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Freedom Federal Credit Union awards grant funds to its 2021 Golden Apple Annual Education Award recipients (L to R): Summer Hurley, BangTam Miller, Alycia Covelly, Chiwy Webster, and Laura Hahn.

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FREEDOM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION SELECTS FIVE HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES TO WIN GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

Recipients Were Honored on August 21

Bel Air, MD –At a reception held in conjunction with Freedom Federal Credit Union’s Ribbon Cutting for their new branch in Perry Hall on Thursday, August 19th, attendees gathered to honor Alycia Covelly and

Chiwy Webster, as the grand prize recipients of the Credit Union's 2021 Golden Apple Annual Educator Award grant competition. Ms. Covelly and Ms. Webster, employees at Edgewood High School, won the top \$2,000 grant for her plans to start a school-based pantry, called Blessings in a Backpack, where students can stock up on necessities like food and clothing before weekends and long breaks. The pantry will be staffed by Ms. Webster, Ms. Covelly, and student volunteers from Ms. Webster's First Ladies of Edgewood Mentor Group and the Spanish National Honor Society. The volunteers envision a safe space, where students can pick up essential items without shame or judgement. In their admissions essay, Ms. Covelly, who is a social worker at the school, detailed how this program will not only help students and their families meet essential needs, but will help build a relationship-based support system for the many families who request assistance each year.

Freedom's Golden Apple Award judges also elected to present \$1,000 to Ms. Laura Hahn, History Teacher at Havre de Grace Middle School. Ms. Hahn's grant will be used to fund her Volunteer Club, which has become a popular outlet for kids in the school of all backgrounds and interests to give back to their school and community. The Volunteer Club has a track record of creating an inclusive bonding experience for students through service. Freedom's award will allow Ms. Hahn to focus on expanding the club's service projects, which she had previously been funding personally.

Additionally, two other recipients were awarded grants: Summer Hurley, Special Education Teacher at Patterson Mill High School, and BangTam Miller, a Human Resources Specialist at HCPS' Central Office. Both Ms. Hurley and Ms. Miller will receive \$500 each to fund their respective initiatives.

Ms. Hurley plans to use the grant fund to purchase materials for a new vocation lab, intended to prepare students with disabilities to transition out of high school with skillsets that are ready for the workforce. Work experience stations will allow students to learn how to stock shelves, bag groceries, fold and hang clothes, file paperwork, and set a table, among other skills. The new vocation lab will become a key resource for students who want to hone their independence and become contributing members of the community.

After 25 years with Harford County Public Schools, Ms. Bangtam Miller recognizes that for many, education takes a backseat when the community is experiencing systemic issues. Ms. Miller has taken her experience as an educator and administrator in Edgewood, where she and other volunteers better the community through funding GED credits for adults, setting up and stocking community pantries, beautifying school grounds, and hosting local clean up events. Ms. Miller plans to use her award for these initiatives, as she continues the journey to revitalize the Edgewood area and create a thriving environment for student to live and learn.

"For the last 10 years, Freedom has been honored to be able to provide The Golden Apple Awards," stated Mike MacPherson, President and CEO of Freedom Federal Credit Union, who hosted the reception. "Today marked an important moment because by now having a physical presence in Baltimore County as well as Harford County, we have the ability to offer this program to more people. Last year, we expanded our Golden Apple Awards to include an additional category for a monetary award. This year, I am pleased to announce that we plan to double our resources for the

program, ensuring that Baltimore County and Harford County educators can apply to a Golden Apple Awards program in their own community.” The announcement preceded a check presentation to Deborah Phelps, Executive Director of The Education Foundation of Baltimore County Public Schools in the amount of \$2,000.

Ms. Phelps acknowledged the donation and new partnership in remarks to the attendees, “It’s an honor to be included in today’s many celebrations. We are thrilled to welcome Freedom to Baltimore County, and to join them in celebrating these wonderful educators. We have appreciated their outreach to our foundation, and their genuine dedication to improving our schools.”

Ben Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Harford County Public Schools (HCPS), was also in attendance and addressed the recipients and guests. “As we look back on the school year, these educators, who persevered through challenges we couldn’t have imagined, remind us that HCPS staff will rise to the occasion EVERY time, and they will flourish. It is my honor to recognize their passion to as they support our students in new and inspiring ways. Congratulations to each of you and thank you, Freedom Federal Credit Union, we appreciate your continued dedication to HCPS,” stated Richardson.

The annual awards are intended to support Freedom Federal Credit Union members who are employed at a Harford or Baltimore County school and have a creative vision for education that can only be met with community support. All applicants were asked to submit an essay demonstrating how their idea would serve their students, class, school and their local community. Entries were judged by a panel of Freedom employees, board members, and community leaders.

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About Freedom Federal Credit Union

Freedom Federal Credit Union is a community-chartered federal credit union offering consumer financial services to those who live, work, volunteer, worship, attend school, or have family in Harford and Baltimore Counties. Additionally, Freedom offers a full-line of banking services for all businesses, associations, and other organizations that are based in Harford or Baltimore Counties. Freedom has been in business since 1953 and has six locations throughout Harford and Baltimore Counties. To learn more, visit freedomfcu.org

About Harford County Public Schools

The mission of Harford County Public Schools is that each student will attain academic and personal success in a safe and caring environment that honors the diversity of our students and staff. The vision of the Board of Education of Harford County is to inspire and prepare each student to achieve success in college and career.