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PRESS RELEASE

AFSCME Members, Family Members Awarded 2026 Union Plus Scholarships

Winners Honored for Achievement and Union Values

Washington, D.C. – Union Plus recently awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to 181 students representing 42 unions, including 26 winners representing the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 42 states and one U.S. territory. The AFSCME winners are:

- **Karyn Alston of New York City.** Alston, who is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 768, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Leticia Izabelle Assuncao of New Bedford, Massachusetts.** Assuncao, who is a member of AFSCME Council 94, Local 2886, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Olivia Megan Bate of Easton, Maine.** Bate, whose mother, Kristie Bate, is a member of AFSCME Council 93, Local 2117, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Molly Ann Buesing of Kasota, Minnesota.** Buesing, who is a member of AFSCME Council 5, Local 404, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Grace Maria Dennison of Wonder Lake, Illinois.** Dennison, whose mother, Mary Dennison, is a member of AFSCME Council 31, Local 1748, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Ena C. Ferdinand of Richmond, California.** Ferdinand, who is a member of AFSCME Council 57, Local 2019, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Joseph Yukio Fischer of Forest Hill, Maryland.** Fischer, who is a member of AFSCME Council 3, Local 1459, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Felicia Jade Garramone of Levittown, New York.** Garramone, whose father, Thomas Garramone, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Local 882, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Delina Ephrem Gebremichael of Ridley Park, Pennsylvania.** Gebremichael, whose father, Ephrem Gebremichael, is a member of AFSCME Council 33, Local 394, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Jack Henry Landman of Plainview, New York.** Landman, whose father, Michael Landman, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Local 881, has been awarded a \$2,500 scholarship.
- **Janeasa Lester of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.** Lester, whose mother, Lisa Lester, is a member of AFSCME Council 13, Local 1593, has been awarded a \$3,500 scholarship.
- **Kayla MacDermott of Plainville, Massachusetts.** MacDermott, who is a member of AFSCME/SHARE Local 3900, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.

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- **Amanda Mavricos of Staten Island, New York.** Mavricos, whose mother, Joanne Mavricos, is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 372, has been awarded a \$3,000 scholarship. Amanda was a Union Plus Scholarship recipient in 2020 and 2021.
- **Nikki Mazlomi of Anaheim, California.** Mazlomi, whose mother, Sanaz Fanaeian, is a member of AFSCME/UDW Local 3930, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Nina McQueeney of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.** McQueeney, who is a member of AFSCME/SHARE Local 4000, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Jacob Mohring of East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.** Mohring, whose father, Andrew Mohring, is a member of AFSCME Council 13, Local 2455, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship. Jacob was a Union Plus Scholarship recipient in 2021, 2023, and 2024.
- **Addisyn Marie Moore of Crownsville, Maryland.** Moore, whose father, Robert Moore, is a member of AFSCME Council 3, Local 582, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Keith Thomas Morehead of Fairview Heights, Illinois.** Morehead, who is a member of AFSCME Council 31, Local 1805, and whose spouse, Latrisha Morehead, is also a member of Local 1805, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Briona Parkinson of Laveen, Arizona.** Parkinson, who is a member of AFSCME Local 6090, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Wondwosen Paulos of Everett, Washington.** Paulos, who is a member of AFSCME Council 28, Local 304, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Angela Rockefeller of Germantown, New York.** Rockefeller, who is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Local 856, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Sonia Rodriguez of Bronx, New York.** Rodriguez, who is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 1549, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Gabriella Rupert of West Seneca, New York.** Rupert, whose mother, Cynthia Rupert, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Local 868, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Nasira Seals of Oakland, California.** Seals, whose mother, Erica Seals, is a member of AFSCME Council 57, Local 3916, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Jessica Marie Sosnowski of Oakfield, New York.** Sosnowski, whose parents, Howard Sosnowski and Christina Sosnowski, are members of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Local 819, has been awarded a \$2,500 scholarship.
- **Andy Zhang of Anchorage, Alaska.** Zhang, whose parents, Xinxian Zhang and Wei Cheng, are members of AFSCME/ASEA Local 52, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.

“We are honored to recognize this year’s Union Plus Scholarship award winners,” Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. “As we celebrate Union Plus’s 40th anniversary this year, we are proud to note that the Union Plus Scholarship Program has provided over \$6.2 million in scholarships to support the educational goals of union families.”

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Meet Some of the 2026 AFSCME Honorees

Molly Ann Buesing

Walden University (online)

Rasmussen University, Bloomington, Minnesota: Associate of Applied Science, business management (2023)
Mankato [Minnesota] West High School

Molly is a dean's list student at Walden University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in psychology with a forensics concentration. She has advanced rapidly through multiple roles in the forensic mental health program at the State of Minnesota's St. Peter Regional Treatment Center (RTC), where she has worked since 2022. "My education will enhance my understanding of human behavior, evidence-based treatment, and the psychological factors influencing criminal behavior," Molly said. "In the long term, I hope to help bridge the gap between correctional and clinical systems to improve outcomes for this population."

Early in her career, Molly faced wrongful release from her position but was reinstated after AFSCME representatives intervened. "My AFSCME representatives fought for me, gave me a voice when I felt unheard, and stood by me when I needed support the most," Molly said. "Since then, I've made it my mission to share my story with others. Each time someone decides to join AFSCME, I feel proud knowing I've helped strengthen our collective voice. It's my way of paying forward the same support that once lifted me up."

Activities: St. Peter RTC Wellness Committee; St. Peter RTC new employee orientation mentor; AFSCME professional development, leadership training; Crisis Prevention Institute specialized training

Honors: Society for Collegiate Leadership & Achievement; Psi Chi international psychology honor society; National Society of Leadership and Success

Volunteerism: community mental health awareness events; local food pantry

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Ena C. Ferdinand

*Merritt College (MC), Oakland, California
Skyline High School, Oakland*

Ena is a biology major at Merritt College, part of the Peralta Community College District (PCCD). She expects to graduate in May 2027 with an Associate in Science for Transfer degree and plans to pursue a BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing). Ena is a customer service representative for the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), where she has worked since 2020. A first-generation college student, she has persevered in balancing the demands of full-time work, parenting, and education. "This has not been easy, but it has strengthened my discipline, compassion, and sense of purpose," Ena said. "I hope to contribute to improving health outcomes in my community and mentor others who are walking the same path."

Union values such as the belief that hard work begets respect, fairness, and opportunity have shaped Ena's family for generations. "Unions like AFSCME have given my family and me stability, dignity, and protection when we needed it most," Ena said. "As a single parent, AFSCME provided me with creative freedom to try different training opportunities to expand my skills and knowledge for anticipated change. I am pursuing my degree to advance professionally but also to be an example for my children that perseverance and education can transform lives."

Activities and honors: Phi Theta Kappa honor society; EBMUD and Peralta Cohort Program 2024 valedictorian; PCCD Laney College (LC) certificate of supervision and management

Employment and volunteerism: MC Public Health student intern; independent property manager; Alameda County [California] Community Food Bank volunteer coordinator; LC Student Success and Mentorship Program peer mentor

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Joseph Yukio Fischer

*University of Maryland, Global Campus (UMGC)
Dulaney High School, Timonium, Maryland*

Joseph is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in environmental health and safety at the University of Maryland, Global Campus, part of the University System of Maryland. He expects to graduate in June 2027 and enter Maryland's Environmental Health Specialist apprenticeship program. Joseph is a mechanic for the facilities management department at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). "This education will help me transition into a professional role with greater responsibility, stability, and long-term career growth," Joseph said. "I joined AFSCME when I realized that individual effort alone was not enough to protect workers from unsafe and demoralizing conditions. My goal is to use my degree to help ensure that AFSCME members never have to choose between their paycheck and their long-term health."

AFSCME Council 3, Local 1459 Vice President Clint Stevens works alongside Joseph with UMBC Facilities Management and in the union's efforts to protect Maryland state employees' rights and safety. "Joseph serves our local as a shop steward, a role that requires a high degree of responsibility, legal understanding, and advocacy," Stevens said. "He has proven to be a vital asset to our union, particularly in his efforts to improve workplace environmental safety. I am confident that Joseph's continued education will make him an even more powerful advocate for worker protection and the AFSCME mission. He represents the very best of our union workforce."

Activities: Maryland Native Plant Society; Southern Lacrosse Officials Association

Honors: Phi Kappa Phi, Alpha Sigma Lambda honor societies; UMGC dean's list

Employment and volunteerism: Towson University lead maintenance mechanic (2017-2022); pet store manager (2006-2015); UMBC environmental projects; Wounded Warrior Project fundraiser; youth lacrosse coach, referee

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Jack Henry Landman

Plainview-Old Bethpage [New York] John F. Kennedy High School (JFK HS) (2026)

Jack will major in political science at Florida State University (FSU), where he plans to participate in FSU's First Year Abroad program in Valencia, Spain. He hopes to attend law school and wants to advocate for underrepresented individuals and spur meaningful legal reform. Jack contributes to the student-run political website Elevate Student Knowledge on Politics and has interned for Agulnick Kremin P.C., a New York-based insurance recovery and litigation law firm. His father, Michael Landman, has been an AFSCME member since 1998, following in his own father's footsteps. "My grandfather's and father's AFSCME memberships have shaped both my family's sense of security and my own values of hard work and community," Jack said. "The union also taught us the value of looking out for one another and fighting for what is right."

Katelynn Brandow taught Jack's AP (Advanced Placement) Language and Composition class at Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School, where he took seven AP courses. "Jack is an exceptional student whose dedication and growth left a lasting impression on me as an educator," Brandow said. "He demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility and kindness in his interactions with others, and his dependable nature and thoughtful contributions make him a valued team member. I am confident that Jack will continue to achieve extraordinary success in his future academic and personal endeavors."

Activities: National Honor Society; Spanish, English, music, social studies honor societies; Students for Veterans of Plainview; JFK HS Community Service club; JFK HS Band; JFK HS Hockey

Honors: College Board AP Scholar with Honor; JFK HS Academic High Honor Roll

Employment and volunteerism: Mama Lino's Pizzeria; ShopRite; Driftwood Day Camp counselor

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Janeasa Lester

West Chester [Pennsylvania] University (WCU)

Harrisburg [Pennsylvania] High School (HHS) SciTech Campus (2025)

Janeasa is a nursing student at West Chester University and expects to graduate in May 2029. She said her goal has always been to help people and that nursing matches her passion for healing and being an advocate for care, a commitment she witnessed in her mother's career. Her mother, Lisa Lester, is a behavioral therapist and has been an AFSCME member since 2018. Janeasa said she is grateful that the union has worked to protect jobs like her mother's and to give workers a voice. These values were underscored in her volunteer work with the Rotary Club's Youth Community Development Team. "Working alongside other students from different schools showed me that change can begin with awareness, teamwork, and meaningful action," Janeasa said. "Being able to make a difference in my community has been incredibly meaningful."

One of Janeasa's most inspiring experiences has been her work as a junior coach for Girls on the Run, a program that helps young girls navigate the transition to adolescence, value education, and maintain their physical and mental health. "I grew up surrounded by family and a community that showed me the importance of caring for others, and that played a big role in shaping who I am," she said. "Working with girls who understand the challenges of growing up in a low-opportunity community brought me great joy because I knew I was making a real difference."

Activities: Rotary Club of Harrisburg Youth Community Development Team (YCDT); JT Dorsey Foundation soccer club; HHS Tennis captain

Honors: WCU Academic Excellence Scholar; Rotary Club of Harrisburg YCDT recognition; Big Brothers Big Sisters of South-Central PA recognition; HHS distinguished honors

Employment and volunteerism: Hamilton Health Center medical assistant intern; Big Brothers Big Sisters of South-Central PA; JT Dorsey Foundation volunteer

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Amanda Mavricos

University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine

Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey:

Bachelor of Engineering, biomedical engineering (2024); Graduate Certificate in Finance (2024)
Tottenville High School, Staten Island, New York (2019)

Amanda is a Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry candidate in the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine and expects to graduate in May 2028. She is a member of the Penn Dental Medicine Clinical Research Honors and Summer Research programs. Amanda aspires to create a patient-centered practice that integrates biomedical technologies to improve treatment outcomes. "After multiple engineering internships and research experiences, I realized the trajectory I had been following did not align with the patient-centered work, connection, and tangible impact I desired," Amanda said. "My earlier academic and research projects have allowed me to integrate engineering principles with clinical and patient-focused application, and each step of my education has reinforced my commitment to service and equity in oral health. I hope to empower patients, advance access to care, and leave a lasting impact on my community."

Evangelia Kasselakis, DMD, associate professor of clinical restorative dentistry in the Penn School of Dental Medicine, has worked closely with Amanda over the past two years.

"Amanda's academic strength is complemented by an awareness of the world around her and a genuine humility about her work, setting her apart from her peers," Kasselakis said. "The Union Plus Scholarship is an investment in her education and in the lasting impact she will have on her patients, colleagues, and the field of dentistry."

Activities: American Dental Education Association D2 representative; DentPath at Penn mentorship program co-founder, assistant director; Penn Dental Medicine admissions ambassador; Penn Dental Medicine Ortho Society; American Student Dental Association; Rutgers University School of Dental Medicine Gateway to Dentistry; Future Practice Owners; multiple honor societies

Honors: Penn Dental Medicine Dean's Scholar; Stevens Rising Leader Award; Stevens Presidential Scholar; Edwin A. Stevens Scholar; Stevens Pinnacle Scholar; Stevens dean's list

Employment: Johnson & Johnson research and development engineering co-op; PepsiCo supply chain manufacturing co-op; Stevens School of Business research assistant

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Nikki Mazlomi

*University of California (UC), San Diego
Troy High School, Fullerton, California (2025)*

Nikki is a global health major at the University of California, San Diego, and expects to graduate in June 2028. She hopes to attend dental school and aspires to own and operate a dental practice. Nikki completed multiple AP (Advanced Placement) and honors classes at Troy High School, where she was a member of the highly competitive Troy Tech, Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma, and International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programs. She interned in UCLA's Institute for Quantitative and Computational Biosciences Collaboratory under the direction of Matteo Pellegrini, Ph.D. Nikki's mother, Sanaz Fanaeian, is a California School Employees Association (CSEA) member in addition to being a member of AFSCME/UDW Local 3930. "I hold a deep respect for the effective role that unions play in creating equity for the workforce," Nikki said. "Union membership has provided my mom with job security and a sense of protection that she didn't feel before joining."

Nikki emulates this commitment to human rights as a board member for Culturing Peace, a nonprofit that connects youth from around the world for online conversations about global peacebuilding practices. "Mina, a first-time participant from Afghanistan, was clearly eager to speak but too nervous to participate," Nikki said. "I reminded her that it was a safe place where her perspective was valued. Though initially shy, she shared a heartfelt story about the struggles women face daily in Afghanistan, moving everyone on the call to tears. This experience reinforced my belief in the power of supportive, engaging, and encouraging leadership methods. I'm excited to continue engaging with diverse groups and promoting these values as a leader in my community and around the globe."

Activities: National Honor Society; Troy Ilium (yearbook) editor; Troy Kids for CASA Club; Troy Media and Pop Culture Club founder, president; Troy Peer Tutoring Club; Troy Volleyball captain

Honors: College Board AP Scholar with Distinction; Troy principal's honor roll

Employment and volunteerism: Advance Dental intern; Mathnasium instructor; Hope 4 Athletes Foundation board member; Oak Canyon Nature Center day camp counselor; City of Anaheim youth volleyball coach; Bahá'í children's class teacher

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Addisyn Marie Moore

Archbishop Spalding High School, Severn, Maryland (2026)

Addisyn will major in mechanical engineering at Colorado School of Mines and aspires to develop products that improve people's daily lives by helping them become more efficient and effective. She was among the top students in her Archibald Spalding High School graduating class as part of the school's Project Lead the Way (PLTW) path to engineering program.

Addisyn was chief engineer for the 4541 CAVineers, Spalding's FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition team. Her father, Robert Moore, is a proud member of AFSCME Council 3, Local 582. Additionally, Addisyn's mother, Kristie Moore, is an American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) member. "The unions have helped improve my family's lives through their endless work of negotiating, fighting to protect my parents' jobs, and securing workplace rights," Addisyn said.

CAVineers head coach Amy Brunner, chair of the Spalding computer science and engineering department, praised Addisyn's intellect, dedication, and integrity. "Addisyn distinguishes herself through her technical skills, academic achievements, leadership, commitment to service, and positive influence on her peers," Brunner said. "In every setting, she demonstrates intellectual curiosity, perseverance, and a genuine desire to help others grow. Addisyn is one of the brightest, most hardworking, and most inspiring students I have encountered in my teaching career."

Activities: OnTarget Fencing Club D-rated competitive fencer

Honors: Mines Academic Scholar; USA Fencing High School All-America second team (2025), honorable mention (2024); FIRST Dean's List Award district finalist; two-time PLTW Scholar; 2024 Junior Olympics qualifier

Employment and volunteerism: OnTarget Fencing Club assistant coach; Annapolis Maritime Museum summer intern; 400-plus hours of community service

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Keith Thomas Morehead

Southern Illinois University

Governors State University, University Park, Illinois: Master of Arts, criminal justice administration (2016)

Northern Illinois University: Bachelor of Science, sociology (1997)

Rockford [Illinois] East High School

Keith is a Master of Social Work (MSW) candidate at Southern Illinois University and expects to graduate in 2029. He has worked as a clinical placement facilitator for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) since 2017. After earning his MSW, Keith will be eligible for professional advancement within the department. He holds EMT, basic law enforcement, and direct child welfare services certifications. "Working for DCFS has been the most purposeful position of my career," Keith said. "I assist in securing safe, stable placements for at-risk children and families in East St. Louis and collaborate with caseworkers, service providers, and foster parents to ensure each child's individual needs are met. This job gives me a sense of fulfillment because I directly contribute to improving the lives of vulnerable children, advocating for their wellbeing, and helping families access essential support."

Keith and his wife, Latrisha Morehead, who works for the Illinois Department of Human Services, have each been AFSCME members for more than 20 years. "Our long-term involvement with AFSCME has been both a professional commitment and a personal value," Keith said. "The union's principles of fairness, respect, and solidarity have profoundly influenced our lives and shaped our understanding of public service. We are proud to continue the legacy of the AFSCME members who came before us and remain dedicated to the unwavering belief that every worker deserves dignity, respect, and a voice in shaping their future."

Activities: Phi Beta Sigma (ΦΒΣ); NAACP East St. Louis chapter; National Pan-Hellenic Council

Previous employment: Illinois Liquor Control Commission special agent; Rockford Park [Illinois] District Police Department patrol officer; Children's Home and Aid Society (now Brightpoint)

Volunteerism: ΦΒΣ Sigma Beta Club youth auxiliary coordinator, mentor; March of Dimes; ZERO Prostate Cancer Run/Walk; Sickle Cell Association Sickle Cell Stroll; breast cancer awareness community walk

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Angela Rockefeller

University at Buffalo (UB), The State University of New York

State University of New York Plattsburgh: BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) (2021)

Saugerties [New York] Senior High School

Angela is a Master of Public Health (MPH) candidate in the University at Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions. She expects to graduate in the spring of 2027. Angela, a licensed RN (registered nurse) and certified LPN (licensed practical nurse), has worked in healthcare for nearly two decades. Currently, she is an emergency department assistant nurse manager at Northern Dutchess Hospital, a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) for Ulster County [New York], and a TeleSAFE forensic RN for St. Peter's Health Partners, virtually supporting patients who have experienced sexual violence and coordinating with their care and advocacy teams. She is also a substitute nurse for the Saugerties Central School District and regularly volunteers at Kingston's O+ Festival Artist Clinic, a free medical and wellness care service for uninsured and underinsured artists.

By earning an MPH, Angela hopes to increase her influence on community health by combining her clinical experience with public health initiatives. "This education will allow me to move beyond individual patient care and contribute to population-level solutions, policy development, and prevention-focused programs," Angela said. "I feel more driven than ever to advocate for vulnerable populations and strengthen outreach to communities facing disparities. Earning an MPH is a crucial step toward expanding my professional scope and making a more meaningful contribution to public health in my community."

Honors: Hudson Valley Nursing Excellence Top 20 Nurses (2025); Northern Dutchess Quality Department Clinical Partner of the Year (2025)

Previous employment: HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley; Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood

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Nasira Seals

University of Pennsylvania

The International High School of San Francisco (International SF) (2025)

Nasira is a general education student at the University of Pennsylvania and plans to major in law and society. She expects to graduate in June 2029 and aspires to attend law school. A first-generation college student, Nasira is a member of the Penn Civic Scholars Program, a select undergraduate cohort that integrates academic inquiry with civic engagement, community affairs, and public policy research. “I have a deep interest in bridging theory with real-world issues and am fascinated by our reliance on this method to evaluate the world and its major systems,” Nasira said. “I find civic engagement without educational framework to be ineffective, and education not rooted in civic engagement to be void.”

Dominé Ezechukwu is the high school completion manager for the East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC) Pathway to College and Career (PTC²) Program, through which he mentored and worked with Nasira as a high school student. “Nasira has been one of the most inspirational students I’ve had the pleasure of knowing,” Ezechukwu said. “She has committed countless hours of tireless effort and energy to EOYDC, becoming an invaluable part of our community. Nasira is driven by a clear purpose: to create lasting policy change and bring justice to communities overlooked by broken systems. Awarding her the Union Plus Scholarship is an investment in her future and in the countless lives she is destined to impact. Nasira is exactly the kind of leader and changemaker this scholarship was designed to support.”

Activities: West Philadelphia Tutoring Project operations directors board, off-campus section director; Roots Community Health People’s Advisory Council; International SF Black Student Union president; International SF Debate captain; International SF Model United Nations

Honors: International SF Jane Camblin Award for fostering inclusion; Oakland Museum of Children’s Art Jill Violet Changemaker Award; EdRedesign Transforming Place Through Neighborhood Leadership Summer Institute at Harvard

Employment and volunteerism: Oakland Thrives RiseEast steering committee; EOYDC youth leader

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Jessica Marie Sosnowski

*State University of New York (SUNY) at Brockport
Oakfield-Alabama [New York] High School (OAHS) (2025)*

Jessica recently completed her freshman year at the State University of New York at Brockport. She plans to transfer this fall to SUNY Oneonta and major in psychology with a minor in special education. Jessica expects to graduate in May 2029 and aspires to earn a master's degree with the goal of becoming a school psychologist. Oakfield-Alabama High School teacher and student council adviser Tracy Schlagenhauf said Jessica is well positioned for success in college and her chosen field of work. "Jessica cares about her school, peers, and family, and she is one of the finest young people I know," Schlagenhauf said. "Her concern for others in combination with her leadership skills will allow her to be a productive member of society."

Howard Sosnowski, Jessica's father, joined AFSCME in 2021, and her mother, Christina Sosnowski, joined in 2022. Jessica said the contrast between her parents' work lives prior to becoming union members has been dramatic. "AFSCME has provided them with stability," Jessica said. "Ever since joining, they have been surrounded by a community that is giving and supportive to one another, which has been inspiring to me. I will forever be grateful that AFSCME fought hard to secure higher wages and better healthcare."

Activities: Oakfield Youth Betterment Committee; National Honor Society OAHS chapter president; OAHS student council junior, senior class president; OAHS Link Crew leader; OAHS Basketball, Softball, Volleyball captain; New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYPHSAA) Section V Student-Athlete Advisory Committee

Honors: SUNY Oneonta Academic Merit Scholar; New York State Education Department Seal of Civic Readiness; NYSPHSAA Section V Scholar Athlete; Genesee County [New York] Youth Bureau Youth Recognition Award; OAHS high honor roll

Employment and volunteerism: SUNY Brockport office assistant; Genesee County YMCA summer camp counselor; Labor Daze Festival; various community service events, fundraisers

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Andy Zhang

Dimond High School (DHS), Anchorage, Alaska (2026)

Andy will attend Harvard University and plans to declare an environmental sciences and public policy concentration with a focus on data-driven decision-making. He has studied the ramifications of climate change on the aquatic ecosystems and local communities of Alaska through a mentorship with the USGS (United States Geological Survey) Alaska Science Center. Andy's passion for the field of study is rooted in his Alaskan upbringing, and he hopes to return to the state and lead climate adaptation endeavors that inform research-based, community-focused initiatives. His parents are both longtime AFSCME/ASEA Local 52 members. "Growing up in Alaska, the term 'union' was never just a concept; it was the foundation of my family's stability," Andy said. "My parents have fair wages, reliable healthcare, and the peace of mind that comes with a protected voice at work. Seeing the benefits they've reaped through AFSCME membership has shaped my own values, teaching me the importance of advocacy and the responsibility to support the rights of all workers."

A highly accomplished and professional violinist, Andy was selected for a National Youth Orchestra 2 Fellowship, an intensive summer program at Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. He performed at Carnegie Hall and made his European debut in Edinburgh, Scotland. Andy completed multiple AP (Advanced Placement) and honors classes at DHS, where he completed all the math classes the school district offers by the end of his sophomore year. DHS science teacher Natalia Sears, who taught two of Andy's AP classes, said he is a passionate learner, hardworking, humble, and compassionate. "Andy is an exceptional student who applies his academic knowledge of mathematics, chemistry, biology, and programming into ecological research," Sears said. "Regardless of any challenges with difficult concepts, school life, and after-school activities, Andy maintains a positive attitude, smile, and can-do attitude. He is an exceptional role model, and Harvard will benefit greatly from having Andy as a student."

Activities: United States Senate Youth Program Alaska delegate; National Honor Society DHS chapter president; Mu Alpha Theta math honor society; DHS Orchestra concertmaster; DHS Robotics; DHS Swim captain

Honors: Youth Orchestra Los Angeles National Festival Symphony; U.S. Stockholm Junior Water Prize Alaska winner, national finalist; Alaska State Science and Engineering Fair first place (earth and planetary science); Alaska School Activities Association (ASAA) all-state orchestra, all-state swimming, 200-yard freestyle relay state champion

Employment and volunteerism: Anchorage Symphony Orchestra; private swim instruction business owner; Schoolhouse.world SAT tutor; SwimAmerica Alaska youth swim coach

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Learn More About the Union Plus Scholarship Program

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 35th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$6.2 million in educational funding to more than 4,400 union members, spouses, and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is exceptionally competitive: 6,335 applications were received this year from 68 unions and all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories, and five Canadian provinces.

Visit unionplus.org/scholarship for applications and benefit eligibility.

About Union Plus

Union Plus, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Over the last four decades, Union Plus has used the collective buying power of America's nearly 15 million union members to deliver top-quality benefits and services at competitive prices to working families. Programs include financial services, hardship help, and money-saving benefits, including exclusive everyday discounts on wireless service, travel, and more.

Additional education programs include the Union Plus College Program and the Union Plus Student Debt Navigator. The College Program offers exclusive tuition discounts, financial aid and grants, providing union members and their families with the opportunity to earn affordable, online degrees and certificates. The Student Debt Navigator is a tool that can help student loan borrowers lower monthly payments and navigate loan forgiveness programs.

Visit unionplus.org to explore Union Plus's 30-plus benefits.

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