



## Student Spotlight: Matar Diouf Submitted by Tad MacMillan

In Wolof, one of the languages that is spoken in Senegal, they have a proverb that says, “Soap does not do laundry alone.” Basically, this saying is the Senegalese version of “it takes a village,” and **Matar Diouf, a former student in the Youth Challenge Program and a current Virtual Foothills student**, is so happy to be a part of the Foothills Village. And he is certainly aware that it takes a lot of hard work to get the laundry” done. This young man has amazed teachers at our Virtual Foothills with how fast he is completing our coursework. Since enrolling in Foothills in May 2023 (barely 7 months ago), he has 14 credits and has completed 15 courses. Despite the obvious challenge, he wants to graduate in May 2024 and has his sights set on attending the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



It is hard to talk to Matar and not be proud of the opportunities at Foothills Regional High School (and not be proud of Matar for taking advantage of those opportunities). Although Matar was born in Georgia, he moved to Senegal, when he was four years old to live with his grandmother. When he returned to the United States after 11 years, he had zero high school credits and was looking for a way to get his high school pathway started. He heard about the Youth Challenge Program and volunteered to enroll. The Georgia Youth Challenge program was started in 1993, offering a more structured high school program aligned to a military model.

### Message from the Superintendent

We are always proud of the fact that the impact of Foothills reaches far and wide, providing targeted opportunities to students around the state of Georgia. Matar Diouf, this month’s Spotlight Student, takes that notion to the next level—all the way to Senegal!

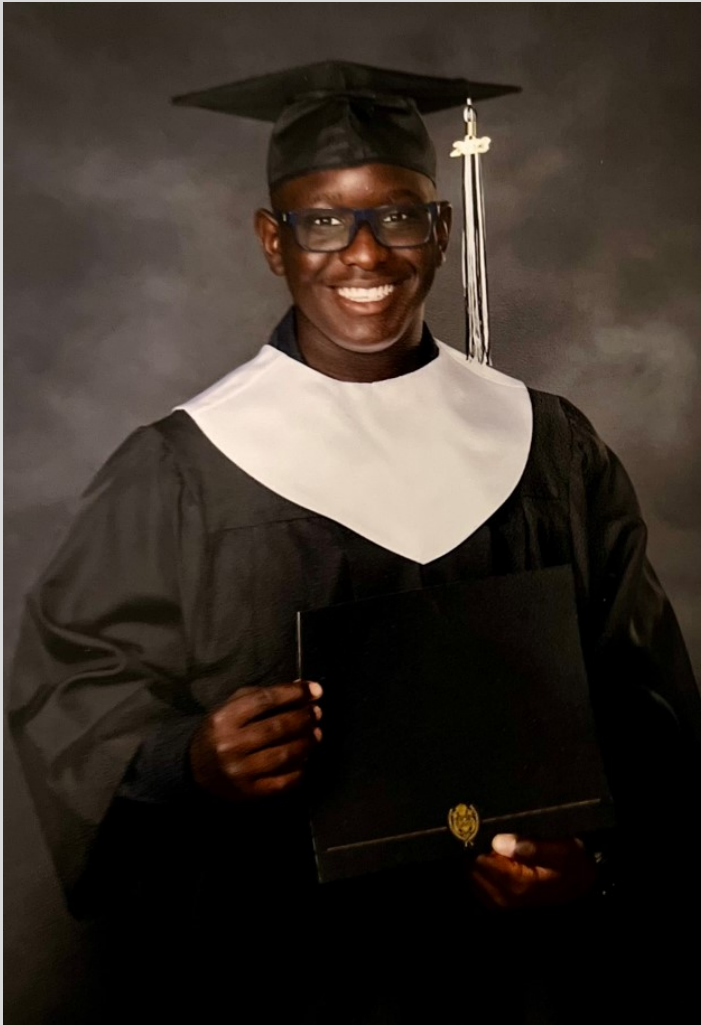
Matar’s story illustrates once again how every student’s story is unlike any other, and how Foothills is uniquely designed to meet students wherever they, literally in this case. We look forward to hearing about the next chapters in Matar’s life as he works towards his goal of attending the Air Force Academy.

—*Sherrie*

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This program works in partnership with Foothills Regional High School so that eligible and qualified cadets can obtain their high school diploma or earn high school credit that they can transfer back to their previous high school. Matar finished at YCP in September and his YCP counselors helped him transfer straight into the Foothills Virtual High School when he moved back home to Jonesboro.

Since returning home, his singular focus has been on completing his high school credits and getting a Foothills High School Diploma. And he has been relentless. He works on his coursework constantly and he loves that he can visit the virtual classrooms for help or encouragement. He says that the “Virtual Program has changed everything in my life. I love the meeting rooms—the teachers are so nice and give me so much love and support.”

*(Matar, handsome in his cap and gown)*

He says the teachers at Foothills are “a family for me. They teach you how to succeed in life and if you have their guidance, you don’t need anything else. I am so motivated that I even work on school work over the weekend.” He adds that teachers tell him every day that they will help him reach his goal. When asked if there are any teachers he would like to highlight, he says that list would be too long because every single teacher he has worked with has been supportive “and really, really nice. They are family to me.”

That admiration apparently extends both ways. **Rebecca Moon, Co-Site Director of Foothills Virtual**, says, “Through our great partnership, YCP and Foothills Virtual have been able to do for Matar what I wish we could do for every single kid. Matar's work ethic and kind demeanor make him a pleasure to get to work with—our entire staff is so thankful to get to spend time with Matar!”



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### *The Foothills Vision*

*Foothills Regional High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.*