



PRESS RELEASE

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Surry County Schools/Surry Community College Career Coach Impacts Governors

Mrs. Crystal Folger-Hawks, Career Coach for Surry County Schools and Surry Community College, was invited to attend the National Governors Association Meeting in Raleigh on Thursday, October 4, 2018. Folger-Hawks attended the *Policy Academy on Scaling Work-Based Learning Fall Cross-State Meeting* and participated in a panel discussion for the *Host State Highlight: North Carolina Work Based Learning*. The session was designed to highlight work-based learning opportunities in conjunction with private and public sector organizations, something Folger-Hawks knows a lot about.

Participants of the National Governors Association were governmental leaders at all levels and 18 states were represented. While presenting, Mrs. Folger-Hawks shared how the Next Generation Career Academy originated and how it is benefiting students in Surry County. The Next Generation Career Academy was created as a result of Superintendent of Surry County Schools, Dr. Travis L. Reeves, and Surry Community College President, Dr. David Shockley recognizing the need for more work-based learning opportunities in Surry County. This need was driven by business partners who had a need for employment based on projected employment needs for the next five years in over 550 manufacturing and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) related positions in Surry County. These business partners also had a desire to mentor youth, resulting in the education and business partners applying for and receiving over \$300,000 from the Golden Leaf Foundation to fund the Next Generation Career Academy.

The Golden Leaf Foundation (GLF) was established in 1999 to support tobacco-dependent and economically distressed and/or rural communities in their efforts to transition to more prosperous and stable economies. The goal of the Next Generation Career Academy does just that. It helps provide opportunities for students to complete internships or apprenticeships designed with local business and industry partners that can and will lead to employment.

Students earn industry-related career credentials, such as Soft Skills Certification, Career Readiness Certificate, OSHA Certification, Lean Six Sigma Certification from Surry Community College and instruction in content areas such as welding, construction, nursing, computer-integrated machining, and electronics. GLF funds pay stipends directly to students for their work-based learning internships, funds the costs of textbooks at the community college &/or high school courses, and funds transportation costs for students to make these internships and apprenticeships doable. GLF also funds Mrs. Folger-Hawks' position as a career coach to serve as the project manager and matchmaker for businesses who need employees with students who have the skills or readiness to meet the needs of the business.

Folger-Hawks stated, "I met individually with each business to learn what their needs were, toured their facilities and planned a 'course/certification plan of study' for each intern position. I then used that information to work with the three traditional high schools, East Surry, North Surry, and Surry Central High Schools, as well as Surry Early College, to facilitate the application and interview process. Once students were selected, schedules were modified to accommodate the internship experience, including the use of our own online Surry Virtual Academy high school courses. I monitor the internship experience, serve as the liaison between Surry County Schools, Surry Community College, and the workforce, and work with students on course and/or certification enrollment."

The Next Generation Career Academy program has been highly successful in the short time since its inception. During the spring of 2018, 12 interns were placed at nine different businesses. Internships ranged from technical, hands-on positions to office positions. Of the 12 interns from last spring, four graduated and were offered positions at the company where they interned. A *job signing event*, similar to that of athletic signing events was held at the end of May 2018 to celebrate the students and businesses. Three of the 12 interns returned this year and five have graduated and are continuing their education. Several students plan to work at their internship sites during college breaks.

This year, 16 interns have been placed with the plan to add at least four more in the spring of 2019 for a total of 20 students this year and 30 students next year. Mrs. Folger-Hawks went on to state, "The Next Generation Career Academy program in Surry County is already making a difference to our local employer workforce pipeline, helping our students learn valuable skills and credentials, and employing our students in our community, where we hope they will stay. The partnership between Surry County Schools, Surry Community College, and the Golden Leaf Foundation is providing high school students real-world work experience while allowing local businesses to find future employees."

For more information on how to get involved with the Next Generation Career Academy, contact Crystal Folger-Hawks at (336) 401-7820.

