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Front row seat to history: Georgia Southern Liberty Campus student attends 2020 State of the Union

February 12, 2020



U.S. Representative Buddy Carter and Liberty Campus student Jaiden Thompson on the U.S. Capitol Subway en route to the 2020 State of the Union address.

While the world watched the 2020 State of the Union address by President Donald Trump from their living rooms, Georgia Southern first-year student Jaiden E. Thompson witnessed the historic event from a balcony seat at the United States Capitol with U.S. congressmen, senators and Supreme Court justices on the floor level below her.

“The event was surreal,” said Thompson. “I remember watching past State of the Union addresses on the television with my grandfather, so seeing them in person was mind-

blowing.”

U.S. Representative Buddy Carter, who serves Georgia’s first district, invited Thompson, a business administration major on the Liberty Campus, and her mother to attend the State of the Union address as his guests.

“It was amazing,” she said. “I had so much fun with Buddy Carter. He introduced me to many other representatives and members of Congress. I also got to attend two receptions with him and my mother in a beautiful room on Capitol Hill filled with other representatives and their guests.”



Jaiden, center, with her mother, Patryce Lewis, and Rep. Buddy Carter

Thompson caught Carter’s attention as a recipient of the prestigious Gold Award Girl Scout in 2019. A Girl Scout in Hinesville, Georgia, for 13 years, Thompson was honored for her outreach work, including a project, Community of Care, which offers a personal hygiene closet, a clothing closet and a school supplies closet to a local school with low-income students with behavioral or emotional disorders. There is also a prize room full of candy, snacks, stickers, book bags and toys, where students, ages 5 to 21, can earn items for good behavior.

“My project was geared toward helping those who were in need of personal hygiene items and school supplies and blossomed into the school uniforms closet and a prize room,” said Thompson. “I selected my project after I became aware of some of the challenges families experience through the school’s social worker, who reached out to my Girl Scout leader. When the opportunity was presented to me I knew I could make a beneficial change for others. It has been my honor to bring my community together to give.”

With the help of local businesses, Thompson designed flyers and organized drives to encourage donations, which poured in from area churches, small businesses, teachers and even her classmates.



The Community of Care prize room

“The children at the school greatly appreciated me putting together these closets,” she said. “Their favorite is the prize room but the most appreciated one is the personal hygiene closet. Seeing the children at the school love the closet so much filled me with happiness and joy to see that I am capable of changing lives.”

Thompson, who chose to attend Georgia Southern based on its flexible schedules, proximity to her home and a recommendation from her alumnus father, hopes to continue making a positive impact on her college community as a member of the Black Heritage Month committee and aspiring peer leader.

Her goal is to continue to learn, grow and support others throughout her educational journey.

“I believe Georgia southern will help prepare me for my career by continually educating me and exposing me to new experiences,” said Thompson. “I love learning and taking what I’ve learned and passing the knowledge on to others.

I always want to be a positive and influential role model.”