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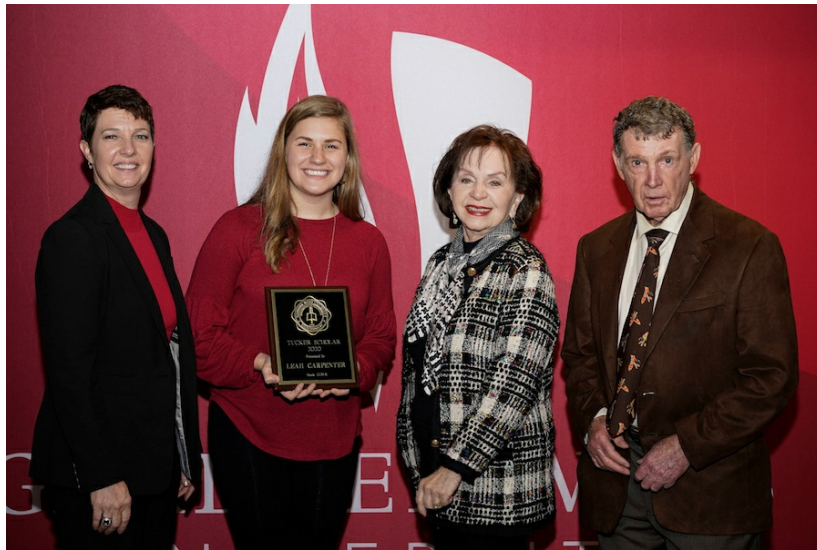
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Communications

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Leah Carpenter, of Stanley, N.C., Presented the University's Most Prestigious Undergraduate Award



Members of the Tucker family pose with Leah Carpenter, the first recipient of the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength Scholarship. From left, are, Lisa Tucker, Leah, Carolyn Tucker and Robert Tucker.

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—A high school senior described as a “ray of sunshine” is the first recipient of the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength Scholarship at Gardner-Webb University. Leah Carpenter, of Stanley, N.C., made history recently when she received the award, which is given to a student with exceptional academic achievement, who also exemplifies the commands of Jesus found in Mark 12:29-31—“Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Gardner-Webb President Dr. William M. Downs welcomed everyone and noted the significance of the occasion. “We’re here to thank one family who has meant so very much to this university and to welcome a new family to our campus,” he affirmed. “The Tucker family name has become synonymous with student success here at Gardner-Webb. Each day we get to enjoy the showcase facility called the Tucker Student Center. And now, thanks

to the continued generosity of the Tuckers, we come together to celebrate the awarding of the inaugural Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship—the most prestigious undergraduate award at Gardner-Webb.”

Carolyn and Robert Tucker, who gave the University \$5.5 million in 2010 for the Tucker Student Center, established the Tucker Scholarship in March 2019 with a \$4 million scholarship endowment. Before presenting the scholarship to Carpenter, Mrs. Tucker explained what Mark 12:29-31 means to her. “Many years ago, I asked God for one thing,” she shared. “My life prayer for all of my seed and their spouses is that they would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and their neighbor as themselves.”



Leah Carpenter poses with her family who attended the event. From left, are her cousin, Levi Summey, her aunt, Kristy Summey, her great aunt, Prue Carpenter, her father, John, Leah, her mother, Kelly, her sister, Hannah, her grandparents, Martha and Donny Coltharp, and her great uncle, Fredrick Carpenter.

To remind her children, grandchildren and future Tucker generations of her request, Mrs. Tucker gave them plaques inscribed with the scripture. Replicas of the plaques also hang at entrances to every building on the GWU campus. Before presenting the scholarship to Carpenter, Mrs. Tucker gave her one of the plaques.

The formal scholarship presentation was made by the Tuckers’ daughter, Lisa, a 1989 alumna. “I was so impressed with you from the moment we met,” she told Carpenter. “Everything you stand for, it beams from you immediately.”

Carpenter, who plans to major in nursing, is a senior at Highland School of Technology in Gastonia, N.C. She was one of 90 individuals recommended for the scholarship, and among 15 finalists. “I am extremely overjoyed and grateful to the Tucker family,” Carpenter stated. “It’s amazing to be selected for this scholarship. I wanted to come to Gardner-Webb, because of the nursing 100 percent passing rate (on the licensing exam). Also, whenever I came to campus here, I felt at home. I told my mom, ‘Whether I get the scholarship or not, Gardner-Webb is the place.’”

She’s a member of the Beta Club and her community service includes packing meals for a homeless ministry, helping with a summer home repair ministry, and serving on a mission

trip to those impacted by Hurricane Florence. She is a member of a Bible club and shares her faith with those around her. “I feel like I owe something back to the community, because it’s what Jesus would do,” Carpenter expressed. “It’s the best experience you will ever have in your life, humbling yourself and helping others. I enjoy every single minute of it.”

Carpenter was nominated for the scholarship by Taylor Campbell, a GWU alumna and her youth pastor at New Covenant United Methodist Church in Mt. Holly, N.C. “She’s a leader and does so much in our youth group, our church and our community,” Campbell described. “Her love and her light just radiates.”

Among the faculty and staff in attendance was former GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner, who served on the Tucker Scholarship selection committee and was instrumental in helping to establish the endowment. Special guests were Carpenter’s parents, John and Kelly Carpenter; her sister, Hannah Carpenter; her grandparents, Martha and Donny Coltharp; her aunt and cousin, Kristy and Levi Summey, all of Stanley; and her great aunt and uncle, Prue and Fredrick Carpenter of Lincolnton, N.C.



Leah Carpenter, center, poses with members of the Tucker Scholarship interview committee. From left, are, former GWU president Dr. Frank Bonner, Provost and Executive Vice President Dr. Ben Leslie, Lisa Tucker, Leah, Vice President Emerita of Student Development Dr. Dee Hunt, Professor of Biology Dr. Tom Jones and Vice President of Christian Life and Service and Senior Minister to the University Tracy Jessup.

[Learn more about the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship.](#)

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