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For Immediate Release:

Griffin-Spalding STAR Students and Teachers Announced at Kiwanis Luncheon

Griffin, GA – The 2026 STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Recognition) Students and Teachers for the Griffin-Spalding County School System (GSCS) were announced at the Kiwanis Club of Griffin luncheon today. They are:

Griffin High School (GHS)	**Spalding High School (SHS)**
Mason Harrell – STAR Student	Anna Foster - STAR Student
Kathy Moore - STAR Teacher	Andrew Newman - STAR Teacher

To be named a STAR student, a high school senior must have the highest score on any single test date of the SAT taken through the November test date of their senior year and be in the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average. The STAR teacher is selected by the declared high school STAR student for making the most significant contribution to their academic development.

GHS STAR Student Mason Harrell plans to pursue engineering at Georgia Tech. Harrell chose his Criminal Justice Teacher Kathy Moore as his STAR Teacher.

In his speech, Harrell said, “I choose Ms. Moore because of her passion and ability to challenge me. Since I was a kid, I always had a love for learning and wanted to learn as much as I could about everything. I lost that urge for a few years, but Ms. Moore sparked my flame for learning again. I also want to thank my incredible parents for always pushing me to be my best.”

Moore stated, “I am overwhelmed with pride that Mason chose me as his STAR Teacher and it gives me great confirmation that I made an influence on his life. Mason was my go-to student who challenged me every day. He challenged me, the law, justice and stood on his convictions. Through his love of learning, positive attitude and respect for others, Mason is going to change the world as we know it!”

SHS STAR Student Anna Foster plans to attend the University of North Carolina or the University of Georgia to study biology on the pre-medical track. Foster chose her AP Biology Teacher Andrew Newman as her STAR Teacher.

Foster stated, “I have had the pleasure of being a student in Mr. Newman’s class three times; however, his AP Environmental Science class truly opened my eyes to my love for science. He taught us about the natural world in new and engaging ways. Because of Mr. Newman’s belief in me and encouragement, I was able to study biology under college professors for four weeks through the Governor’s Honor Program last summer. It was one of the most enjoyable and formative months of my life. Mr. Newman is a fantastic teacher, and I have a lot to thank him for.”

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Newman stated, “I am honored that Anna chose me as her STAR Teacher. Anna is one of those students who makes teaching feel less like a job and that the future is going to be in good hands. Anna is determined, brilliant and just competitive enough to keep her teachers humble. But what I am most proud of isn’t Anna’s grades or SAT score, it is her leadership and kindness. Anna is not just the kind of student who succeeds; she changes the whole atmosphere of a school. She makes my classroom better and has made me a better teacher. I am so proud of her and can’t wait to see what she does next!”

Spalding High School STAR Student Anna Foster and her STAR Teacher Andrew Newman were announced as the county-wide district STAR Student and Teacher. The district STAR Student will compete for region-wide honors in the 12 STAR Regions. Region winners and their STAR Teachers then compete for the Georgia state STAR scholarships and awards.

The Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) serves as the state coordinator of the STAR Program. The program is now in its 68th year and has honored nearly 30,500 students and their teachers.

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