



6201 Powers Ferry Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30339



www.fultonschools.org

News Release

For Immediate Release
December 17, 2018

For More Information Contact
Anne Hampson Boatwright or Cierra Chuly Boyd, Communications
470-254-6830 or communications@fultonschools.org

Riverwood students design and decorate official Georgia Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C. ***Students create ornaments for tree outside the White House***

Nineteen students from Riverwood International Charter School's National Art Honor Society were invited to design ornaments to decorate the official Christmas tree representing the state of Georgia, which is currently on display in Washington, D.C. The six-foot state tree is one of 56 smaller trees that surround the National Christmas Tree in President's Park, outside the White House. Each tree represents a U.S. state, territory or the District of Columbia. Riverwood, a Sandy Springs high school in Fulton County, was selected as the sole provider of handmade ornaments for the 2018 Georgia tree.

Students were tasked with creating ornament designs that best represent Georgia. The students are: Allie Abbott, Chloe Capes, Anaya Chennault, Morgan Cohen, Maria Coles, Ari Feingold, Alexis Fernandez-Hernandez, Diana Harden, Elizabeth Hernandez, Grecia Hernandez, Hague Johnson, Riley Mehrman, Liza Miller, Nissa Newman, Sage Patterson, Maggie Regier, Jacob Smith, Sydney Williams and Christal Woodward.

Junior Chloe Capes marvels, "It's really exciting to think about my work being displayed in front of so many people. I think it's so cool that Riverwood was given this unique opportunity to represent the entire state of Georgia." Maggie Regier, also an 11th grader, adds, "Creating an ornament for the President's Park is such a great experience. I think it is amazing that my work will be featured there."

With help from the Riverwood National Art Honor Society and Art Department Chair Dana Munson, as well as art teachers Lana Ensmann and Heather Meyer, the students researched specific characteristics of the state; including the official state tree, flower, bird, fish, and insect, as well as other notable symbols and designations of the "Peach State."

"When we discovered Georgia has the second largest film industry in the world, a student insisted on doing a cleverly-named 'Y'allywood'-themed ornament," said Ms. Ensmann. Students were encouraged to select a medium that suited their theme and their talents. Paper maché, paint, sculpture and even mosaic tile were

materials used. Ornaments featured dogwood flowers, Vidalia onions, peaches, white-tailed deer, largemouth bass, honey bees and the state flag. One ornament is even filled with Georgia peanuts.

Jessica Booth, Fine Arts Education Director at the Georgia Department of Education, selected Riverwood International Charter School for the honor of decorating this year's Georgia tree. Riverwood is active in state-wide arts programming and education and boasts an energetic and engaged National Art Honor Society chapter. The school offers Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) art curriculum, as well as classes in drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, film and digital design.

The tree project, dubbed *America Celebrates*, is one of the highlights of the National Christmas Tree experience, which began on November 28 with the 96th Annual National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. It is coordinated through a partnership with the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of Education, and it is funded by the National Park Foundation. The trees will remain on display outside of the White House through January 1, 2019.

Photos of Riverwood National Art Honor Society students attached.

(Photo caption #1): *Riverwood National Art Honor Society students Morgan Cohen (l-r), Chloe Capes and Maggie Regier, ready their handmade ornaments for travel to the official Georgia state tree outside of the White House in Washington, D.C.*

(Photo caption #2): *The state and national trees at President's Park, 2018. (Credit: NPS photo).*

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About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. More than 95,000 students attend 106 school campuses in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton, and Union City.