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Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics

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DuPage County ACT-SO Top in the Nation for STEM Medals at the National ACT-SO Competition in Baltimore, Maryland

(Naperville, IL) – Students from the DuPage County ACT-SO program led the nation in medals awarded in STEM categories at last Sunday's 39th Annual National NAACP ACT-SO Awards Ceremony that was held in Baltimore, Maryland. The students won the top medals awarded in the categories of Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth and Space Sciences and Physics. DuPage County ACT-SO students also the bronze medal in the Engineering category and the silver medal in Music Composition, bringing DuPage County ACT-SO into a tie for the second highest number of total national medals awarded, a total of six. The medalists will each receive cash prizes ranging from \$1,000-\$2,000 and were given a Samsung Chromebook Plus at the awards reception.

The awards ceremony was hosted by Cornelius Smith, one of the stars of the ABC hit show *Scandal*. Smith is an ACT-SO alum, having competed at the local and national levels in the category of Music Vocal Contemporary when he was a high school student.

"DuPage County ACT-SO has emerged as one of the nation's top-performing programs as a result of the dedication of its students, parents and volunteers," said Teresa Haley, President of the Illinois State Conference NAACP. "The ability to have in-depth, hands-on exploration of potential career areas is so important as students prepare for college and career. ACT-SO provides its students the ability to explore areas that they have talent for or interest in within a supportive environment."

The medalists were part of the group of 14 area high school students that won local gold medals at the DuPage County ACT-SO that was held in March. The students vied for honors against more than 700 other local gold medalists from around the country at the National ACT-SO competition that was held on Friday. DuPage County ACT-SO was one of three programs in the nation that was awarded a National ACT-SO Student Engagement Award for having the most students competing at the national competition.

ACT-SO, the Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics, is a year-long program that was created to encourage high academic and cultural achievement among high school students of African descent. The primary focus of the program is the development of projects for competition in categories in the areas of STEM, Business, Humanities, Performing Arts and Visual Arts. Mentoring and academic enrichment are key objectives in this endeavor.

The program owes much of its success as the leading ACT-SO STEM program in the nation to its relationship with Argonne National Laboratory. This is the fourth year that Argonne and DuPage County ACT-SO have partnered for the Argonne/ACT-SO STEM Mentoring and Research Program. Each high school ACT-SO STEM student is paired with a scientist from Argonne National Laboratory in Darien, which provides mentoring, guidance and facilities for the students' research. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, the program brings in professionals every month to expose the students to careers in various STEM areas.

Middle and high school students that want to participate in DuPage County ACT-SO's 2017-2018 academic year program should plan on attending one of the orientation sessions that begin the weekend of August 26th. The information flyer is available on the program's website: www.dupageact-so.org.



DuPage County ACT-SO is a program of the DuPage County Branch of the NAACP. Since its 1979 inception, the local program has partnered with the College of DuPage. Key sponsors and partners of the program include Argonne National Laboratory, Glenbard High School District 87, Glenbard South High School, the McDonald's Corporation and Comcast.

DuPage County ACT-SO 2017 National Award Winners

| Category | Medal | Name | School | Grade |
|-------------------------|--------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Chemistry | Gold | Cristal Johnson | Bolingbrook High School | 12th |
| Computer Science | Gold | Whitney Ford | Plainfield East High School | 11th |
| Earth and Space Science | Gold | Riziki Covington | Neuqua Valley High School | 11th |
| Music Composition | Silver | Kyla Denwood | Willowbrook High School | 12th |
| Physics | Silver | Jalen Crump | Air Force Academy High School | 12th |
| Engineering | Bronze | Joshua Lambert | Glenbard East High School | 11th |

More About the ACT-SO Program

The Afro-Academics, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) is a major youth initiative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Founded in 1978, by the renowned author and journalist, Vernon Jarrett, ACT-SO provides a forum through which African American youth demonstrate academic, artistic, and scientific prowess and expertise, thereby gaining the same recognition often reserved for entertainers and athletes. The objective of ACT-SO is to prepare, recognize and reward African-American youth who exemplify scholastic and artistic excellence.

NAACP branches and youth units throughout the country conduct annual competitions for students in grades 9 - 12. Gold medalists from the local competitions then compete against gold medalists from other cities around the nation at the National ACT-SO Competition that is held during the NAACP's Annual Convention in July.

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