

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact for Working Press Only:
Office of Public Affairs: 202.401.1576

Contact for Schools and Families Only:
U.S. Presidential Scholars Office: 507.931.8345
PSP@scholarshipamerica.org

LOCAL STUDENT Jonas Jay Banta
NAMED CANDIDATE IN U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Jonas Jay Banta, a graduating senior at Steller Secondary School, has been named one of more than 4,000 candidates in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. The candidates were selected from nearly 3.3 million students expected to graduate from U.S. high schools in the year 2016.

Inclusion in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, now in its 52nd year, is one of the highest honors bestowed upon graduating high school seniors. Scholars are selected on the basis of superior academic and artistic achievements, leadership qualities, strong character and involvement in community and school activities.

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964 by Executive Order of the President to recognize some of our nation's most distinguished graduating seniors for their accomplishments in many areas: academic success, leadership, and service to school and community. It was expanded in 1979 to recognize students demonstrating exceptional scholarship and talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts. In 2015, the program was expanded once again to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical fields. Annually, up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars are chosen from among that year's senior class, representing excellence in education and the promise of greatness in America's youth. All Scholars are invited to Washington, DC in June for the National Recognition Program, featuring various events and enrichment activities and culminating in the presentation of the Presidential Scholars Medallion during a White House-sponsored ceremony.

A distinguished panel of educators will review these submissions and select 800 semifinalists in early April. The Commission on Presidential Scholars, a group of up to 32 eminent citizens appointed by the President, will select the finalists, and the U.S. Department of Education will announce the Scholars in May.

Scholars will be invited to Washington, DC, for several days in June to receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a recognition ceremony and to participate in events and activities.

Jonas is the son of Janice and Joseph Banta, and can be reached at (907) 887-9408.

For more information about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, parents and students can call the U.S. Presidential Scholars Office at 507.931.8345, or send an e-mail to PSP@scholarshipamerica.org.

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NOTE TO NEWS EDITORS: A complete list of candidates will be available on the Program's web page <http://www.ed.gov/psp>. Semifinalists will be announced early April and Scholars in May. News media without Internet access may call 202.401.1576 for a list of candidates by state. For more information about the student(s), contact the student(s) directly.

THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

FACT SHEET

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964, by Executive Order of the President, to recognize and honor some of our Nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the Program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields. Each year, up to 161 students are named as U.S. Presidential Scholars, one of the nation's highest honors for high school students. The Scholars represent excellence in education and the promise of greatness in young people. In honoring the U.S. Presidential Scholars, the President of the United States symbolically honors all graduating high school seniors of high potential.

Students have the opportunity to become U.S. Presidential Scholars based on three paths of accomplishment. The majority of the Scholars are selected on the basis of broad academic achievement. Approximately twenty students are selected on the basis of their academic and artistic scholarship in the visual arts, the performing arts, or creative writing. And beginning in 2016 approximately twenty additional students will be selected on the basis of their ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.

Each year over 4,000 candidates are identified for the component of the program that focuses on academic achievement and based on having scored exceptionally well on the SAT or the ACT. Eligible students are U.S. citizens and legal permanent U.S. residents graduating or receiving a diploma between January and August of the current program year, who have taken the SAT or ACT Assessment on or before the preceding October. Students meeting these requirements are automatically considered for participation. Initial inclusion in the pool of eligible candidates is determined by the information (e.g. graduation year) provided by the student on his/her SAT or ACT test registration. Also, each Chief State School Officer (CSSO) may nominate ten male and ten female candidates based on their outstanding scholarship, residing in the CSSO's jurisdiction. Additionally, the program is partnering with several recognition organizations that will each nominate up to 10 candidates from their individual programs.

Candidacy materials are mailed to students for participation in the program. Application is by invitation only; students do not apply individually to the program, nor do their schools nominate them.

For the arts component of the Program, students are initially selected based on their artistic ability. Students must register for and participate in *YoungArts*, a national program identifying and recognizing young people demonstrating excellence in the arts. Upon completion of the *YoungArts* program, the National YoungArts Foundation nominates approximately 60 students who meet the U.S. Presidential Scholars candidacy requirements. Candidacy materials are mailed to those selected students, inviting them to apply to the program.

For the career and technical education component of the Program, students are initially selected based on their accomplishments in career and technical education fields. Students are nominated through their Chief State School Officer. Each CSSO can nominate up to five candidates who meet the U.S. Presidential Scholars candidacy requirements. Candidacy materials are mailed to the selected students, and they are invited to apply to the program.

To confirm their interest and assist in the selection process, all candidates complete and submit candidacy materials for review, including essays, self-assessments, secondary school reports and transcripts. A review committee of qualified individuals experienced in secondary and post-secondary education evaluates candidates on their academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and the quality and content of their essay.

Approximately 800 candidates are named semifinalists, and their names and supporting materials are forwarded to the Commission for further review.

In April, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars reviews the applications of all semifinalists, applying the same criteria used by the review committee. The Commission selects up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars each year.

All scholars are honored for their accomplishments during the National Recognition Program, held in June in Washington, D.C. During this trip, U.S. Presidential Scholars are guests of the US Department of Education and the Commission and enjoy an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with government officials, educators and other accomplished people. To commemorate their achievement, the Scholars are awarded the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Since 1964, this unique federal program has honored more than 7,000 U.S. Presidential Scholars, who have demonstrated scholarship, leadership, artistic excellence and selfless service to others. The work of the Commission on Presidential Scholars, on behalf of the President and his Administration, reflects recognition of the immense value and potential of our Nation's youth, and a deep commitment to ensuring that every child in America receives the benefits of a world-class education.

For general information about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, please contact 202.401.0961 or <http://www.ed.gov/psp>. For general information on the Arts component of the program, please contact the National YoungArts Foundation at 800.970.ARTS or <http://www.youngarts.org>. For specific questions regarding the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program application, contact 507.931.8345 or PSP@scholarshipamerica.org.