention. The event brought together 142 students from across the state to learn about the dangers of tobacco and nicotine use while developing skills to advocate for healthier communities.

His selection as a 2026–2027 National Youth Ambassador for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids provides an opportunity to represent the voices and concerns of young people on a national platform.

His accomplishments reflect a history of academic promise as well. In 2023, while attending William J. Clark Middle School, Hubbard was recognized as a South Carolina Junior Scholar, an honor acknowledging students who demonstrate exceptional academic potential.

"Patrick represents the very best of what we want for every student in Orangeburg County School District," said Dr. Shawn D. Foster, Superintendent of Schools. "He is academically accomplished, but what makes his story especially powerful is that he is using his voice, his influence, and his opportunities to improve the lives of others. His work with the FIRE Squad has helped bring about meaningful change in our community, and now he is being recognized

among the nation's most outstanding students. We are incredibly proud of Patrick and the example he is setting for his peers."

Foster added that Hubbard's accomplishments reinforce the district's commitment to preparing students not simply to graduate, but to become individuals who lead with purpose and contribute meaningfully to society.

"When we talk about student success, this is what we mean. We want our students to be prepared academically, but we also want them to understand that they have the ability to influence their communities and shape the future. Patrick is already doing that. His success reminds us that extraordinary talent, leadership, and potential are right here in Orangeburg County," shared Dr. Foster.

Established in 1986, the Coca-Cola Scholars Program is one of the nation's premier achievement-based scholarship programs. Semifinalists advance through an extensive selection process that includes academic records, essays, recommendations, and leadership and service accomplishments. From the 1,227 semifinalists, 250 finalists will be identified in January 2027, with 150 students ultimately selected to receive $20,000 college scholarships.

For Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School and Orangeburg County School District, Hubbard's latest achievement represents another reason to celebrate the accomplishments of students who continue to distinguish themselves through scholarship, service, and leadership.

Orangeburg County School District congratulates Patrick Hubbard Jr. on this extraordinary national recognition and wishes him continued success as he advances in the Coca-Cola Scholars selection process.

Orangeburg County School District

The mission of Orangeburg County School District, the catalyst of innovation and excellence, is to ensure all students discover and develop their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences distinguished by a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion; a creative learning environment with inspiring opportunities; a commitment to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of all. Visit us online at ocsdsc.org

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