



## **2022 “Students of Distinction” Scholarship Recipients**

***Congratulations to our fourteen 2022 Scholarship Recipients from Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, and Peoria Illinois! Our scholar recipients are:***

**Alexandria Karen Hickman  
Marissa Alexandria Hilt  
Jordan J. Tatum  
Rashaad Lavell Jones  
Jordynn Alexandria Griffin  
Symone Lynn Baptiste  
Makayla Paige Tupper**

**Destiny Azariah Rush  
Silas Elijah Terrell  
Karis Avant  
Caleb Isaac Pembele  
Jasmine Raya O’Connor  
Cydnee J. Baylis  
Zion Williams**

[Please [view](#) and [read more](#) on each scholar recipient, following this message.]

***Each of our student scholars has demonstrated upstanding character, commitment to community, and academic excellence. In pursuing CIC’s rigorous application process, these student scholars have collectively and individually inspired the CIC Scholarship Committee. Each student scholar’s personal statement and reflections concerning their experiences and real-time resilience in a world-wide pandemic, assured Committee members that America’s future is secure and brilliant with this next generation of servant leaders.***

***The Central Illinois Chapter of The Links Incorporated is gratified to know we could be a small part of our student scholars’ journeys in fulfilling their respective academic dreams, career pursuits, and service to community.***

***Scholars, we salute you and wish you every success in your future endeavors!***

### **2021-2022 Scholarship Committee**

***Cheryl Jackson, Esq. – Co-Chair  
Thembi Conner-Garcia – Co-Chair  
Wilma Bates  
Cheryl Fluker  
Nikki Gibson***

***Paulette Jackson  
Denise Poindexter  
Angie Shaw  
Juanita Smith***

## **2022 “Students of Distinction” Scholarship Recipients**

### **Alexandria Karen Hickman – Decatur, IL – (Eisenhower High School)**



Alexandria has had a busy four years at Eisenhower High School. This 2022 graduate has been a cheerleader and a part of the student council for all four years. The summer prior to her senior year, Alexandria participated in a special program and was able to obtain her Certified Nursing Assistant certificate. During her senior year, Alexandria served as president of the student council. In addition, Alexandria has given back to her community and volunteered with various organizations. In the fall, Alexandria will be attending Arizona State University or the University of Texas at Arlington as a pre-med major.

### **Destiny Azariah Rush – Peoria, IL – (Richwoods High School)**

Destiny is a 2022 graduate of Richwoods High School. During her time at Richwoods, Destiny has excelled on the court and in the classroom. She was a member of the basketball and tennis teams and was recognized as a Big 12 scholar athlete for all four years. During this time, Destiny has consistently volunteered as a food service worker for a local church. Destiny aspires to become an Emergency Medicine nurse. She will be pursuing her nursing degree this fall at DePaul University or the University of Illinois at Chicago.



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### **Marissa Alexandria Hilt – Bloomington, IL – (Bloomington High School)**



Marissa is a 2022 graduate from Bloomington High School. During her time at Bloomington High, she has been a part of both the basketball and track teams and been recognized as a scholar athlete multiple times during high school for her achievements in sports and academics. Marissa has shown leadership as captain of the basketball team and a commitment to her community by consistently volunteering at Midwest Food Bank and as a children’s church staff assistant. This fall, Marissa plans to attend Wayne State University or High Point University and major in Actuarial Science.

### **Silas Terrell – Bloomington, IL – (Bloomington High School)**

Silas is a 2022 graduate of Bloomington High School. During his high school tenure, Silas has been involved in a wide range of activities. He was a member of the soccer, track and Esports teams. Silas has received recognition for excelling in sports and academics. Even though he had a busy extracurricular schedule, Silas believes in the importance of giving back to the local community and has volunteered with Midwest Food Bank, Salvation Army, and Adopt-A-Highway. In the fall, Silas plans to study Political Science at Purdue University or Loyola University with the goal of going to law school and practicing in the state of Illinois.



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### **Jordan Tatum – Urbana, IL – (Urbana High School)**



Jordan has had a busy four years at Urbana High School. This 2022 graduate has had a busy extracurricular activities schedule which included playing basketball and being an Eagle Scout recipient. Jordan has also received many different academic awards and been recognized as a scholar athlete. In addition, he has volunteered as a Boy Scout leader/mentor to Cub scouts, food pantry helper and assistant for summer school at his church. In the fall, Jordan will attend Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology or Purdue University. He plans on majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Electrical Engineering with an eventual goal of developing a device that will help individuals with congestive heart failure.

### **Karis Avant – Champaign, IL – (Champaign Central High School)**

Karis is a 2022 graduate of Champaign Central High School. She has been involved in multiple extracurricular activities during high school including soccer, band, and the Future Business Leaders of America. Karis has also served as a volunteer worker at food pantries. Shortly after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Karis became a Peer Ambassador through the Trauma and Resilience Initiative in Urbana-Champaign. As a Peer Ambassador, Karis was able to reach out to single mothers experiencing homelessness and offer support. In addition, she helped create awareness of this issue in her community. This fall, Karis will start her major in Business Administration at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University or the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



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### **Rashaad Jones – Decatur, IL – (Eisenhower High School)**



Rashaad is a 2022 graduate of Eisenhower High School. During his time at Eisenhower, Rashaad has participated in multiple extracurricular activities including band, track, baseball, and tennis. He has also been recognized for his high level of academic achievement. Rashaad plays the drums for his church and gives back to his community by assisting with various fundraisers. In addition to keeping himself on track academically, Rashaad also would help his peers when they would have trouble with homework. In the fall, Rashaad plans on attending Eastern Illinois University and major in Communications.

### **Caleb Isaac Pembele – Normal, IL – (Normal Community High School)**

Caleb is a 2022 graduate of Normal Community High School. During his four years at Normal Community, Caleb was a member of the Key Club and a tutor in an after-school program for other students at his high school. He has also received multiple awards recognizing his high level of academic achievement. This past year, Caleb was a participant in the Model United Nations program which really piqued his curiosity in the arena of politics. In the fall, Caleb plans on attending either Northwestern University or Vanderbilt and will major in Political Science and minor in Statistics.



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### **Jordynn A Griffin – Bloomington, IL – (Normal Community High School)**



Jordynn is a 2022 graduate of Normal Community High School. She has been a member of the track, cross country and basketball teams and received recognition for being a scholar athlete multiple times for different sports during high school. Even though she had a full extracurricular schedule, Jordynn volunteered at her church and in her community in various ways including providing childcare for foster parents during support groups and serving as a youth activity coordinator. This fall, Jordynn will be attending Illinois Wesleyan University where she will major in Veterinary Science and pursue her dream of becoming a veterinarian.

### **Jasmine Raya O’Connor – Champaign, IL – (Champaign Central High School)**

Jasmine is a 2022 graduate of Champaign Central High School. During high school, Jasmine has received multiple academic related accolades and participated in multiple extracurricular activities including the Eco Club (president and co-founder), and the African American club. Jasmine has also had her own jewelry business during the last five years which has been a way for her to fundraise for other organizations in her community. In addition, to fundraising for other organizations, Jasmine has volunteered time to help those with food and housing insecurity. In the fall, Jasmine will attend either the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign or Indiana University and major in Business, Entrepreneurship and Corporate Innovation.



## **2022 “Students of Distinction” Scholarship Recipients**

### **Symone Lynn Baptiste – Peoria, IL – (Peoria High School)**



Symone is a graduate of Peoria High School. During her time at Peoria High, she was involved in a wide variety of activities including Student Council, Key Club, and the Trio Upward Bound College Program. During her junior year, Symone joined the Health Occupations program and will receive her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate in June 2022. Even though school kept her quite busy, Symone has remained very active in her church where she is a part of the youth choir and volunteers as an activity assistant for vacation bible school. In the fall, Symone plans on attending Illinois State University or Western Illinois University where she will pursue her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

### **Cydnee J. Baylis – Champaign, IL – (Champaign Central High School)**

Cydnee is a senior at Champaign Central High School, has been actively involved in a variety of extracurricular activities including African American Club, drama club and choir. Active in her high school, Cydnee received scholastic achievement awards throughout her academic journey as well an award contributed to being a softball athlete. After graduation, she plans to attend college and pursue a major in Veterinary Technology. As a self-described independent and naturally motivated leader, Cydnee loves to bring people together and be a resource to others. Overall, she is an extremely grateful, talented, and intelligent young lady determined to have many experiences to display her leadership skills to be beneficial to others.



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### **Makayla Paige Tupper – Bloomington, IL – (University High School)**



Not only is Makayla a top-notch scholar, but she is also a top-notch cheerleader athlete. She’s hardworking and very active in her community, as well as her church. A 2022 graduate of University High School, Makayla wants to major in Elementary Education. She plans on attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign or Eastern Illinois University. She is looking forward to a binding connection with her students. She has learned that setbacks in life shape us into being a stronger person. Makayla loves children and is looking forward to college, teaching her the way to fulfill her dream.

### **Zion Williams – Bloomington, IL – (Normal Community High School)**

Zion is 2022 graduate of Normal Community High School. During his time at Normal Community, Zion has displayed leadership on and off the field as captain of the football team and being named an IHSA scholar athlete. He has also participated in the band and been a member of the track team. After much reflection during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zion decided that he wants to pursue a career in the medical field as a physician. This fall, Zion plans on attending Augustana College as a pre-med major.

