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Student Spotlight
2026

Elijah Baldwin

Locust Grove, GA



When Elijah Baldwin walked across the stage to receive his high school diploma this past spring, he carried with him far more than years of academic achievement. He had persevered through profound loss, upheaval at home and challenges that could easily have derailed his plans for the future. Yet Elijah not only graduated – he did so with 22 college offers and the opportunity to choose what came next. In the end, his decision reflected the same love and devotion that had shaped his life from the very beginning: he chose to attend college close to home so he could remain near Marilyn Green, the woman who adopted him as an infant and whom he simply calls “Mom.”

Marilyn became Elijah’s mother when he was just one month old. Elijah’s biological mother, Marilyn’s former sister-in-law, made the difficult decision to place him for adoption, and Marilyn welcomed him into her family. Through an open adoption, Elijah was also able to maintain a relationship with his biological mother throughout his childhood, growing up surrounded by people who loved him and wanted the best for his future.

When it came time for Elijah to start kindergarten, Marilyn knew that finding the right learning environment would be important. The schools available in their neighborhood struggled academically and did not offer the smaller, more supportive setting she believed Elijah needed to flourish.

“Your environment can play a big role in the path you take in life,” Marilyn explains. “I didn’t want Elijah to become trapped in a negative cycle. I wanted him to have opportunities that would challenge him, encourage him and surround him with people who would help guide him in a positive direction.”

As Marilyn explored other options in their community, she discovered Strong Rock Christian School and immediately saw the kind of environment she had been searching for. There was just one obstacle: the cost of tuition. An AAA Scholarship helped bridge that gap, giving Marilyn the ability to choose a school she believed could bring out the best in Elijah.

It was a decision that would shape the course of his education for years to come.

As Elijah settled into school, Marilyn and his teachers began noticing that he sometimes struggled to maintain focus. Trusting her instincts, Marilyn eventually had him evaluated and he was diagnosed with ADHD. The

diagnosis helped explain some of the challenges he faced, but in the smaller, more individualized learning environment at Strong Rock, Elijah had the support he needed to succeed.

His teachers helped him navigate difficult subjects while also encouraging him to recognize his own abilities. Over time, Elijah developed the confidence and skills to work through challenges independently. Even when a subject did not come easily – like geometry during his junior year – he had learned not to give up.

“My teachers always pushed me to do better,” Elijah says. “Even when something was difficult, they were there to help me and encouraged me to keep going.”

That support remained a constant throughout his education. Elijah stayed at Strong Rock from kindergarten through high school graduation, providing him with a sense of continuity that Marilyn believes played an important role in his success. By his final years, he was earning all A’s while taking dual-enrollment courses and honors classes. He was also recognized with the school’s Summit Award in honor of his many years as a student there.

But Marilyn says the school helped shape far more than Elijah’s academic abilities.

“You are a product of your environment,” she says. “The opportunities he had through his school exposed him to experiences that helped him grow, see beyond what was immediately around him and understand that he could build a different future for himself.”

Those experiences frequently took Elijah beyond the classroom. He participated in food drives, helped feed people experiencing homelessness and joined other community service projects. He and Marilyn created holiday baskets for families in need during their own time, and through his school, Elijah participated in mission trips in Florida and Honduras – an experience that made such an impression on him that he hopes to return to Honduras one day.

Along the way, teachers also helped Elijah discover new interests. His high school biology teacher, Mr. Troy Davis, sparked a particular fascination with science, inspiring Elijah to consider pursuing biology as a minor in college. By the time he entered his senior year, years of encouragement, structure and perseverance had prepared Elijah well academically. But nothing could have fully prepared him for the personal challenges that year would bring.

Because of his open adoption, Elijah had remained connected to his biological mother throughout his life. During his senior year, her health declined and Elijah was able to be by her side when she passed away. Not long afterward, Marilyn suffered a stroke that severely affected her vision and left her unable to work. The resulting financial strain forced the family to leave their home and move in with Marilyn’s older daughter.

In the span of one school year, Elijah experienced profound loss and instability. Yet he continued showing up – in the classroom, for his family and for the future he had worked toward for so many years. He maintained his grades and completed high school with a record that ultimately earned him 22 college offers.

For Marilyn, watching Elijah reach that milestone was a reminder of how far he had come from the kindergartner she once worried might not receive the support he needed.

“I truly don’t believe Elijah would be where he is today without the opportunity the AAA Scholarship Foundation gave him,” Marilyn says. “The scholarship allowed me to place him in an environment where people saw his potential, challenged him and helped mold him into the young man he is today.”

Of the 22 college opportunities he received, Elijah ultimately chose Kennesaw State University, in large part because it allowed him to remain close to Marilyn – the mother whose devotion and unwavering support helped shape him over the years. He began his freshman year this fall, studying computer science with a minor in biology, an interest first sparked by one of the teachers who encouraged him during high school. And while Elijah is now beginning an exciting new chapter of his own, staying close to home means he can also be there for the woman who has been there for him since he was just one month old.

"Even with the challenges my family and I have faced – especially over the last couple of years – there is still so much to be grateful for," says Elijah. "I am on my way to achieving something that can feel out of reach for so many young people in my community. None of this would have been possible without my mom's support, the teachers who believed in me, and the AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors for opening the door to so many opportunities. I am beyond grateful and I hope to make the most of every opportunity you have helped make possible."

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

The typical AAA Scholarship student is either below grade level, failing at their previous school, or both, when they receive an income-based scholarship. Parents who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges and engages their child to reverse inappropriate learning and/or social patterns and the lifelong negative impact they imply. They wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure. Another is the first-time student, who is just entering kindergarten. Parents, wanting to empower their child's academic journey from day one, choose the AAA scholarship so that their child will have a quality education tailored specifically for their learning needs ensuring their time in school is a seamless experience from K-12. Your contributions to AAA provide the lifelines that these parents need.

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