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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate Student Named National Merit Semifinalist

Winter Haven, Oct. 17, 2017 — Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School senior Sujena Koilpillai is one of 16,000 students in the nation who is a 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program semifinalist.

Nearly 1.6 million high school juniors tested for the program, which means Koilpillai is part of less than 1 percent of students in the country who make up the semifinalist pool.

Koilpillai is one of 13 semifinalists in Polk County.

“I was really excited to find out that I am a semifinalist because this gives me the opportunity to receive scholarships for my college education as well as represent my high school,” Koilpillai said.

About 15,000 semifinalists are expected to advance to the finalist level, according to the National Merit Scholarship Program, and of those finalists, 7,500 will be selected to receive scholarships from a pool of more than \$32 million based on their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

Koilpillai recently submitted an application to become a finalist in which she provided information about her academic record, participation in school and community activities, and honors and awards she has received. Semifinalists must also earn SAT scores that confirm their earlier performance on the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) – also known as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT).

Koilpillai has a 4.6 weighted grade-point average and scored a 1520 on the SAT.

She plays flute in the school band, participates in Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), and is a member of the National Honor Society and Key Club. She volunteers at Good Shepherd Hospice, where she plays music for patients and their visitors.

Her favorite subjects in school are chemistry, anatomy, and physiology. She wants to study biomedical engineering in college and go into research for developing medical tools. She is considering attending Emory University or the University of Miami.

Koilpillai is expected to learn in February whether she is a National Merit Scholarship Program finalist.

"We are extraordinarily proud of Sujena and this recognition of her academic achievement," Chain of Lakes Principal Bridget Fetter said.

About Polk State College

Located in Winter Haven, Florida, and established in 1964, Polk State College is a multi-campus institution serving more than 16,000 students with Bachelor of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science, Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees, as well as a wide range of certificate and workforce training options. The College also operates three charter high schools. Polk State's advantages include small class sizes; hands-on learning; dedicated faculty; day and night classes; online options; affordable tuition; excellent financial aid; and a diverse community and vibrant student life, including fine arts opportunities, clubs, and intercollegiate athletics.

