

Eastside High senior named Keeper of the Dream award winner by Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission

Maintaining a 4.74 grade point average in the extremely rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Eastside High School is an amazing accomplishment in itself. But it's not enough for senior Taylor Hill-Miles, who also devotes many hours to serving others through her volunteer work and social activism.

"I love to stay busy, and everything that I'm doing is stuff that I love," said Hill-Miles. "It doesn't feel like work because I enjoy what I'm doing."

"Taylor is a phenomenal young lady," said Eastside principal Shane Andrew. "She's a well-rounded leader, she excels in our IB program and she works tirelessly in our community to serve others above herself."



For her many achievements in and out of school, Hill-Miles has been named the winner of the 2021 Edna M. Hart Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Award. The award is presented each year by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission of Florida to an outstanding Alachua County high school year senior, and is based on criteria including academics, civic involvement and leadership.

Hill-Miles definitely meets all those criteria, and then some. At Eastside, she's the student body president. She's also the captain of two varsity sports teams, cross country and soccer. She's a member of the school's National Honor Society, serves as a tutor to fellow students and participates in the Chick-fil-A Leader Academy, a national program that fosters the leadership abilities of high school students.

Outside of school, Hill-Miles has contributed more than 500 volunteer hours to a variety of community organizations, including the VA Hospital, GRACE Marketplace and the Alachua County FARMSHARE program. She also led a county-wide book share program that provided more than 300 books throughout the community, and the One Community, One Family program, which involved collecting, sanitizing and delivering 500 cards to residents of nursing homes and rehabilitation centers.

Hill-Miles says she learned about service from her family, particularly her grandmother.

"She really instilled in me the values of kindness and giving back to others," she said. "I carried those values with me, and when I started to make my own decisions, I decided to get involved."

That involvement has also included speaking out about critical social issues. Through Eastside's TEDx Club, Hill-Miles has become active on YouTube and other platforms, sharing her ideas about Black Lives Matter and other issues. She also served in a youth leadership role for a local political campaign during the 2020 election season.

Hill-Miles says she feels a responsibility to speak out to other young people and encourage them to do the same.

"We are the future," she said. "People my age, we're going to start voting soon and getting into politics. We have to talk about the change we want, because if we keep staying silent, things will just stay the same."

Hill-Miles interest in serving others and in the future also guides her plans after high school. She's interested in biomedical engineering, and ultimately would like to work with the World Health Organization to develop low-cost medical technology for third-world nations.

"For me, that would be the perfect combination of advocacy, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), which I love, and helping others," she said.

As the Keeper of the Dream recipient, Hill-Miles will be giving the keynote address at a Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday even hosted by the Commission at Citizen's Field. The event begins at noon on Monday, January 18.

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