

North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State

NEWS

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**Elaine F. Marshall
Secretary of State**

For Immediate Release

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Secretary Marshall Awards National John Lewis Youth Leadership Award to Two North Carolinians

RALEIGH – On February 10, North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall awarded two North Carolina youth leaders with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) John Lewis Youth Leadership Award. The award recognizes those 25 years or younger who have demonstrated leadership abilities, have a passion for social justice, and are motivated to improve the quality of life in their community. The 2024 recipients of the first-ever John Lewis Youth Leadership Awards presented in North Carolina are Elijah King of Durham and Tia Meredith of Liberty.

“Elijah and Tia are exceptional young leaders who are making a tremendous difference in their communities and the State,” said Sec. Marshall. “I’m proud to honor them with the John Lewis Youth Leadership Award for their outstanding work as we also commemorate the extraordinary impact of the late Congressman John Lewis by encouraging our youth to advocate for civil rights, democracy, and equality.”

Elijah King has been a spark of leadership for most of his 22 years. In 2019, he co-founded the Durham Youth Climate Justice Initiative, connecting youth with climate experts and public servants with bi-monthly open public conversations. He has advocated for climate justice across North Carolina.

King also founded the Durham Neighbors Free Lunch Initiative in 2020, securing more than \$250,000 through grassroots funding and served more than 60,000 fresh meals to the food insecure during the pandemic. He has also organized campaigns against legislation related to a youth gender-affirming care ban, banning transgender girls in sports, and limitations on public schools discussing gender identity. King is currently attending UNC-Greensboro.

Tia Meredith is an inspirational young leader who volunteers her time and energy to issues around food insecurity, gun violence, and more. Tia served as chair of multiple committees for the N.C. State Food Science Club, including fundraising for “Wine to Water”, supporting a global nonprofit that assists local leaders in creating water, sanitation, and hygiene solution emergency response teams to aid stricken areas such as Florida, Mississippi, Pakistan, and Ukraine. She also volunteers for the “Feed the Pack” food pantry, which meets the food needs of all members of the N.C. State community with dignity and respect.

Tia has also been engaged in efforts to curb gun violence, including participating in the N.C. March for our Lives event following the Parkland school shootings. Tia is a Food Science Major at N.C. State and is on track to graduate in May of this year. As a high school student at Providence Grove High School in Randolph County, she was class Salutatorian and conducted food drives and provided Christmas cheer for shut-ins.

About the NASS John Lewis Leadership Award

The John Lewis Leadership Award was established in 2021 by the National Association of Secretaries of State. The award honors the extraordinary accomplishments of Congressman John Lewis.

His courageous achievements during the Civil Rights Movement and his long tenure of public service have inspired and will continue to inspire Americans for generations to come. In 1961, at the age of 21, Lewis was one of the original thirteen Freedom Riders. In 1963, Lewis was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington and one of the “Big Six” leaders that organized the march. In 1965, Lewis helped lead the Selma to Montgomery marches. The first march became a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement when unarmed marchers were attacked by state troopers as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Lewis’ activism continued throughout his life. He served as a U.S. Congressman for 33 years until his death in 2020.

