

AG Commissioner visits HCHS; honors Junior Chef Team



Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles visited Harlan County High School Thursday afternoon to honor the school's state champion Junior Chef Team.

Quarles told those in attendance that he was "honored" to be at HCHS to honor the team of Kieran Chadwick and Selena Moreno, the duo which took top honors during the Kentucky State Fair, and their coaches, Chasity McCarty and Leilani Kelly.

Addressing the gathering held at the café in the school media center, Quarles said he looked forward to seeing the southeast regional competition in Louisville in May 2019. Harlan County will represent the state in that event.

"We hope to see you go all the way," Quarles said.

Quarles said as the program continues to grow that seeing such successes are "bright spots in Kentucky."

Harlan County Schools Superintendent Brent Roark said he is elated at the success of the Harlan County Junior Chef Team.

"This is a great honor for the students, the school and the district," he said. "In addition to bringing positive recognition to all, it provides financial incentive for the students to continue their education and pursue culinary training. This is another opportunity for our students. I really appreciate Commissioner Quarles for making the trip down to honor our students and coaches."

Harlan County's winning recipe was for taco pop tarts.

Kentucky Farm to School Program includes the Junior Chef, which is a statewide high school cooking competition designed to offer youth the opportunity to learn valuable skills in recipe development, food preparation, marketing public presentation, organization teamwork and community involvement.

The program is designed to stimulate interest in local agriculture, create a nontraditional market for Kentucky agriculture producers, increase quality of products available to school lunchrooms and increase consumption of produce of Kentucky students.

Harlan County Schools Food Service Director Jack Miniard said, "We are thankful that the Superintendent and the Board of Education allow us to sponsor this program. This is our fourth year. We've competed at the state level for the past three years. This year the students won. This gave them each a \$16,000 scholarship to Sullivan University and an opportunity to compete in the southeastern region which would provide a full four-year scholarship if they win."

Miniard said he is very appreciative to Quarles and his administrative team of Bill Wickliffe and Tina Garland for supporting and working to grow the program.

Miniard said the HCHS team's recipe was taste tested with students in the school district.

"We have served the taco pop tart in two different schools," said Miniard. "The students loved it."

While at the school, Quarles met the school's agriculture teacher Joseph Dempsey and his Future Farmers of America leadership team.

Moreno was unable to attend the reception as she is enrolled at Sullivan University in Louisville, taking advantage of the scholarship she received for being on the state champion team.