



Cabot Corporation's Tuscola location provided a \$500 STEM scholarship to a Tuscola High School Senior. The Cabot scholarship is awarded to those who will pursue a degree in math, science, or engineering field.

The recipient of this year scholarship is Hailey Downs, right, who plans to enroll in the Parkland Pathway to the University of Illinois where she will major in Microbiology. While in high school, Hailey played softball, ran cross country, was a National Honor Society, was in Students Against Destructive Decisions, and had a part-time job. Hailey is the daughter of Dustin Downs and Malea Warner.

Cabot said, "We are committed to delivering contributions that make a positive difference in the local community. Providing scholarships helps with advancing Cabot's sustainability pillars of building a better future for tomorrow."

Connie Allen, sr. administrative assistant, left, represented Cabot at Tuscola High School Honors Day. Submitted photo.

Rose passes bill to protect child abuse victims

Far too often, child victims are traumatized again by the criminal justice system when they must testify in front of their assailant in court, said State Sen. Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet). Legislation co-sponsored by Rose would allow victims under the age of 13 to testify remotely in most cases.

"This is an important layer of protection for children who have been victims of the worst types of crimes, who would be re-victimized all over again by having to speak about the worst moments of their life in front of a courtroom of strangers, while their abuser stares them down," said Rose. "This won't fix the trauma for the family that brought this to my attention; but, I hope that it will help them find justice as they will now know that their efforts will help future victims of abuse."

House Bill 2607 creates a legal mechanism to allow victims under the age of 13 to testify outside the courtroom, with the testimony shown in the courtroom via a closed-circuit television system.

The legislation was inspired by constituents of Senator Rose who were forced to take legal action to prevent their child from being required to testify against their abuser in court, rather than via closed circuit TV.

"The entire court process made a horrific situation even worse and proved to be extremely traumatic for both the child and their family," Rose concluded.

The legislation has now passed both chambers of the General Assembly and awaits the signature of the Governor to become law.

Arthur residents looking to form a local arts council

Nearby area and residents of Arthur are coming together to form an arts council group in an effort to promote and support local art and help benefit community outreach at the same time.

The idea for the group came about after artist and poet, Ariana R Cherry, realized that there wasn't a lot of support for the arts in town. She said she thinks there is a need for this type of organization to help bring together artists, musicians, writers and other creatives within the community.

Cherry is looking to reach out to other local artists or organizations who have an interest in forming an arts council. She has spoken with a few people so far, and has received positive responses, she said.

Recently, she organized the first art fair that Arthur has had along with the help of Pastor Jill Bunker. Cherry would like to see more events like that in the future, as well as the possibility of hosting art workshops, open mic ses-



Cherry

sions, small concerts, writing groups/workshops and any other talents that local artists could bring.

The goals of the arts council would work together to promote and support local artists and also use its funding to benefit areas of need within the community.

The group is currently in the process of organizing a meeting to discuss the formation of the arts council and to gather input from the community. They hope to have a strong turnout and to begin laying the groundwork for a vibrant and active arts community in Arthur.

"I believe that the arts are an important part of any community - even in a small rural area," Cherry stated. "Artists come from all walks of life," she added.

If you are interested in helping Cherry form an arts council in Arthur, please reach out to her via email at arianathepoet@gmail.com or cell phone at 217-246-1966. She is looking to hold a first meeting sometime in June. With the support of local artists and community members, the group is optimistic about the future of the arts in the Arthur area.

Ariana Cherry is one of the new artists at The Vault Art Gallery in Tuscola

Most recently, you might have seen some of Ariana Cherry's works of art at two local art festivals - the First Arthur-Area Spring Art Festival, the Mattoon Artworks Festival or even online via social media or eBay where she regularly sells many of her prints. At the beginning of May, her art began to appear at another place - The Vault Art Gallery in Tuscola.

Last year, Cherry had tried applying to have her work at the Vault, but there wasn't available space - although that changed for her this year. Her work appeared in the Mattoon Cross County Mall after being named "Artist of the Month" during the months of January-March. She was told that an artist from the Vault had seen her art at the mall and suggested that she apply once again, so she did. Around the beginning of April, Cherry was told that her artwork had been accepted. This will be a new exciting endeavor for her, she said, as she has always wanted to see her art in a gallery - so starting locally is a great way to begin.

Cherry has had a love for art since she was a little girl. She also loves to write poetry, so sometimes, she also tries to find ways to incorporate lines of poetry into her art too. Her most common niche is creating ATC's (a.k.a: Art Trading Cards). Art Trading Cards are small works of art measuring 2.5 in x 3.5 in.



ARIANA CHERRY'S ARTWORK on display at The Vault Art Gallery in Tuscola. Submitted photo.

Many people around the world buy, collect, trade and sell art trading cards. It is a more affordable way to have works of art without having to purchase large expensive pieces.

Cherry's favorite medium to use is colored pencils as she has always been told "she has an eye for color" ever since she was a high school art student. She has also been known to mix her personal photography,

digital art and watercolor pencils into her art as well. One of her largest inspirations for her to continue her art has been her grandmother June Brandon Cherry even though she passed on well over 10 years ago. Her simple advice, "Just keep at it," has always echoed in Cherry's ears, she said, and remembering the art competitions the two entered together at the Moultrie-Douglas fairs

and the time they spent sharing each others' artworks have been memories that she holds close to her heart.

If you would like to see Cherry's art at the Vault Art Gallery in Tuscola, it is located at 100 North Main Street. She also will be working there one shift a month. Her work is also sold online via her eBay store at: <https://www.ebay.com/str/fullmoonartproductions>

Letter circulating to save scholarship program

Republican members of the House circulated a letter supporting the extension of the Invest in Kids scholarship fund which is slated to sunset at the end of 2023. The program currently gives over 9,000 kids hope for a better education and a better life through tax-credit scholarships when the traditional public school system fails them. If the program is not extended Illinois will be the first state in the nation to kill a school choice program. This year neighboring states of Iowa and Indiana have made school choice universal or nearly universal.

According to Fox News, Gov. JB Pritzker said last year that he supports school choice. He opposed school vouchers during his election campaign saying they would take funds away from public schools.

"The only kernel of school choice that exists in the State of Illinois is the 'Invest in Kids Act,' and unless there is significant pushback, Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Chicago Mayor-elect Brandon Johnson and others in the state legislature are going to kill the program for low-income, working-class families when it comes up for renewal

this legislative session," said State Representative Brad Halbrook.

"Every legislator agrees that one of the most important duties we have is to help provide a good education to all children. Unfortunately, many public schools are failing our children. Statewide only one-third of students are at grade level. In Decatur, sadly, only 10 percent of students at our Eisenhower High School are at grade level. As we work to improve public schools, we must give parents trapped in these systemically failing schools a way out. For our children, we

must extend the Invest in Kids Act. And we need to act now," said State Representative Dan Caulkins.

"For the 2023-24 school year families and scholarship granting organizations must know if an extension of the program will be approved in order to register students and align scholarships with students and schools. This activity all happens over the next two months. Unfortunately, Illinois House Speaker Chris Welch's office put out a statement that legislators have until the end of the year to extend the Invest in Kids

Program- this is misleading. In practicality, the Illinois legislature must act before regular session ends to extend this program." Caulkins further explained.

"Three out of four legislative leaders have chosen private school for themselves or their children, so has the Governor and numerous other legislators. It is unbelievable that they would deny low-income kids the same opportunity they availed themselves to. How can anyone send a student back to a school where no kids are at grade level in math or reading? And yet, those are

the types of schools we have and these children need an escape from," said State Representative Chris Miller.

"The Illinois legislature must act before regular session ends to extend this program," Miller further explained.

To date, 32 members have signed the letter. A copy of the letter is below.

This scholarship program has helped thousands of deserving Illinois students living in under-resourced communities to access a high-quality education, and this is what genuine school choice looks like.