

The Evening Times



West Memphis High seniors (from left) Ashley Foster, Erin Swafford, Emily Naylor and Camden Harrell were offered Arkansas State's top scholarship by Gilbert Fowler, Perry Jackson and Rebecca Oliver.

WMHS seniors 'win' ASU sweeps

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Four West Memphis High School seniors got a surprise visit Tuesday during classes that is academia's answer to the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes.

The West Memphians were taken out of classes to be offered Arkansas State University's top academic scholarship, the University Honors Scholarship, valued at \$60,000 over four years.

Emily Naylor, Ashley Foster, Camden Harrell and Erin Swafford were among 35 seniors from Arkansas high schools to be offered the UHS.

One-hundred-fifty-four students from Arkansas were eligible for the UHS. The committee looked at grade-point average, class rank, highest ACT composite and transcripts.

"This is the second year for the 'Prize Patrol' as we call it," said Rebecca Oliver, director of student services at ASU. "Last year we stayed local around the Jonesboro area, but this year we branched out some. An admissions counselor at our institution a few years ago came up with the idea of going to the high schools and offer the scholarships in person and as a surprise."

The four West Memphians were definitely surprised. "I knew about the scholarship, but I didn't think I'd hear back from (ASU) until much later," said Swafford, a smile wafting across her face.

UHS winners must be Arkansas residents and must be a graduate of an Arkansas high school. The students must have a minimum of 29 on the ACT and a 3.5 GPA. They must also either be a Governor's Distinguished Scholarship recipient or be a National Merit finalist or semifinalist.

The scholarship covers tuition and fees, a double-occupancy room for on-campus housing, food and a stipend of \$1,200 per year.

"The element of surprise is the part we (as administrators) love about this," said Oliver. "Only the high school's guidance counselor knew who was going to receive the offer."

WMHS senior guidance counselor LaTarsha Johnson's only ploy was to make sure her students were at school on Tuesday.

"I just told them to be at school, even if you're sick drag yourself out of bed for this day," Johnson said.

The four students received a loud cheer from their fellow classmates as Oliver, along with associate dean and journalism professor Gilbert Fowler and admissions counselor Perry Jackson made the announcement.