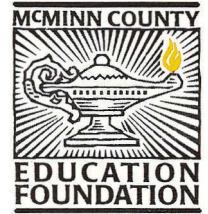




2026 MCEF YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET



EXPLANATION: The McMinn County Education Foundation recognizes the importance of fostering leadership in our students. Encouraging each student's growth in responsibility will provide the knowledge necessary to become a future school and community leader. The 2026 MCEF Youth Leadership Award is being presented to reward and promote leadership abilities among the students in the McMinn County area.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 enrolled in the Athens City, Etowah City, and McMinn County public school systems are eligible to apply. Students applying should have an exemplary record of attendance, academic achievement, and good citizenship. Applicants should be well-rounded individuals who display leadership in school, community, and club activities, and are excellent peer role models.

APPLICATION: The student must complete the application in his/her own *legible* handwriting, including his/her signature on the statement that the submitted information is correct and that he/she has maintained a "C" or better average. A short essay (one page only) **written by the student, without help from any artificial intelligence source**, must be included. The essay may be typed or hand-written. No additional pages or folders of any kind may be used. Two adult references (non-family members) are also required. **These should be placed in an envelope with your name on the front and signed across the seal by the person completing the form before being returned to the student and MCEF.** Please know that applicants who have not followed these directions will be disqualified. This year's essay will be based on personal examples of leadership that you have witnessed. The topic is: "*A Leader in my Life*". *Explain in detail who you consider to be a positive leader and mentor in your life and why. How do you think this person will help you develop your own leadership skills?*

DEADLINE: Completed applications must be returned to the guidance counselor at the student's school by **January 30, 2026. These will be picked up from the schools on February 3rd. Late applications will not be accepted.** Some schools' guidance counselors may set an earlier due date. If January 30 is a snow day, the applications will be due on the first day back to school. If the applicant is out sick on January 30, please make every effort to get the application to school that day or call the school to make arrangements with the guidance counselor.

AWARDS: Students, parents/guardians, other family members, teachers, school officials, and McMinn County Education Foundation members will be invited to a recognition ceremony during which Youth Leadership Award certificates and medallions will be presented to all winners. This ceremony will be held in late March or early April, in Townsend Auditorium at Tennessee Wesleyan University. *Please understand that dates and event venue can change.*

SELECTION: A committee of MCEF board members, community leaders, and Leadership McMinn members will select an award winner from approximately every thirty students per school, with approximately 65 total award recipients throughout McMinn County. *This is a blind selection process; students' and parents/guardians' names and addresses are not made known to the committee. Selections are made solely on the information provided by the students and their adult references. The ratio of males and females is not a consideration.*

SPECIAL EVENT: A Youth Leadership Day on Campus will be held at Tennessee Wesleyan University in the fall. The day will include sessions with professors, a tour of the campus, lunch, and a t-shirt commemorating the day. **(Applicants MUST circle their shirt size on the application to receive a shirt.)**

Thank you for participating in this program. We wish everyone the best of luck.



2026 MCEF Youth Leadership Award Application

Complete this one-page application, give a copy of the reference forms to each of two adult references, write your essay, and return this to your school counselor by January 30, 2026.



Awards/Recognitions/Offices Held (grade level, school-wide, city, county, state, etc.)

School Involvement (clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.)

Community Involvement (all volunteer activities such as 4-H, scouts, church, sports, recycling, drama, etc.)

Personal Essay: Please attach your personal *one-page-only* essay, either typed or handwritten. This should be created without the use of any AI tools. The title of the essay should be: *“A Leader in my Life”*

References: Two personal references are required. Forms to be given to them are on the following two pages. *Recommendation – one grade level teacher and one community member who have observed you in action. References from relatives will be disqualified.*

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY MAKING SURE THAT NAMES AND ADDRESSES CAN BE READ.

Student Name _____ School _____ Grade _____
Parent/Guardian Name _____ Phone _____
Parent/Guardian Email _____
Mailing Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

****What do you think your t-shirt size will be in October 2026: Sizes are all Adult S M L XL XXL**

*******MUST BE SIGNED BY APPLICANT*******

I agree that the information submitted is correct, that my grade average is “C” or better and that no recommendation is from a relative. I agree that my essay was created without the assistance of any artificial intelligence applications.

Student Signature _____



2026 MCEF Youth Leadership Award Reference Form



This student has applied for consideration as an MCEF Youth Leadership Award recipient. Your cooperation is essential to make certain the applicants are of the required caliber.

Please circle the areas indicated below, using the following scale:

1 – never 2 - seldom 3 – sometimes 4 - usually 5 – always

Demonstrates leadership and earns respect among peers	1	2	3	4	5
Shows initiative through school and/or community involvement in activities	1	2	3	4	5
Recognizes personal responsibility & shows above level maturity	1	2	3	4	5
Possesses awareness of and enthusiasm for growth in leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Shows mature thinking in attitude & cooperation among school personnel or community leaders	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment on applicant’s leadership abilities

This is a blind selection process. Please do not use the student’s name. Use “this student,” “he/she,” etc.

Reference Name _____ Reference Signature _____

Relationship to Student (Teacher, Coach, Minister, etc.) _____

Student Name _____ School _____ Grade _____

**When you are finished with this form, please place it in an envelope, seal the envelope, and then
WRITE YOUR NAME ACROSS THE SEAL.**



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Demonstrates leadership and earns respect among peers 1 2 3 4 5

Shows initiative through school and/or community involvement in activities 1 2 3 4 5

Recognizes personal responsibility & shows above level maturity 1 2 3 4 5

Possesses awareness of and enthusiasm for growth in leadership 1 2 3 4 5

Shows mature thinking in attitude & cooperation among school personnel or community leaders 1 2 3 4 5

Please comment on applicant’s leadership abilities

This is a blind selection process. Please do not use the student’s name. Use “this student,” “he/she,” etc.

Reference Name _____ Reference Signature _____

Relationship to Student (Teacher, Coach, Minister, etc.) _____

Student Name _____ School _____ Grade _____

**When you are finished with this form, please place it in an envelope, seal the envelope, and then
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