

Carrollton's Caleb Grathler awarded KHA scholarship

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Carroll County Schools recent graduate Caleb Grathler was awarded a scholarship from the Kentucky Housing Association (KHA), totaling \$3,000 over three years.

Grathler is one of four scholarship recipients and received the highest amount with two other students. KHA said they had 11 other applicants this year. The award is for high school or GED graduates or adults wishing to continue their education who live within a KHA-affiliated Housing Authority.

Pat Baker from the Carrollton Housing Authority recommended him for the scholarship. "I think of the people that lived here that are graduating that I know are good students," she said. Baker reached out for recommendation letters on behalf of Grathler. "They kept calling us, saying, 'Have you heard? Caleb deserves it! They were all very excited.'"

In order to apply for the scholarship, Grathler needed a 2.5 grade point average, which he well exceeded with around 3.8, consistently earning As and Bs.

"C was not acceptable in my household," laughed his mother Cindy York, who teaches third grade at Milton Elementary School. Nevertheless, she credited her son's success to his self-motivation and maturity from a young age.

With the scholarship money as well as that from the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) for his good grades, Grathler will attend the University of the Cumberlands as a full-time student this fall, studying to become a chaplain.

Grathler said of the profession: "I think that it's important to encourage people and be there for people in their most important times."

The career choice was cemented by his own experience this year with grief and illness. In January of this year, Grathler's family became sick with COVID-19. Unfortunately, this led to the death of maternal grandmother at the end of the month—and then, four hours after the funeral, his father also passed.

"Back in January, I had talked to one of the chaplains and received prayer...it just seemed like something I wanted to do, to help people and all that," he said.

Baker added that the Carrollton Housing Authority is also willing to donate to the extra year of school Grathler will need to acquire a master's degree to be a chaplain in Kentucky.

Knowing that is not quite ready for on-campus life, Grathler will take classes online through Cumberlands for at least his first year, but plans on attending in person later on. "I think after losing my dad and grandma, I kind of want to get out and meet other people eventually. Not right now—I still have a lot to deal with—but I think eventually I'd like to get out," he said.

Grathler had already been ordained as a minister before his father passed away, and has been exploring the online ministry community. He posts videos twice a week—one sermon and one lecture focusing on encouragement—on his Facebook page "Minister Caleb Grathler."

Born in Louisiana, Grathler's family moved to Carrollton when he was only a baby. At CCHS, Grathler enjoyed learning Spanish and playing the alto saxophone in jazz band. Outside of school, he has climbed the full ranks of the Boy Scouts and done community service at places like the food bank. His Eagle Scout project was installing the flag pole, solar lights, and surrounding flowers at the Dividing Ridge Apostolic church, which he attends. He also has been working at Walmart, though he is currently on medical leave.

“He’s an ideal son,” Baker said in regard to Grathler’s community involvement. “I’ve loved him ever since I met him. He’s so kind and respectful.”

Reflecting on living within the Housing Authority, Grathler said, “I met a lot of very interesting people. I think that my life would have been a lot different had I not met those people. I think their background introduced me to things—different types of music, different types of ideas—and I don’t think I would have been introduced to those things had I not met the people here.”

“He accepts people for who they are, and I think that has a lot to do with where he’s lived and things he’s been exposed to along the way,” his mother added. “He’s kept true to himself.”