



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Two West Ashley High students awarded NJROTC scholarships

West Ashley High School

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Charleston, SC – Darius Brown and Saniyah Drayton, two West Ashley High School (WAHS) NJROTC cadets, were recognized in a ceremony last week to celebrate their academic achievements. Each will receive \$180,000 in scholarships to continue their educational careers at the post-secondary level.

The NROTC Navy scholarship pays full tuition and fees, provides an allowance for books, and a monthly stipend of \$250 - \$400 for four years of college. Brown's scholarship covers five years.

Brown is a NROTC National Preparatory Program Scholarship recipient and plans to attend Southern University and A&M College in the fall and participate in their NROTC program. Drayton is a NROTC National Minority Scholarship recipient and will attend Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and participate in their NROTC program.

To be eligible, the student-cadets had to meet rigorous academic and physical requirements, answer essay questions, and complete a 20-page application.

Brown's scholarship helps cadets get ready for the rigors of Navy ROTC by giving them an extra year to prepare. Students are only eligible to use the Preparatory scholarship at certain universities. The application process requires the student to be accepted into the college first, then apply for the scholarship. Recipients must have an 1100 on the SAT or a 44 on the ACT or 2.75 GPA. Also Brown had to pass a physical fitness test with a minimum of 62 sit-ups, 51 push-ups and a one mile run in 11:00 minutes.

Drayton had to meet the same academic requirements for her scholarship. The physical fitness requirements for females are slightly different. Drayton had to be able to do 62 sit-ups, 24 push-ups and a one mile run in 13:30 minutes.

Upon graduation, both will be required to serve for a minimum of five years as officers in the United States Navy.

Carlos Nelson of Stand and Serve, a non-profit organization that assists student applicants, helped both Brown and Drayton navigate the application process. Charleston County School District Board of Trustees Chairman Rev. Dr. Eric Mack, City of Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg, Principal Ryan Cumback, and NJROTC instructor Petty Officer Fredrick Davis officiated the ceremony to honor the student-cadets.

"We are so incredibly proud of Darius Brown and Saniyah Drayton," said Cumback. "They are both amazing students and have, for the last four years, served as student leaders in and out of the classroom."

ROTC Instructor Davis described the honors as rare.

"Both Saniyah and Darius received the scholarship not only because they were deserving but also because they were two of our top ranking, motivated, hardest working cadets we have in the program," said Davis. "It means a great deal to them because not only will they be able to receive a debt-free education but they will be able to serve the country as an officer in the United States Navy."

Brown said he decided to apply for the Navy Preparatory Program Scholarship because it offered an extra year of college to sharpen important skills that will be necessary to succeed in college and the military.

"I was very happy when I found out I got the scholarship," said Brown. "It gave me a sense of relief and reassurance that all of the hard work my mom and I put in paid off. My plan after graduating college is to go into the military as a Naval Flight Officer, and then pursue a career in accounting."

Drayton said she applied for the scholarship because college loans were not an option for her. If a scholarship wasn't available, she was willing to directly enlist.

"I decided to apply for this specific scholarship because I knew that I met the scholarship requirements and that it would be an amazing opportunity for me if I was awarded the scholarship," said Drayton. "I also applied for the scholarship because the U.S. Navy has a history of having a shortage of minority officers allowing me to have a greater chance of receiving the scholarship."

"One of the things I like to tell the cadets as it pertains to NJROTC, their goals, and future career is to begin with the end in mind," said Davis. "It always seems fitting."

Drayton and Brown followed that advice.

"Knowing that I will be graduating college at 21 debt-free is really a blessing and an opportunity of a lifetime," said Drayton. "I will not have to worry about fitting college debt within my budget in life, which allows me to have more financial freedom later in life."

Drayton plans to become a Naval Officer with a specialization within Surface Warfare. She also hopes to further her education so that she can transition to the Nurse Corps.

"I hope that the students at West Ashley High or anywhere can find some motivation from my achievement to take whatever they're passionate about and become great with it," Brown added. "You never know what kind of benefits can come from it."

For more information, contact Public Relations Director Donnie Newton at (843) 852-2516.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents 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.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.