

Launching Educational Assistance Programs Forward, Inc.
LEAP Forward, Inc.
Prince Frederick, Maryland

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEAP Forward, Inc. Awards 2013 Scholarships

On July 28, 2013 Launching Educational Assistance Programs Forward (LEAP Forward), Inc. administered their 2013 memorial scholarship awards which honor the contributions of Wallace Lorenzo Leeper, Randolph Adams and Clifton Morsell, Violet Parker and Rev. Charles H. Lee Sr.

Approximately 100 students, family members and friends attended the **LEAP Forward Scholarship Reception** held at Mount Olive United Methodist Church in Prince Frederick, MD.

LEAP Forward, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization that has served the community since 2001. Educational support services offered include science technology, engineering and math (STEM) career interest seminars, college admissions assistance, college tours, industry tours, professional growth preparation, encouragement and motivation. One of their major thrust is their scholarship program and to date they have provided **112** scholarships to deserving youth.

Founder and President, Rhonda Thomas began the program with a welcome address encouraging students to "Build Success One Brick At A Time." Ms. Thomas stated that a good foundation is necessary to achieve goals in life and that the students have to apply integrity, commitment, dedication and hard work to obtain their desired outcomes. She told the recipients that their foundation has to have the strength and durability of a brick so that their lives become a structure with purpose. She concluded "it's a simple principle, you've got to put something in, to get something out and I am confident that if you all do your part, you will achieve your career aspirations."

Serving as Masters of Ceremonies were two past scholarship recipients, Mr. Darius Jones and Mr. Torez Cooke. Darius is a rising sophomore at Shepherd University and is also a member of the Shepherd University Rams Division II baseball team. Torez is a junior at Salisbury University and plans to join the Air Force after obtaining his degree. Both young men are studying sports medicine and exercise science.

Invocation was provided by Pastor Dana Jones who serves as the Pastor of Mt. Olive United Methodist Church.

Entertainment for the afternoon was provided by the singing group "I AM Angels." The group is from Montgomery County and consists of 5 young ladies ages 12 to 14 years old. The group was founded in 2009 to provide young girls a platform to minister and share God's goodness through song and service. Over the past three years, I AM Angels has ministered at Six Flags Praise in the Park, National Council of Negro Women, She Matters Girls Empowerment Conference and the MLK Memorial Dedication as well as local churches, nursing homes and other community events. They have been recognized for their community service by the Governors Office, Senator Barbara Mikulski, and Kohl's Kids. As a result of their efforts, they received the 2012 Community Impact Award. They will release their very first single later this year. Their motto is "Only What You Do For Christ Will Last."

The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Brittany Dana Brown, currently a rising sophomore at the University of Maryland College Park, pursuing a degree in Education. Brittany has been described as a "quiet storm" and a "generational thinker." Since 2009, she has served as the Youth Ministry Coordinator of Dominion International Ministries in Owings, MD. She is also the Founder of Transitioning Into Excellence, a program at Huntingtown High School that helps students transition from standard-level courses to more challenging courses. Her goal is to inspire her generation and the next to be great and do great.

Brittany's inspirational message to the 2013 recipients was entitled "Refusing Your Limitations" and she challenged the recipients to remove any limitations in their and to be open to everything that's possible. She noted that there are "new doors" and encouraged everyone to try different things during this different season in their lives. She warned all not to let the fear of failure limit you.

Brittany proudly expressed her passion to be an educator and admonished the recipients to remember that education is a huge part of succeeding, but that getting a degree is just step one of their journey. She stated "education is the equipment, not the medal. If you want big things, you have to think big." She challenged them by asking "what do you want to leave to the generations that follow and what are you doing?"

She continued to share several poignant points including the following: You have to leave a purpose and legacy; You have to change the world; You have to strive for greatness; You have to become thinkers and not observers; You have to leap forward and be great not

average; you have to run your race and win--you can't lose; you have to make every second count and you can't let one mistake in life weigh more than all the good you've done.

Brittany concluded her magnificent speech by asking, "Who will you become?" She responded, "Only God knows who you will become. We all have choices, so make sure you don't limit yourself." Her message was truly inspirational!

The scholarship awards ceremony began with a short biographical sketch of the person to whom the scholarship was named. Accomplishments for each student were read and students accepted their awards and offered words of gratitude and appreciation.

Twelve (12) scholarships awards were presented to students in attendance. Three (3) students not in attendance were acknowledged. Recipients included 2013 graduates from Calvert, Northern and Patuxent High Schools, Calvert Country School and current college students. Presentations included the Rev. Charles Lee Sr., Violet Parker, Clifton Morsell and Randolph Adams, and Wallace Leeper memorial scholarships.

The Reverend Charles Lee Sr. Memorial Scholarship honors the memory of a Pastor, Korean Conflict Veteran, Civil Rights Activist and Education Supporter. As a student, he was a leader in Student Sit-in Demonstrations and in the Selma to Montgomery March. Rev. Lee served in the United States Army—Europe, Pacific Far East where he served in the Korean Conflict (Private to Captain- Airborne and Infantry; Chaplain (Major) in the California Army National Guard (Retired). He served as pastor to several Methodist churches in TX, GA and CA. He was also appointed in 1987 as District Superintendent for the Golden Gate District of the California/Nevada Conference for the United Methodist Church until his retirement in 1991. This scholarship was established by his widow, Mrs. Carol Carruthers Lee and her sons, Charles Lee, Jr. and William Lee.

Memorial acknowledgement of the Rev. Charles Lee, Sr. and award presentations was provided by his son, William Lee. Mrs. Carol Carruthers Lee, the eighty-one year old widow of Rev. Lee, Sr. was present and also acknowledged the award recipients. Three (3) \$1000.00 scholarships were presented to **Brittany Brown**, the guest speaker and **Kortinai Moore**, a Patuxent High graduate who will attend the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and major in Criminal Justice. **Karrah Findley**, a Calvert High graduate, was acknowledged. She will attend Towson University and major in Accounting.

The Violet Parker Memorial Scholarship honors the memory of a Calvert County resident and farmer whose joy was toiling in her

garden and tobacco crops. Though not formally educated, she was certainly educated by life and shared her wisdom with all. She desired the best for everyone not just her family and was excited and proud of those who pursued higher education. This scholarship was established by her children (Waverly Parker, Grace Parker, Estella Willett, Gloria Parker and Mary Ann Bell), grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

The family of Mrs. Violet Parker (Grace, Mary Ann, Waverly, and Tammie Owens) presented two (2) \$1000.00 Violet Parker Memorial Scholarships to **Symphony Love**, a graduate of Patuxent High who will attend the College of Southern Maryland and major in Theater Arts; and **Raneese Tyler**, the second recipient, a junior at Stevenson University majoring in Criminal Justice.

The Clifton Morsell and Randolph Adams Memorial Scholarship honors the memory of a World War II veteran who served in the United States Army/Air Force in 1943. Mr. Morsell received several honors including the Good Conduct Medal, African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon and the World War II Victory Ribbon. He was a devoted Calvert County farmer and father who stressed the importance of education. Mr. Adams was a resident of Calvert County and worked as a sand and travel truck driver. Ms. Marseta Adams Dill, daughter of Mr. Adams is a past recipient of LEAP Forward community outreach efforts and is an Electrical Engineer with the Federal Aviation Administration. This scholarship was established by Marseta Adams Dill and Baron Dill.

The Adams-Morsell family including Baron and Marseta Dill, Rantassa Anderson, Mae and Timothy Morsell presented four (4) \$600.00 Adams-Morsell Memorial Book Scholarships to master of ceremonies **Torez Cooke**, a student at Salisbury University who is majoring in Sports Medicine; **Danielle Deville**, a Patuxent High graduate who will attend the College of Southern Maryland and major in Education; and **Erik Haskell II**, a Patuxent High graduate who will attend Daniel Webster College and major in Air Traffic Management. **Ryan Mickley**, a Northern High graduate was acknowledged. He will attend the University of Maryland College Park and major in Accounting/Business Management.

The Wallace Lorenzo Leeper Memorial Scholarship honors the memory of one of the most outstanding counselors who served at Calvert Senior High School in Calvert County, Maryland. Wallace Lorenzo Leeper graduated from Richmond, VA public schools and Virginia Union University with a B.S. degree in Education. He later received his Masters Degree in Guidance from Indiana State University. His teaching career started in Calvert County as a History and English Teacher at Brooks High School. He continued to work in the school system as a coach and guidance counselor at Calvert Senior High and the Calvert Vocational Technical Center. During the 1970s, Wallace

Leeper was heavily involved with the Patuxent Naval Air Station engineering cooperative education program. More than 20 Calvert County students earned engineering and technology degrees through this program under Mr. Leeper's guidance. LEAP Forward was established in Mr. Wallace Leeper's honor.

Six (6) \$600.00 Wallace Leeper Memorial Book Scholarships were presented by Rhonda Thomas, Conrad White, Tim Morsell, Alma Thomas and Maurice Irvine (LEAP Forward Board Members). The following recipients received awards: **Keisha Capers**, a graduate of Calvert High will attend Hampton University and major in Chemical Engineering; **Matthew Doxie**, a graduate of Patuxent High will attend Pennsylvania College of Art and Design and major in Art; **Eric Gross**, a graduate of Patuxent High will attend the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and major in Accounting/Business; **Malaysia Johnson**, a graduate of Calvert High will attend Wellesley College and major in English; **Kaitlyn Torney**, a graduate of Patuxent High will attend the University of Maryland College Park and major in Veterinary Medicine. **Tavaughn Weeks** was acknowledged and is a Calvert Country School graduate and will attend Northern Virginia Community College and major in Business Math.

Special recognition was made to **Matthew Doxie**, who provided a pencil drawing (portrait) of the late Wallace Leeper. Matthew is a two time grand prize winner of the Black History Month Contest sponsored by Constellation Energy at Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant as well as scholarship recipient from the Corcoran College of Art and Design (Washington, D.C.) Pre-College Program.

Past scholarship recipients were also asked to provide a few words of wisdom to the recipients. The trio of Darius, Torez and past scholarship recipient and college graduate Jessica Brooks encouraged the scholars to do their very best academically, manage their time wisely, have the courage to stand up against peer pressure, and watch who they associate with on campus.

Poet, Andrea Kelson displayed her literary talents. Andrea is a rising junior at Calvert High School and is being mentored by former poet laureate of Maryland, Michael Glaser. She shared two of her exceptional pieces entitled "Lime Green Wedding Dress" and "Broken Heart."

Special acknowledgement was expressed to the Calvert National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Jr. Chapter members and supporters in attendance (Jerrell Jones, Dorien Minor, Jocelyn Berry, Joey Berry and Tron Gantt). LEAP Forward conducts workshops with this group monthly to expose students in grades 6th to 12th to STEM

opportunities and encourages students to **Learn, Excel, Achieve, Perform, Explore and Rise.**

Special recognition was also made to the following past LEAP Forward Scholarship recipients, who have recently graduated. They include Jasmine Brown, Nalynn Holland, Terrence Hall Sutton, Kelsey Edwards, Dominique Reid, Kendra Edwards, Courtney Sutton, Jhalita Holland, Gerard Mushette, Dynika Gross and Michelle Brooks.

Closing prayer and blessing of the food were provided by Pastor Jones. Students, family members, board members, friends and financial supporters ended the program with a great dining experience. Maurice Irvine, LEAP Forward Board Member donated, catered and facilitated this fellowship.



Courtesy Group Photo:

First Row Left to Right: Mary Ann Bell, Mae Morsell, Baron Dill, Kaitlyn Torney (Scholarship Recipient), Danielle Deville (Scholarship Recipient), Symphony Love (Scholarship Recipient), Rhonda Thomas (Founder)

Second Row Left to Right: Alma Thomas, Rantessa Anderson, Marseta Dill, Keisha Capers (Scholarship Recipient), Malaysia Johnson (Scholarship Recipient), Brittany Brown (Guest Speaker and Scholarship Recipient), Kortinai Moore (Scholarship Recipient), Ranesse Tyler (Scholarship Recipient)

Third Row Left to Right: Conrad White, Timothy Morsell, William Lee, Darius Jones (Masters of Ceremonies), Torez Cooke (Masters of Ceremonies and Scholarship Recipient), Matthew Doxie (Scholarship Recipients), Erik Haskell II (Scholarship Recipient), Eric Gross (Scholarship Recipient)

In February, LEAP Forward's Founder and President was awarded the Black Engineer of the Year Award for Community Service by the Career

Communications Group in Baltimore, MD. Rhonda Thomas is featured in their publication, "USBE & Information Technology Conference Edition 2013. She is currently an engineer with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Washington, DC and began her engineering career as the first African-American female to graduate from a Navy Cooperative Education Program sponsored by the Navy in Patuxent River, Maryland. She is pictured below with the Honorable Michael Huerta, the Administrator of the FAA.



Rhonda Thomas and the FAA Administrator