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MEIGS COUNTY SCHOOLS RECEIVE \$609,263 GEAR UP TN GRANT TO PROMOTE COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Decatur, TN (April 18) – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission announced today that Meigs County Schools is the recipient of a **\$609,263** GEAR UP grant over the next six years. The grant funds will provide services to students and families with the aim of increasing enrollment and success in postsecondary education.

The funding is part of the U.S. Department of Education’s Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant, which aims to increase the number of low-income students in Tennessee who are accessing and succeeding in higher education. Meigs County Schools is one of 15 communities selected to receive funds. The communities were selected through a competitive application process by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the administrator of the state’s GEAR UP TN grant.

“We are extremely excited about receiving this grant. We have seen the impact that GEAR UP TN can have on the college-going culture within our schools and have truly benefited from that. We are looking forward to expanding our college and career access services to increase our students’ readiness and improve their opportunities for postsecondary success. It is our ultimate goal that all of our students graduate college and career ready,” Carmen Choat, Secondary Supervisor/Director of College & Career Access.

“Meigs County Schools are eager to experience all the benefits that come along with the GEAR UP TN program. We look forward to expanding our EPSOs and providing more opportunities for our students moving forward.” Clint Baker, Meigs County High School Principal.

As part of the project, Meigs County Schools will form a local, community-based GEAR UP TN Collaborative to provide college access and success-focused services to students at Meigs Middle School and Meigs High School. Students in the Class of 2023, who are currently in the seventh grade, will receive services as a cohort through middle school, high school, and their first year of postsecondary education.

Seniors at Meigs County High School will also receive direct services that will help them prepare for college and apply to postsecondary programs. Services will include one-on-one mentoring, tutoring, college visits and financial aid counseling. GEAR UP TN will also provide students across the state of Tennessee with college and financial aid resources, including a college access and success website, CollegeforTN.org.

Each GEAR UP TN Collaborative includes formal partnerships with at least one middle school, one high school, a higher education institution, a local board of education, and at least two community-based organizations. Partners will help implement grant activities and ensure that the momentum of college access work continues beyond the six-year grant. Meigs County School's GEAR UP TN Collaborative will partner with Cleveland State Community College, Roane State Community College, Bryan College, Tennessee Wesleyan University, Tennessee College of Applied Technology of Athens, the city of Decatur, the county mayor's office, Volunteer Energy Cooperative, SouthEast Bank, and Tennessee River Machine Works. (More partners will be added as the grant is implemented.)

This is Tennessee's third GEAR UP grant. Tennessee's first GEAR UP TN project, which Meigs County was part of, began in 2005 and resulted in a 22.8 percent increase in college-going rates in the nine rural school districts. Communities served by Tennessee's second GEAR UP TN grant, which began in 2012, have shown impressive results, including over 9 percentage points of growth in college-going rates since 2012. Tennessee was one of ten states awarded a GEAR UP grant as part of the 2017 competition.

For more information, please contact Carmen Choat, Secondary Supervisor/Director of College & Career Access, Meigs County Schools, at 423-334-5797, carmenchoat@meigscounty.net.

About GEAR UP TN

GEAR UP TN is a locally driven project that works to prepare students for success in middle school, high school, and postsecondary education. Funded through a seven-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, GEAR UP TN works with community-based Collaboratives in 15 counties across the state to promote college readiness and success. Between 2017 and 2024, GEAR UP TN will provide a variety of services including mentoring, tutoring, college visits, and financial aid counseling, to ensure more Tennessee students can enroll and succeed in postsecondary education.