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**LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SELECTED AS**

**GIRLS INC. NATIONAL SCHOLARS**

Omaha, NE (March 9, 2021) – Two Girls Inc. of Omaha members have been chosen as a 2021 Girls Inc. National Scholars and awarded a Girls Inc. Lucile Miller Wright scholarships. Jayleesha Cooper, a student at Duschene Academy, and Taylor McKesson, a student at Omaha North High Magnet School, were selected for outstanding academic achievements, community service work, and dedication to the Girls Inc. mission of inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. The Omaha girls are two of thirty Girls Inc. National Scholars selected in 2021 from across the United States and Canada.

“I have had the privilege of knowing both of these young women since they were in kindergarten,” stated Roberta Wilhelm, Girls Inc. executive director. “They have both immersed themselves in the Girls Inc. Experience and taken full advantage of so many opportunities at Girls Inc. – STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs, literacy, career and college prep, travel, mentors, and more. The national scholarship committee has certainly selected two very deserving girls.”

Jayleesha Cooper stated, "I am extremely grateful and honored to have received this scholarship. Girls Inc has always been a major part of my life and being the recipient of this scholarship has shown me that hard work and dedication is key to success. Without Girls Inc. I would not be as well rounded as I am today.” She noted, “I became a leader because Girls Inc. enabled me to find my voice within a society where, many times, the voices of girls are silenced.

"Winning this scholarship will help me pursue my dream career as a surgeon. Girls Inc. has helped me value how much hands-on learning makes a difference and supported my journey in trying new things," Taylor McKesson observed. “When I started at Girls Inc., I saw the words Strong, Smart, and Bold for the very first time. Through the years I have grown up with those words on my back and each time I accomplished something in the program, I contributed to those words. Because of Girls Inc., I have learned how to have a voice, to be strong, and to speak up for what I believe - especially that girls can do anything! This is forever a part of my childhood. They always say it takes a village to raise a child, and I gladly say that Girls Inc is a part of mine.”

The Girls Inc. Lucile Miller Wright Scholarship program was created in 1992, when the female pilot and long-time supporter gave a bequest for scholarships for young women. Over $6.5 million in Girls Inc. scholarships have made post-secondary education more accessible to high school women and has inspired them to succeed in school and consider a broad range of career possibilities.

Girls Inc. of Omaha, a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart and bold, provides educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for girls ages 5 to 18. Girls Inc. of Omaha is a national affiliate of Girls Incorporated with two centers in Omaha – the Katherine Fletcher Center in North Omaha with an on-site Nebraska Medicine Clinic, and the Emma Lozier Center in South Omaha. Additionally, Girls Inc. of Omaha operates two transitional housing programs, The Barker Avenue House and Protégé House.

For more information please contact Roberta Wilhelm at rwilhelm@girlsincomaha.org or (402) 457-4676 ext. 1223.

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