



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sumter County Schools

Career and Technical Education Student of the Month for January 2025

Bushnell, FL – South Sumter High School is proud to announce Kirsten Gracen Smith, a dedicated and exemplary 12th-grade student, has been named CTE Student of the Month for January 2025. Gracen, who has lived in Sumter County for over 15 years, is currently enrolled in Early Childhood Education IV, having successfully completed Early Childhood Education I-III at South Sumter High. Her passion for working with children and her commitment to learning have made her a standout student in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

"My favorite part of my CTE program is working with the children and helping them learn while also learning myself," Gracen shared. "Working hands-on with the children in this childcare program has helped me tremendously as a person, and I've gained so much experience. I've learned that I have a passion for working with the future generation and strive to inspire the children in any way I can."

Gracen chose to take the Early Childhood Education course not only because of her soft spot for children but also to gain valuable experience in the childcare field. After high school, she plans to attend Lake Sumter State College and pursue a degree in early childhood education so she can continue working with children. In addition to her CTE class achievements, Gracen has maintained honors courses with A/B honor roll and leads bible studies and youth groups both within and outside of her church. "God is my drive every day in life, and living in relationship with Him every day is extremely important to me," she said.

Gracen is known for her many outstanding characteristics, including being a team player, an organizer, an effective communicator, very respectful and having a terrific personality. She excels at working with others, keeping things in order, listening and thinking about what others say and need, and encouraging everyone!

Her early childhood education teacher commented, "She is always ready to lend a hand when needed in the Early Childhood Program. She is a real asset to the Horizon program and an all-around wonderful person with children."

South Sumter High School's CTE program is honored to recognize Gracen Smith as the January Student of the Month. Her dedication, passion, and positive influence on her peers and the community make her a deserving recipient of this award. Congratulations to Gracen Smith for her remarkable achievements and contributions to South Sumter High School and the Sumter County community!

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a modern approach to higher education and training, and it can accelerate personal and professional success. With little to no barriers to enrollment and 17 career pathways to choose from, individuals can acquire the skills needed through real-world, hands-on experience. As teachers prepare CTE students for their future careers as skilled professionals, students engage in hands-on learning with real life applications. These approaches to teaching are linked to greater understanding, comprehension, and retention. CTE offers a way for students to gain skills and earn certifications in some of Florida's most critical and desirable industries. Unlike traditional higher education, CTE programs can set individuals on the right path in less time with less cost. That means they can get into a career today without the worry of debt tomorrow.

*For more information about **Sumter County Schools**, call **352-793-2315**. For more information about Career and Technical Education in Florida, visit GetThereFL.com.*



Kristen Gracen Smith
South Sumter High School
Sumter CTE Student of the Month January 2025