



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	Contact: Ron Hendricks, Media
	Phone: 405-550-3224
	Email: ron-gmi@swbell.net

[Hearing Loss Association Scholarship Winners Announced]

[Oklahoma organization announces scholarship winners]

[OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, August, 2020] The Board of Directors of the Hearing Loss Association of America Central Oklahoma Chapter (HLAA) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 HLAA Scholarship. This year’s scholarship award winners are Zachary Burlison, Mackenzie Chesnut and Cassidy Floyd.

The HLAA established the scholarship program to assist Oklahoma high school students with hearing loss to continue in higher education.

Traditionally, scholarship winners are announced at the annual HLAA Ice Cream Social which was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions. The awards were presented in person at their home by members of the Scholarship Committee.

“Hearing loss in the classroom can be extremely difficult and our scholarship recipients have excelled despite the challenges,” said Sharon Hendricks, Scholarship Committee Chair. “We are confident in their futures and look forward to hearing their success stories.”

The HLAA is one of Oklahoma’s oldest nonprofit groups, founded in 1990 to help Oklahomans with hearing loss live successfully in the hearing world. The scholarships are offered through donations from members and local businesses. The HLAA is currently accepting matching donations from Oklahoma audiologists and hearing professionals.

Zachary Burlison was born with severe complications and started wearing hearing aids at 10 weeks. His parents, Keith and Tammie Burlison from Bethany, OK believed hearing was extremely important to a child's development and they took immediate action to see that he had every opportunity. Burlison found that he was able to compete and excel where ever he applied himself including varsity football, National Honor Society and achieving the rank of Eagle in the Boy Scouts. Burlison is headed to Oklahoma State University this fall where he plans to major in marketing and to work in social media. Burlison hopes to spread the word to parents of children with hearing impairment that wearing a hearing aid will not affect their ability in the classroom or on the sports field.

Mackenzie Chesnut is the daughter of Darwin & Bridgett Chesnut from Coctaw, OK. Her hearing loss journey began at age 14 when she woke up with an ear infection. She soon became the one of her pediatrician's oldest patients and received her first hearing aid as she entered high school. The adjustment was made easier by her mother who also wears a hearing aid. Chesnut discovered her hearing aid helped in school, especially with the male teachers with low voices because her hearing loss is in the lower register. She experienced the common embarrassment when she first received her hearing aids, but her mother empowered her to be unafraid to be different. The advice soon became her motto that flaws are beautiful and should be embraced. Becoming hearing impaired as a teen gave her a drive and purpose. She hopes to encourage people with hearing loss to talk about it and not be embarrassed. She says that her audiologist, Dr. Emily Mills from Hearts For Hearing in Oklahoma City has made such a positive influence in her life that she wants to do the same for others. Chesnut plans to study audiology and will attend OSU-OKC this fall.

Cassidy Floyd will be attending Northeastern State University in Tahlequah after attending Eastern Oklahoma State College and playing softball for two years. Cassidy plans to become a math teacher and coach so she can give back and show her students that while life may not be perfect, it is wonderful and anything is possible. Floyd is the daughter of Tony & Clara Floyd of Roland, OK and was born with hearing loss in one ear which made a major impact on her life. The hearing loss required her to learn to be more self-reliant, but also showed that it is OK to ask for help. Many teachers, coaches, family & friends supported her through her schooling. Floyd

learned that when you put on a hearing aid you almost become a different person; one who can be involved in a classroom discussion, can communicate in a group setting with background noise, and doesn't feel left out. With her hearing aid Cassidy said, "I feel more comfortable out in the world and am ready to take on more challenges."

The HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter has cancelled the remainder of the 2020 group activities to protect our members and families but offers online support through their website OklahomaHearingLoss.com and on Facebook [@oklahearingloss](https://www.facebook.com/oklahearingloss).

###

PHOTO FILE NAME: CassidyFloyd2020.JPG

PHOTO CAPTION:

2020 HLAA Scholarship recipient Cassidy Floyd

PHOTO FILE NAME: ZachBurlison2020-1

PHOTO CAPTION:

2020 HLAA Scholarship recipient Zachary Burlison

PHOTO FILE NAME: Chesnut2020-0:

PHOTO CAPTION:

2020 HLAA Scholarship recipient Mackenzie Chesnut