

### *Top 25 GED® Scorers Prepare for New Chapter*

**LITTLE ROCK** – When Mason Weldon got word that he scored well on his GED® exam, he thought test administrators meant he achieved a high mark when comparing others’ results who also took the exam at the Saline County Adult Education Center.

But then he got clarification. Weldon had the 24<sup>th</sup> highest score in the state!

“I’m really excited. I didn’t realize it would be like that,” he said.



*Mason Weldon strikes a pose with a family member.*

Weldon attended the annual “Top 25 Ceremony,” which recognizes the test takers who rank in the top 25 for their achievement on the GED® exam among all test takers in the state. In 2015, 4,304 Arkansans took the test. The recognition took place at the Old Supreme Court Chamber at the Arkansas State Capitol. Usually accompanied with their families and GED® instructors, the honorees are not only

celebrated but also encouraged to continue on to become contributing members of society.

“This is just the beginning,” said Trenia Miles, Ed.D., Deputy Director for Adult Education. “If you need to come ‘home’ to get that encouragement and for resources, we are always here for you,” Miles added.

Arkansas consistently ranks as one of the top states with the highest pass rates on the exam. In 2015, Arkansas had a pass rate of 87 percent, which surpassed the national pass rate of 67 percent. GED® leaders unveiled a brand new format in 2014, which is now computer-based and tests on four components with two extended response questions. The new format reflects the current learning methods outlined by the Career and College Readiness Standards.

Joe Berry, the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor at Arkansas State University-Beebe, served as the keynote speaker. Berry himself received his GED<sup>®</sup> and earned a place in the Top 25 in Arkansas. He shared how his own triumphs and experiences propelled him to where he is today.

“My high school guidance counselor told me I didn’t have what it took to make it through high school. When I got ready to transfer from ASU to UALR, I was told I didn’t have the academic ability to make it. I ended up graduating with the department’s highest award,” Berry said.



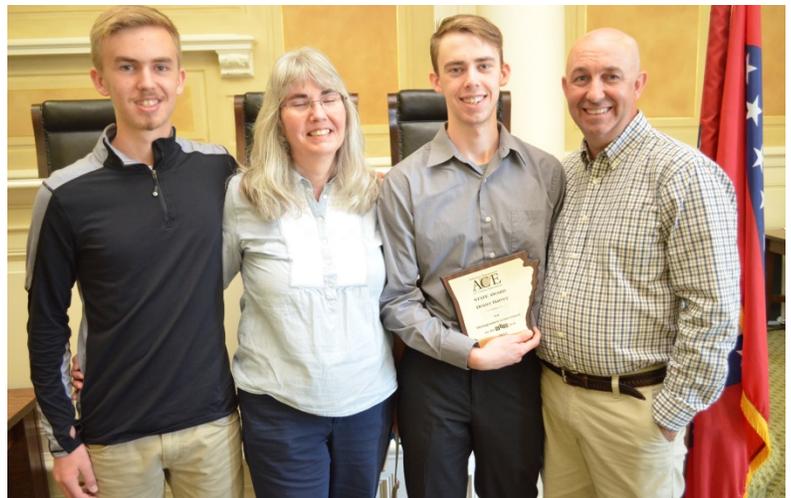
*Berry motivates the Top 25 scorers.*

He added that the accomplishment the honorees received should serve as motivation to go further.

“The GED<sup>®</sup> was not the last domino to fall for me, and I hope it’s not the last domino to fall for you. If you have that commitment to education, whether it’s in the classroom or you take continuing education classes, show your resilience. I’m a firm believer that this is your start,” he said.

Dexter Harvey, who had the 20<sup>th</sup> highest score in the state, took the exam at the Conway Adult Education Center. His goal is to become a full-time firefighter, but he will have to wait until he’s 21 until he can sign up.

“I’m trying to gain weight until then,” Harvey said, while chuckling.



*Dexter Harvey (holding plaque) is flanked by his family.*

While the aspirations of each of the recipients vary, Weldon is ready to hit the ground running in becoming in linguist. He wants to learn French, German, Japanese, and Spanish.

“My plan is to become a polyglot. I know there are a lot of opportunities in that field. I like the way languages have evolved over time. It’s a bunch of building blocks. You can find out why people talk the way they talk,” he said.



*GED Test Administrator Janice Hanlon (purple jacket) with some of the honorees.*

*Adult Education is a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE). ACE provides leadership and contributing resources to serve the diverse and changing career educational needs of Arkansas youth, adults, and persons living with disabilities. For more information about the GED or other ACE programs, please visit the website [www.ace.arkansas.gov](http://www.ace.arkansas.gov) or follow us on Twitter at @ARCareerEd.*

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