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Contact: Beth McLaughlin, Director of Community & School Affairs, 478-988-6390, ext. 0, Beth.McLaughlin@hcbe.net

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Houston County High Students Tie for STAR System Award



Pictured (from left) are: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Scott, Collier, Kwak, Houston County High Principal Dr. Doug Rizer, Schmitz and McDaniel.

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Houston County High School seniors David Kwak and Brandon Schmitz tied for the 2020 System Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) Student for Houston County. Kwak's STAR Teacher is Randi Collier, and Schmitz chose Jennifer McDaniel.

Each winner was presented a \$500 cash award and certificate by the Perry Area and Robins Regional Chambers of Commerce during a recognition program the Chambers hosted on Feb. 4. Their STAR teachers were each presented \$100 and a certificate.

The students next compete for region-wide honors in 12 STAR Regions. Elizabeth Gentry, a senior at The Westfield School, also tied with the young men, creating a first-time, three-way tie for the county. The Region STAR banquet will be held March 23 at 5:30 p.m. at Middle Georgia State College in Macon. The Region STAR Student and Teacher will compete at state, with the winner announced April 27 at a ceremony in Atlanta.

The STAR program began in 1958 to focus attention on Georgia's outstanding students and teachers. To obtain the nomination, high school seniors must have the highest score on a single test date on the SAT. Students must also be in the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average. Each STAR student selects a STAR teacher who has been the most influential to their academic success. STAR students compete for system, region and state-level awards.

STAR Students select the teacher who has been most instrumental in his or her academic development as their STAR Teacher. During the program, each STAR Student and Teacher was recognized and the STAR Students were presented a \$100 cash award. Other 2020 STAR honorees from the district are:

- Northside High - Chase Fletcher, teacher Kim Stewart;
- Perry High - Trevor Vandersall, teacher Dr. Dawn Knapek;
- Veterans High - Ethan Dorr, teacher Dr. Alan Bowers; and
- Warner Robins High - Aaron Hodo, teacher Felicia Hackney.

Kwak has participated in school clubs and organizations to include varsity tennis, Math Team, Coding Club, and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). In addition to honor roll, he has earned highest AP Physics average, University of Georgia Certificate of Merit, 2nd place in the regional Congressional App Challenge, and 5th place in the state for FBLA's Computer Game and Simulation event. He plans to study computer science at Georgia Tech and work for various tech companies such as Google, Tesla, or Microsoft, where he can put to use his passion for software development.

Schmitz has been active throughout his high school years, to include participating in marching band, History Club, French Club, Coding Club, Math Team and cross-country. He was chosen as an All-State Jazz Band member and is on the honor roll; in addition, he has earned the highest French I and Engineering Concepts grades, as well as the UGA Certificate of Merit and the Georgia Certificate of Merit. He and his teammates won 1st place in the Jimmy Carter History Bowl. Schmitz's future plans are to study physics and/or computer science, likely at Georgia Tech, and then become a professor/researcher or an entrepreneur. His ultimate goal is save as many lives as possible through research and technological innovation.

Kwak's STAR Teacher, Collier, has taught in the district since 1998. After teaching at Warner Robins High for 16 years, she accepted a position at Houston County High in 2014. For the past six years, she has taught AP environmental science and honors chemistry. Currently, she lives in Perry with her husband, Adrian, and son, Ren. "I have loved every second of teaching such amazing and creative students who are within the Houston County School District," commented Collier.

McDaniel has been teaching since 2008, after graduating from Georgia College and State University with a Bachelor of Arts in History Master of Teaching Degree. Currently she is working on a Specialist in Teacher Leadership at GCSU. She is Gifted Certified and AP World History Certified and has earned a Teacher Coaching Endorsement. She teaches AP and Honors World History and sponsors the National Honors Society, Student Council and History Club. She is married has three children.

The STAR program was created to focus attention on Georgia's outstanding students and teachers. To obtain the nomination, high school seniors must have the highest score on a single test date on the SAT. Students must also be in the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average. The Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) Foundation sponsors, administers and promotes this program.

For more information about the System STAR winners, contact Dr. Rizer at 988-6340 or visit the [PAGE Foundation website](#).

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