



New School Year Signals Exciting Search
For "Best & Brightest" Graduating Seniors

Now that our community's children are back in school, life returns to the normal non-vacation pace of work and learning, for parents and students. It also marks the time to begin the exciting search for the top high school seniors in the Class of 2014.

For the ninth year, Leon County's seniors begin their final school year within reach of a special reward and recognition. The "Best & Brightest Awards" program will once again recognize and honor the students whose academic and other achievements put them on the upbeat path to becoming standout citizens. It is the most important community-wide recognition of young leaders for nearly a decade – and it is here to stay.

Since its creation in 2006, the Best & Brightest has awarded nearly \$350,000 to more than 1,000 students and to Leon County Schools. At Envision Credit Union, we are tremendously proud of our role as lead sponsor since the inception of this highly acclaimed project. This is especially true because the program acknowledges more than just excellence in the classroom. Equally important is the inspiring dedication by our selected students to a genuine commitment to service in school and in the broader community.

The Best & Brightest honors exemplary students who have demonstrated commitment to their academics, extracurricular activities and meaningful and impressive community service projects. In this wonderful community, we share a well-deserved reputation for a spirit of generosity in service to the community, but too often overlooked is the fact that many of the volunteer hours selflessly donated in service to others come from students at Leon County's public and private high schools.

By February, Leon County high school principals and guidance counselors will have nominated scores of superlative seniors in 15 different categories, ranging from art and athletics to public speaking, journalism and technology. Those school-based winners will undergo a rigorous review and interview process that will ultimately identify three top students as countywide winners, runners-up and honorable mentions in each category.

Many factors are taken into account, including the individual student's achievements in a field of study, personal interview skills, overall academics and, especially, a demonstrated track record of service.

Thanks to the ongoing success of The Best & Brightest, we have been able to introduce a version of it to local middle schools, where students compete in an essay contest about the value of service. This is a way to engage Leon County's middle school students, encouraging them to embrace community service as part of their work ethic from a young age – and as a culture to choose for their lives.

The Best & Brightest program is the most far-reaching scholarship program in the region, and Envision Credit Union is honored to be the leading sponsorship partner. Our commitment to helping is consistent with our mission that focuses on education as the key to the future for our youth and for the community.

Now, more than ever, it is important for people and businesses throughout our community to join in this exceptional effort to recognize and reward young local leaders for academic and service achievement. By making a contribution to the scholarship program, you're able to help propel these young leaders toward the next exciting phase of their lives: higher education. Join us in the most smartest and most important investment that we can make in helping to identify and propel the leaders of tomorrow.

For more information on The Best & Brightest awards program and to make a donation, visit our website at www.thebestandbrightestawards.com.

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