

## GHS sprouts Golden Apples

**2 seniors receive award with financial assistance, summer experience**



*KENT KRIEGSHAUSER/The Register-Mail*  
*Diego Moore studies during a class at Galesburg High School last week. The senior was recently named the recipient of a Golden Apple Scholar award, which offers financial assistance and real-world experience for aspiring teachers.*

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GALESBURG — As a kid growing up in southern Minneapolis, Diego Moore didn't exactly have it all.

He and his brother were raised by their mother in a single-parent home. But a program at a local club called Rec Plus gave him the male role model he needed when he was in fourth grade.

He knew someday he wanted to return the favor.

"Some kids need the help," Moore said. "I want to be there to do it; to teach them."

Thanks to a Golden Apple Scholar award, Moore will be able to work toward that goal.

Galesburg High School seniors Moore and Katie Riner were two of 100 students

in Illinois to receive the award, which offers financial assistance at one of 53 participating colleges, and real-world experience during summer sessions. More than 1,800 students applied for the positions.

Moore was initially an alternate but when a student turned the scholarship down, he jumped at the chance.

In return for the program's benefits, scholars must commit to five years after college and summer sessions teaching at schools in underprivileged areas.

Having been raised in a family like many who attend these schools, Moore said he can probably relate to the kids.

"It's not an obstacle to me to think about because you can't really use that as an excuse," he said. "You can't say 'Oh, I'm poor, I can't do this. I can't do that.' I want kids to realize that you can't let that stop you from being what you want to be."

As part of the program, Moore will attend a five-week, on-the-job training session in Chicago starting on June 20. He will teach young kids during the morning and attend classes relating to his experience during the afternoon.

He will receive a \$2,000 stipend for the summer as well as \$2,500 each of his first two years to help pay tuition at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. During his junior year, that total will increase to \$5,000 per year.

Although the financial assistance will make it easier for Moore attend school, his mother, Tuesday Spinks, said college was never in doubt.

"I do feel proud," she said. "But he always knew he was expected to go to college. He knew from the first grade."

Spinks said her pride extends beyond Moore's academic career.

"I tried to raise a good man, a good, respectful man," she said. "If he didn't make another penny, being a good man is more important."

The Golden Apple Scholar program began in 1988. It began as a Chicago-only program that offered "pre-service" training to high school seniors.

It offers the scholars guidance as they make their way through college. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission and private donors fund the program.

Because the program focuses on underprivileged areas, director Jim Sorensen said some schools that might not have drawn applications from high-quality teachers can benefit.

“A teacher is sometimes reluctant to go into certain classrooms because it’s tougher to teach there,” he said. “But you can be the person who will make a difference in the life of the kids who need it most.”

Sorensen said that in the program’s 21 years, 94 percent have completed the five-year commitment after college. Those who don’t, must repay all financial contributions.

The nine years that students are involved with the program is not always an easy decision, Sorensen said.

“I’m always amazed that a 17-year-old is willing to make that commitment,” he said. “It shows that teenagers have the passion and the need to make a difference.”

Riner and Moore are the second and third Galesburg students to receive the award.

Last year, Katie Lusk became the first.

“They’re special kind of kids,” said GHS principal Tom Chiles. “I’m very happy that we have got kids that are getting this opportunity. It’s just going to be a tremendous learning experience.”

Chiles said he supports the program and appreciates the financial benefits some of the students are receiving.

He also hoped the fact that Galesburg High School now has scholars opens doors not only for the students, but also for the school. As more scholars come from the school, the name will be more prominent, which could mean more scholars come to Galesburg to teach, he said.

But overall, Chiles said the program is a rare opportunity for the kids.

“The experience they are going to gain is going to be fantastic,” he said. “It’s going to give them a head start. A jump start on being a quality teacher early in their career.”

When Moore told his brother, Felix Spinks, about his scholarship, he had to deal with a little bit of teasing.

Spinks told him not to be a “sellout” and only teach the good kids.

With Moore’s background, however, that was never a consideration.

“Some guys, even if they have a dad, need to see that male role model when they’re in fourth or fifth grade,” Moore said. “I just want to be there and not telling the kids ‘don’t do this, don’t do that.’ But they can see from my example. I want to be something they can see as a positive role model.”