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ceived outstanding awards of FCCLA member, outstanding Beta member, outstanding Family and Consumer Science student award and outstanding Health Science Education student. She participated in STAR events for FCCLA and competed at the state level for Beta club. During her senior year, she held officer positions as president of FCCLA, as well as a member of the student council, fundraising chair for Beta and was a senior class officer. During her junior year, she participated in a weeklong endeavor with Girls State in Nashville. She has earned 21 college credit hours through dual enrollment classes and is graduating with honors and as a student of distinction. She is an active member of Davis memorial Baptist church. She plans to attend the University of Tennessee at Martin and major in Secondary Education with an emphasis



in Biology.

No. 10 – Alex Sledd is the daughter of Maureen and Tommy Sledd. During her four years at Dresden High School, she was a part of the Lady Lions basketball team, serving as one of the four captains of the team. She was named to the all-district team and all academic team her senior year. She was active in the Beta club, FCCLA, FCA and the student council, and was a part of the Weakley County Youth Leadership program during her junior year. During her senior year, she served as president of the DHS student council, FCLA assistant and

was a member of the leadership committee for FCA. She was a member of the National Society for High School Scholars and was named Miss Dresden her junior year. Her volunteer experience includes coaching soccer for the Dresden Youth League, helping with Little Dribblers, organizing a can drive, assisting at a McKenzie afterschool program, volunteering in a Latino community in Memphis and volunteering at So Others May Eat soup kitchen in Washington D.C. She also participated in the Lott Leadership program at Ole Miss where she studied political science and public speaking. She has completed several dual enrollment courses at DHS and is graduating with distinction and honors. She is an active member of Martin First Baptist church. She plans to continue her education and major in Political Science and Business Management.

The benefits of taking a gap year

Whereas high school graduates once felt compelled to enroll in college the fall after receiving their high school diplomas, nowadays a greater number of teens are opting to take time off between graduating high school and going to college. Known as a "gap year," this trend has become increasingly popular in recent years.

According to the American Gap Association, attendance at Gap Year Fairs, which aim to bring together Gap Year organizations, interested students and parents, has increased by 294 percent since 2010. While there are no statistics indicating just how many students take gap years before going to college, the increase in fair attendance suggests more students are interested in taking a year away from school after earning their high school diplomas.

Each student is different, so what entices one student to take a gap year may not do the same for his or her classmate. However, the following are some of the potential benefits of taking a gap year between high school and college.

- Gap years give more time to find a major. Many incoming college freshmen feel pressured to choose a major even though they are uncertain about which courses of study they hope to pursue. Colleges and universities may not require incoming freshmen to choose majors, but that does not stop many from doing just that. Students who have no idea what they want to study can benefit from the time gap years afford them to further explore their interests. The year away may help students discover hidden interests, while volunteering during gap years may inspire some to pursue careers they otherwise may never have considered had they not found the time to volunteer.

- Gap years may provide students with opportunities to travel. Some organizations now connect students taking gap years with opportunities to work overseas. The work may not be lucrative, but it can give students the chance to experience life in other countries. Such an experience may prove invaluable and help students

to better understand the world that awaits them upon graduating college.

- Gap years give students a chance to exhale. Students who spent their high school years working hard in the classroom and engaging in extracurricular activities may benefit from the time to breathe and relax that gap years afford. Stepping away from a hectic schedule can provide students with the chance to reflect on their interests and explore how they want the next chapter of their lives to unfold.

- Gap years can help students earn some money. While gap years may not make young students rich, students who spend their gap years working can earn money that can help them pay for college tuition or cover the additional costs associated with going to college, such as room and board.

Gap years give young students a chance to learn about themselves and more time to explore what they want to do with their lives after high school.




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