

# The Katz-Whittle Golden Rule Award Winners

The Katz-Whittle Foundation, Inc. and McIntosh County School System honored the 2025-2026 Golden Rule Award winners at a ceremony on May 5 at the McIntosh County Academy Auditorium.

The Golden Rule Awards were created by the Katz-Whittle Foundation because the foundation believes and wishes to teach students that "doing unto others

as you would have them do unto you" is an important and vital universal law of life: that what you do to others, good or bad, will ultimately return to you.

A student from each school was named each month from September through March and each received \$50 in cash as well as a T-shirt and a plaque displayed in the entrance hall of their school. The three

students of the Year received a \$100 award. The McIntosh County Student of the Year, Peyton LeCounte, received \$250.

Vallye Elayne Williams, the Senior of the Year, received \$3,000, first runner-up, Charlie Lambert, received \$1,500 and second runner up, Patrick Poppell, received \$1,000.

Paragon Award winner, Yvonne Brooks, a

teacher at Todd-Grant Elementary School, received \$1,500; and Staff Award winner, Slymeka Gibbs, a staff member at Todd-Grant Elementary School, received \$1,000.

Several students assisted with Tuesday's ceremony. Christopher Alston, 12th grader, gave the invocation; Steven Robertson, 11th grader, led the Pledge of Allegiance; Callie Crooke, 8th grader, sang the "National Anthem"; and the Todd-Grant Elementary Choir closed the ceremony with a performance of "Happy Together."

The McIntosh County Academy Jazz band performed at the reception following the ceremony.

**This year's McIntosh County Elementary School Student of the Year from Todd-Grant Elementary School is first grader, Harper Williams.**

Delmano Mitchell, Principal of Todd-Grant Elementary School, said, "Our 2026 McIntosh County Elementary School Student of the Year demonstrates extraordinary compassion, kindness, and dependability every day. This student has a heart that naturally cares for others. She consistently puts others first, responds with patience and demonstrates leadership through kindness. She reminds us all what it truly means to care for one another. Her heart makes the classroom a better place every single day."

**The 2026 McIntosh**



Vallye Williams was named the 2026 Senior of the Year. She was awarded a \$3,000 check.

**County Middle School Student of the Year from McIntosh County Middle School is eighth grader, Peyton LeCounte.**

Scott Brooker, Principal of McIntosh County Middle School, said, "Our winner is truly an exceptional student whose character, resilience, and kindness make her stand out among her peers. She consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic and dedication to her academics, but what truly sets her apart is the type of person she is every single day. This student has a heart of gold. She is kind, caring, and compassionate towards others. She has a natural

ability to make people feel welcomed and valued, and she lights up a room the moment she walks in."

**The 2026 McIntosh County High School Student of the Year is 12th grader, Patrick Poppell.**

Todd Willis, Principal of McIntosh County Academy, said, "Our winner has a giving heart and enjoys giving back to his community. He helps anytime that he is asked to help when someone is in need."

"He has helped coach younger children at the recreation department, volunteered his time to organize school supplies and clothes at a children's home, served at a soup kitchen, and delivered and assembled beds for children in need."

**The 2026 McIntosh County Student of the Year, an eighth grader at McIntosh County Middle School, is Peyton LeCounte.**

Missy Brigman, Board Chairman of the McIntosh County Board of Education, presented

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## JOSH DORMINY FOR STATE COURT JUDGE

- 2007 Graduate of McIntosh County Academy, Valedictorian
- Studied and played football at Shorter University
- Graduate of UGA School of Law
- Over 10 years experience in Georgia Courtrooms
- Moved home to raise his family with his wife Jaclyn (Webster) and twin daughters
- IF ELECTED, JOSH WILL
  - Apply the law fairly to all
  - Run an efficient and respectful courtroom
  - Treat everyone with dignity and respect

**VOTE JD ON MAY 19**  
**EARLY VOTING BEGINS APRIL 27**

PAID FOR BY DORMINY FOR JUDGE

**VOTE**

**FRED STREGLES**

**DISTRICT 1**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

*Paid for by the Committee to Elect Fred Stregles*

Certificate of Appreciation

## Kate Pontello & Roger Lotson

For spending over **\$3,600,000** of the County's taxpayer dollars over the past eight years on outside legal representation and federal settlement money to promote your joint failed efforts to force major zoning changes upon the Hogg Hummock Community.

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**JR Grovner**, Candidate for Roger Lotson's District 3 Commission Seat. **Please vote Kate and Roger off the Commission on May 19, 2026.**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect JR Grovner



# Katz

Continued from Page 16

the Student of the Year Award. She said, "Our 2026 McIntosh County Student of the Year exemplifies the qualities that the Golden Rule Award seeks to honor: character, leadership, compassion, and strength. She brings joy, encouragement, and positivity to those around her. This student's strength and character are especially evident in how she has responded to personal adversity. Instead of allowing a tragedy to define her negatively, she chose a different path through her actions, her attitude, and her commitment to doing her very best. Her resilience, positivity, and determination serve as an inspiration to both students and adults. This student leads not only through her academic success but through her example of kindness, perseverance, and grace. She makes her school a better place."

This year the Katz-Whittle Foundation recognized three seniors at McIntosh County Academy. Dr. Kelly Howe, of the Katz-Whittle Foundation, presented the three senior awards.

Of the senior award recipients, Dr. Howe said, "This student is described as a quiet soul who often goes unnoticed, but while he is quiet, he also is one of those students who cheers for others and makes it a habit to make people feel seen. He encourages others to do their best and be their best. This year the second runner-up senior for McIntosh County Academy is **Patrick Poppell**.

"Our first runner-up is described as incredibly kind, respectful, and wise beyond his years. He steps up in big ways at home and carries a lot of family responsibility on his shoulders. He shows up to school and does his best each

day. He often helps others around him who are struggling with content. This year the first runner-up senior for McIntosh County Academy is **Charlie Lambert**.

"**The 2026 McIntosh County Academy Senior of the Year and recipient of a check for \$3000 is Vallye Elayne Williams,**" Dr. Howe said.

"Our 2026 McIntosh County Academy Senior of the Year is unfailingly kind and respectful. She is kind without fanfare, confident without ego, and principled in the choices she makes. Peers and younger students consistently describe her as approachable and encouraging. Teachers regard her as reliable, respectful, and solutions oriented. She is a natural leader who brings a rare combination of academic excellence, extracurricular distinction, community service, and personal integrity. She has distinguished herself as an exceptional student and campus leader whose character, intellect, and work ethic are exemplary."

Dr. Melissa Williams, Superintendent of McIntosh County Schools, presented the staff and paragon awards.

**The 2026 McIntosh County Staff Award Winner from Todd-Grant Elementary is Slymeka Gibbs.**

Nominees for the 2026 McIntosh County Staff Award were Slymeka Gibbs, Todd Grant Elementary School; Micah Harris, McIntosh County Middle School; and Jerry Mangrum, McIntosh County Academy.

Dr. Williams said, "Colleagues say our 2026 McIntosh County Staff Award Winner is someone who truly embodies the Golden Rule Staff Award through her selfless dedication and generous spirit. She takes on countless responsibilities and works well

with her peers. She goes above and beyond in every way, consistently modeling teamwork, compassion, and commitment to her school community. Her flexibility, kindness, and flexibility to serve wherever help is needed, show the true spirit of teamwork and dedication. In her interview, our winner stated that the Golden Rule is a way of life, and she strives to treat others' kids like her very own. It is evident that truly is a difference maker."

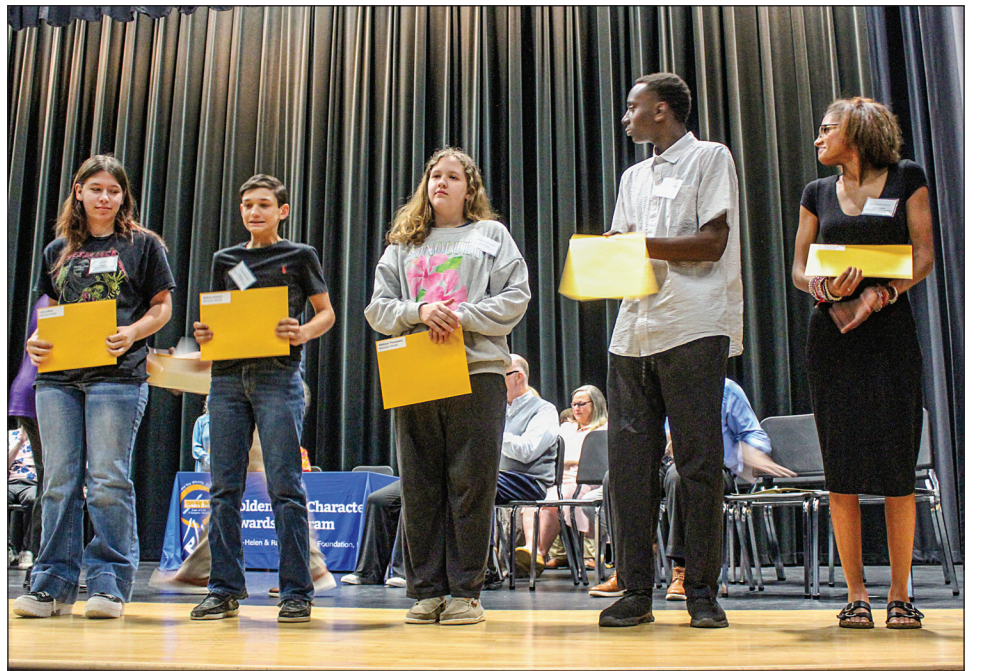
**The 2026 Paragon Award Winner and a teacher at Todd-Grant Elementary is Yvonne Brooks.**

Nominees for the 2026 McIntosh County Don and Marjorie Varnadoe Paragon Award were Yvonne Brooks, Todd Grant Elementary School; Heather Spanuth, McIntosh County Middle School; and Hayley Napfel, McIntosh County Academy.

Dr. Williams said of Brooks, "Our 2026 McIntosh County Paragon Award winner is described as taking the principles of blessing, enriching, and honoring one's neighbor to an extraordinary level. In her classroom, she ensures that every student feels encouraged, supported and valued. She demonstrates commitment to her students by engaging with them beyond academics, taking the initiative to understand their backgrounds and foster meaningful relationships. She demonstrates that her investment in their lives and success continues well beyond the single year she teaches them. Her commitment to serving others also reaches far beyond the four walls of the school. She actively promotes the welfare of others by generously donating her time, money, skills, and resources. While our winner undoubtedly enriches her own life by serving others, she does so quietly and humbly. She never seeks recognition or praise, and most people would never know the extent of her generosity."



2026 Todd-grant Elementary School Golden Rule Students of the Month are, from left, Harper Williams (1st Grade), Cora Deverger (5th Grade), Dan Grovenor (3rd Grade), Harper Chapman (1st Grade), Henry Rhodes (1st Grade) and Amelia Phillips (2nd Grade).



2026 McIntosh County Middle School Golden Rule Students of the Month are, from left, Olivia White (8th Grade), Nathan Howard (8th Grade), Addisyn Thomspen (6th Grade), Christian McIntosh (8th Grade) and Peyton LeCounte (8th Grade). Not pictured is Kaitlynn Peeples (6th Grade).



2026 McIntosh County Academy Golden Rule Students of the Month are, from left, Patrick Poppell (12th Grade), Vallye Williams (12th Grade), Lindsey Green (11th Grade) and Charlie Lambert (12th Grade). Not pictured are Rey Gore (11th Grade) and Lily Maxwell (9th Grade).

VOTE

FRED STREGLES

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