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PRESS RELEASE

Tracey H. Lewis, Ed.D.
Director of Communications
Post Office Box 364
209 N. Crutchfield Street
Dobson, North Carolina 27017
336/386-8211 Cell: 336/401-1873
E-Mail: lewist@surry.k12.nc.us

Julie S. Pharr
Director of Marketing |
Public Information Officer
630 S. Main Street
Dobson, NC 27017
336/386-3452
E-Mail: pharri@surry.edu

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Next Generation Career Academy Reports on Continued Success

Surry County Schools and Surry Community College are proud to report on the continued success of the Next Generation Career Academy. Despite the challenges the pandemic has posed, twelve interns are scheduled to work during the fall of 2020, and five new business partners have signed on for student interns.

The Next Generation Career Academy began in 2017 as Dr. Travis L. Reeves, Superintendent of Surry County Schools and Dr. David Shockley, President of Surry Community College brainstormed ways to create an innovative workforce development program. Their desire was to facilitate a program in which students would complete internships or apprenticeships with local business and industry partners that could ultimately lead to employment. The Golden LEAF Foundation's generous funding made the dream a reality.

"The Next Generation Career Academy continues to evolve. In the spring, Insteel partnered with us to begin an apprenticeship program in machining and signed one apprentice for full-time employment. I am currently working with other businesses who are receptive to partner with us to expand the apprenticeship programs, and I am pleased Insteel will continue with us for a second year," said Crystal Folger-Hawks, the Career Coach for Surry County Schools and Surry Community College. "I think this speaks volumes that businesses are seeking our students to fill their employment needs. Additionally, it is great for us to be able to provide internship opportunities for our own students as Surry County Schools is hosting two interns as school custodians."

"Northern Regional Hospital is fortunate to partner with Surry County Schools and Surry Community College to find local talent in the healthcare industry. They are helping us fill the need for qualified

employees and students get hands-on experience. This is a win-win for business and education partners," commented Ms. Christi Smiley, Human Resources Director, Northern Regional Hospital.

Currently, students are enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course at Surry Community College, and these students will be looking for internships in the spring. Other exciting points of interest regarding the Next Generation Career Academy and how the program has exceeded the Golden LEAF Foundation's grant milestones include:

- 41 students have obtained a minimum of twelve credit hours of college credit or an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree. The Golden LEAF Foundation goal was 30.
- 70 students have earned a total of 144 industry-recognized/third-party credentials. The Golden LEAF Foundation goal was 30.
- 73 students completed a minimum of 100 hours of work experience through internships or other work-based learning. The Golden LEAF Foundation goal was 30.
- An average of 92% of program graduates obtained employment in their field of study within six months or continued training in advanced manufacturing programs or STEM-related fields. The Golden LEAF Foundation goal was 80%.

"I am so proud of our students and the partnership we have cultivated with Dr. Shockley and Surry Community College. The ability of our school system to collaborate with the community college to provide students learning experiences steeped in real-world application is invaluable," stated Superintendent Reeves. "Students are not only learning the curriculum but they are applying that knowledge to the world of work. The Next Generation Career Academy has been a tremendous benefit to our local businesses, with our students both contributing to local business workforces and benefiting from the hands-on learning."

To date, Next Generation Career Academy interns have participated in work-based learning by doing and contributed to workforce development in Surry County. By the numbers:

- 88 students have participated in the Next Generation Career Academy internship program.
- 34 local business partners have hosted interns.
- 34 students have committed to continue working with their company on a full- or part-time basis at our job signings.

"To be able to couple the academic classroom with a hands-on, real-world experience makes the big difference in education," Shockley said. "This is where the rubber hits the road; when students have light bulb moments of being able to apply classroom instruction into an everyday work setting. This experience is valuable to students in that it helps them network with local professionals and build up their resume experience. I am proud and delighted of the partnership we forged with Dr. Reeves and the Surry County Schools to establish the Next Generation Career Academy, and I look forward to seeing future student successes from this program. We are grateful to Golden LEAF for supporting our students through its grant program."

"Golden LEAF is proud to support innovative strategies that help develop a skilled workforce," said Mr. Scott T. Hamilton, Golden LEAF President, Chief Executive Officer. "This project is a great example of how public-private partnerships can create sustainable programs that meet the needs of local business."

Business partners desiring to get involved in the Next Generation Career Academy should contact Mrs. Crystal Folger-Hawks at (336) 401-7820.

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