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Rappahannock Community College

Michele Inderrieden

Media Services Manager

804-333-6824

minderrieden@rappahannock.edu

**RCC Scholarship Students and Donors Honored at Annual Reception**

The Rappahannock Community College Educational Foundation, Inc. (RCC EFI) recently hosted its annual Scholarship Program and President’s Reception at the Church of the Nazarene in White Stone. Over 500 RCC students received close to $700,000 in competitive scholarships for the 24-25 academic year.

Students and their guests, along with members of the EFI and Local College Boards, as well as scholarship donors, enjoyed hors d’oeuvres and time to talk to each other about the impact scholarships have on breaking down barriers to education. Following the social hour, the guests were welcomed by RCC Educational Foundation President Dr. Robert Gates and RCC President Shannon Kennedy. Both expressed immense pride in the students’ accomplishments and thanked the donors.

“Many of you have faced challenges while balancing education, work, and family responsibilities. Yet, through it all, you have shown resilience and determination,” said Kennedy. “At RCC we understand that education is not just about personal growth; it’s about giving back to the community. Our graduates serve in essential roles—whether in our doctor’s offices, hospitals, banks, schools, municipal offices, or local businesses. You are the backbone of our community—thank you.”

Kennedy also recognized the vital contributions of scholarship donors, highlighting that “with 80% of our students attending part-time while juggling work and family responsibilities, scholarships alleviate one of the many worries they face.” She then introduced the student speaker Skyy Staples, a leader at RCC and participant in the Great Expectations program, which provides financial resources and academic support for students affiliated with the Virginia Foster Care System. “We are honored that Skyy accepted our invitation to speak this evening. I know Skyy’s strength, tenacity, and intellect will leave a lasting impression with you.”

Skyy captivated the audience with their powerful story of determination and resilience, while reflecting on the experience at RCC. “When I first began my higher education at RCC, I entered the campus with reluctance and a dream,” they shared. “I still had whiplash from a parentless and adverse childhood and had no clue what would happen upon entering the campus for the first time, whether I would be helped or turned away.” Despite facing numerous challenges, including dropping out of high school, homelessness, hunger, a turbulent childhood, and not much promise of a secure future Skyy’s determination to succeed remained unwavering. “I have been through much, and I’ve been through it by myself. So, when I reached a point in my life when things seemed to calm down a bit, I asked myself: am I still afraid of going into a classroom? Am I really intimidated by deadlines and assignments? I realized that the answer to that was no, I wasn’t afraid of that. But I was afraid of my future being more difficult than my past. And I was willing to work hard to give myself the life I’ve always wanted and deserved.”

“This institution has granted me nothing but a wealth of support,” continued Skyy. “People from my demographic are very unlikely to obtain a higher education. One in five foster children become incarcerated within seven years of aging out of the system. Less than six percent of foster children will go on to receive a bachelor’s degree, and the numbers only dwindle as the costs and difficulties of college increase. But these statistics do not scare me, nor do they preordain me to fail. With the generosity of scholarship donors and brilliant educators granting me much needed encouragement and resources to embark on this journey, I can continue to create a great future for myself, as well as for others. I’m somebody who’s used to having to pick myself back up when life knocks me down. I can’t express how much it means for a helping hand to be extended to me. One day, I will be able to return the favor to those around me.”

Skyy concluded with a heartfelt message to her peers, stating, “Community does matter. We all have a special place in this world, and in this school. Don’t forget who you are and remember that you are an important part of something much larger than yourself.”

“My experiences will follow me for my entire life, and they give me an insightful perspective into the human psyche. I can use that knowledge to make the world a better place,” concluded Skyy.

The celebration ended with a thank you video from the scholarship recipients to the donors. The event underscores the collective commitment of RCC, its students, and the community to foster an environment where education can thrive, and dreams can become realities.

The 25-26 RCC scholarship application is now open until February 19, 2025. For more information on applying or on establishing a scholarship, visit [www.rappahannock.edu](http://www.rappahannock.edu).

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Since 1970, Rappahannock Community College has been breaking down barriers to education in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Five degrees, six certificates, and 26 career and workforce studies programs are offered through RCC, in addition to nearly 40 guaranteed admissions agreements with colleges and universities across the state and region. For more information, visit rappahannock.edu.