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For Immediate Release

Hancock County Community Foundation Introduces 2021 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Finalists

GREENFIELD, Ind. (November 20, 2020) – The primary purposes of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program are 1) to help raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana; 2) to increase awareness of the roles foundations can play in their communities; and 3) to encourage and support the efforts of current and past Lilly Endowment Community Scholars to engage with each other as educational, nonprofit and civic leaders to improve the quality of life in Indiana generally and in local communities throughout the state.

HCCF has the privilege of administering the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship (LECS) in Hancock County. Each year, HCCF applies for the opportunity to recommend two graduating students to Lilly Endowment for the full four-year tuition scholarship award. Should they accept the application, HCCF implements and supervises the process for selection.

To be eligible to apply for the LECS in Hancock County, students must be Hancock County residents, attend one of the four Hancock County public high schools, be ranked in the academic top 15% of their graduating class, and plan to pursue a baccalaureate course of study, to be completed in four years, at any accredited Indiana public or private college or university.

Student applications are submitted online and reviewed blindly (without name or contact information) by third-party professional readers represented by experienced out-of-county, community foundation personnel. The third party selects eight finalists, two students from each Hancock County public high school, who best meet the scholarship criteria. Community service is the primary criterion for qualification. Financial need is not a consideration for the LECS.

The eight finalists were interviewed in early November by a volunteer committee identified by HCCF, all of whom adhere to a strict conflict of interest policy. This committee has the difficult task of selecting two students from the talented pool of eight finalists and submitting their recommendation to Lilly Endowment for approval. Pending approval, the awards will be announced in December. The eight finalists were honored at their respective school corporation's board meetings in November.

Below are the stories of the eight finalists:

Kaitlyn Arkenau
Mt. Vernon High School

Kaitlyn, daughter of Ed and Krysia Arkenau, was inspired at an early age by her mother, who provided free physical therapy care to a friend who was dying from cancer.

“Although I was young at the time, the relationship my mom and I formed with this patient is one that I will never forget and it is truly what sparked my interest in physical therapy,” says Kaitlyn. “I want to spend the rest of my life making a difference in the lives of others and showing them hope and progress in a time of hardship.”

She has already taken steps in that direction by volunteering as a physical therapy aide at Westminster Village North for the past few years. Helping others be able to walk has taken another form for Kaitlyn as well, as she has volunteered in the nursery at her church, ReaLife, for the past few years. She has taken extra steps to take a Safe Sitter course and learn CPR to be a better volunteer. Kaitlyn has used this knowledge and experience to help front-line workers and others affected by the current pandemic provide care for their children.

Kaitlyn has immersed herself in her Mt. Vernon High School by serving as a class officer for three years, participating in theater for 4 years, and even volunteering at a coffee bar in the cafeteria before school. As a junior, she served on the prom committee. She has been involved in Campus Life and is a two-year member of National Honor Society. In addition to her school activities, she also has participated in dance classes and helped with the tumbler class at her dance school. She has also been involved in NLFC Youth Group, AfriCAN, and Marauder Mentors.

“If I had the time, talent, and resources to enact a positive change in Hancock County, I would establish a Christ-centered organization open to preK-12 students who need a safe place to go after school. Here they would be provided with a meal, tutoring, counseling, activities, mentors and more to equip them with the resources they need to stay on track throughout school and adult life,” Kaitlyn says.

Kayden Bensheimer
Mt. Vernon High School

Kayden, son of Kurt and Amy Bensheimer of Fortville, began dreaming of becoming an engineer at a young age. While he was busy building structures out of Lego blocks, he was also constructing a career aspiration in his young mind.

“I knew that I wanted to do a job that involved physics,” Kayden reports. “I have always been a kid that has learned in a hands-on, visual fashion, as doing projects and drawing out things always aided my learning process.”

All of his passions came together to form a straight path to a career as a mechanical engineer. He hopes to attend Purdue University to pursue that dream.

Kayden's high school career has included serving on the Y-GIVE Youth Philanthropy Board for four years. The Y-GIVE Board is a committee of the Hancock County Community Foundation consisting of four students from each Hancock County public high school. The board learns about and participates in local philanthropy efforts. Of his time on the board, Kayden says, "Participating in this activity throughout these three years has truly been a blessing and it really makes a lasting positive impact on the kids and on Hancock County's future."

He has also participated in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program (D.A.R.E.), a church trunk-or-treat service activity helped Psi Iota Xi Sorority with their annual cheeseball fundraiser and worked to help clean up Fortville Memorial Park. He has been active in National Honor Society, AfriCAN, Empowering Marauder Mentors, football and wrestling.

"If I had the time, talent, and treasures to enact a positive change in Hancock County, I would ensure that each and every child in the county was given the tools to learn and the ability to succeed by investing in the education of our county's youth through the funding of reading programs and libraries, the construction of and funding of early learning institutions and schools, and the expansion of and funding of special education services," Kayden says.

Gage Guenin
Greenfield-Central High School

Gage Guenin, son of Blaine and stepson of Ashleigh Guenin of Greenfield, has dreams of becoming an anesthesiologist to help restore people's lives so that they can go out and benefit the world.

"Just last year, one of my good friends and teammates, a man I truly looked up to, had to undergo open heart surgery to fix an artery that was not functioning properly. In that moment, where my friend's life could only be saved by a surgeon at Riley Children's Hospital, I realized how valuable being able to keep someone on this earth was, so that they may serve and lead." Gage plans to attend Anderson University to begin his road to becoming an anesthesiologist.

Gage has served the community in a variety of ways in the past few years. He has been a volunteer at the Hope House Warehouse Thrift Store. His duties there included sorting items, stocking shelves, and moving and pricing merchandise. He has been volunteering there periodically since he was eight years old and regularly for the past three years. He has also served at the Kenneth Butler Memorial Soup Kitchen by volunteering to help with cleaning, moving furniture and breaking down boxes. As an officer of Interact Club and Student Leadership Academy, he helped lead and participated in various fundraisers for local nonprofits. He has also been involved in track, cross country, Cougars and Cubs, National Honor Society, Spanish Honors Society, Biomedical Council, choir, and Key Club.

Gage says, "If I had the resources and social outreach necessary, I would create a volunteer outreach program focused on children in 8th grade and under to promote the values and benefits of serving one's community with volunteered time. I was blessed as a kid; I grew up in a household where my parents instilled the value of service in me from day one. I also have a grandmother I am extremely close to who serves in the community almost every day, providing an example of what a volunteer and charitable community member can and should be.

“Through my 325+ volunteered service hours at both the local soup kitchen and Hope House, I have learned that while money is always appreciated by local charities, the most valuable item an individual can donate is time.”

Lainie Lawrence
Eastern Hancock High School

Lainie Lawrence, daughter of Jonathon and Bobbie Lawrence of Greenfield, would like to pursue a career in the chemical or medical sciences and study at Rose Hulman Institute of Technology.

“The work of chemical equations and memorizing polyatomic ions has always come easy for me, and I have always found it to be loads of fun. I am a chemistry nerd through and through! I also want to give my life to helping others, and I think these two areas of work would combine my passions of science and helping others,” Lainie says.

Lainie has been a part of Hancock County Junior Leaders since 7th grade and has served in leadership for the past five years including president this year. As a part of Junior Leaders, Lainie has completed many community service projects.

“They range in type, from creating tie blankets and collecting socks for the Hope House to sustaining project judging and a food booth at the county fair. Each leader has to sign up for 3 shifts to fulfill the project's requirements. I always love to go above these requirements, and I usually volunteer 15-20 shifts per year. I do this because I love volunteering and giving back to our community,” Lainie reports.

She is also involved in VOICE, a youth empowerment group dedicated to prevention of tobacco and vaping use in teens. Lainie is a volunteer at the Hancock County Food Pantry as well, most recently loading boxes in cars for drive-through pantry and transporting meals for the Feast of Plenty. She has also served other students during Kindergarten 101, 4-H Camp, and Royal Leadership Academy where she organized Puppy Days and Reading Buddies, as well as a flexible seating project for classrooms and has participated in Once Upon a Prom. She has also been involved in 4-H, student council, EH Academic Teams, tennis, National Honor Society, Drama, and has served as a class officer for three years.

“The positive change that I would enact into Hancock County would be to update and modernize our county fairgrounds. This positive change would also benefit our county in general. If our fairgrounds were to look more professional, it could be rented out for conventions, large livestock shows, craft fairs, expos, parties, and more! This would bring tourists to Hancock County, so they could support our local shops and eateries, therefore boosting our economy. This could also attract new business endeavors to our ever-growing city. We could become a popular destination for travelers with our new visual appeal. This renovation would positively impact our close-knit community of Hancock County, bringing us closer together in such a unique time,” Lainie concludes.

Kendall Mann
New Palestine High School

Kendall Mann, daughter of Jeff and Janet Mann of New Palestine, plans to pursue a career in education because she loves kids.

“Throughout my high school career, I have dedicated myself to helping with kids' events and volunteering in any way I can. Children are the future. Teachers prepare students to be successful. I have had many amazing teachers throughout my educational career,” Kendall says. She desires to attend Butler University to major in education.

Most of Kendall's volunteer work has involved working with children. She has volunteered at the Indianapolis Zoo with kids' camp in the summer as well as holiday events such as ZooBoo and Christmas at the Zoo.

“I feel happiest when I have helped someone, like making a camper smile even though that camper might be missing a mom or dad at work,” she reports. Kendall also volunteers with the Jubilate Choir—a special needs part of the Indianapolis Children's Choir. “I help a little girl named Stella who is blind. My job is to help her organize her music in a way that makes it easier for her to learn since she can't read sheet music. My work involves helping her with activities that include touching items that resemble notes and using verbal directions. It is special to work with her and see how music impacts her life,” Kendall says.

Kendall is a volunteer for FUSE Adaptive Swim program that teaches students with special needs how to swim. She has also been involved in community service through Student Council, Random Acts of Kindness Project, the Disability Awareness Project, Brookville Road Youth Leadership Team, and has participated in cross country, track, swim, Unified Track, Science National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, National Honor Society, and Indianapolis Children's Choir.

“If I had the time, talent, and treasure to do anything for Hancock County, I would try to inspire and encourage all high school students to be ‘great’ by serving their community and allowing them to earn free college by creating what I would call the 4-400-4 project. The goal is to encourage high schoolers to graduate with a 4.0 Grade Point Average and volunteer 400 hours by the end of high school. Completing the 4-400 part would result in 4 years of free tuition in Indiana - the 4-400-4 project. Imagine if just 35 students from each of the four high schools earned a 4.0 and volunteered 400 hours, that would be 14,000 hours dedicated to helping Hancock County per year and 56,000 hours of service over 4 years. Imagine the impact 56,000 service hours could make!” Kendall concludes.

Natalee Russell
New Palestine High School

Natalee Russell, daughter of Jeffery Russell and Laura Miller, both of New Palestine, intends to pursue a career in Physical Therapy. She would like to attend Indiana Wesleyan University to pursue that ambition.

“I love the idea of being able to leave someone better than when they came into my life,” she says about the occupation.

Natalee has been highly involved in the Best Buddies Program for four years. Best Buddies is an international non-profit dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendship, integrated employment, leadership development, and inclusive living for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program has matched her in a one-on-one peer relationship with a person with intellectual or development disabilities. She has also

served in leadership in the club. As a part of leadership in this organization, she has attended three leadership conferences. Natalee also participated in community service activities with National Honor Society, Student Council, Key Club, Science National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, Ball Barn workouts, Friends of the Library, and through her church, Brookville Road Community Church. She has been involved in show choir, Quizbowl, softball and tennis as well.

“If I had endless amounts of time, talent, and treasures I would use them to wage a war in Hancock County against teen suicide. The tragic act of taking one’s life is sadly a reality for teenagers--not just for those who commit it, but for those who are left behind. It is a reality for teenagers not only in Hancock County but across America. Starting my freshman year and every year after, I have experienced the shock and sadness as yet another of my peers has taken his or her life,” Natalee says. “In *Apollo 13*, the script writers were interviewing a former controller from the mission control room and he asked if anyone ever panicked. He calmly replied that ‘No, when bad things happened, we just calmly laid out all the options, and failure was not one of them.’ Failure is another loss of a teen’s life. Let this end in a triumphant victory in this war against teenage suicide,” Natalee concludes.

Kambell Trapp
Greenfield-Central High School

Kambell Trapp, daughter of Chad and Lori Trapp of Greenfield, has always wanted to be a doctor. She says, “Even since I was a little kid, I knew I wanted to be a doctor. Most girls my age would ask for Barbie dolls, but I would ask for pretend medical equipment.” She would like to attend Notre Dame University to begin that journey.

For the past year, Kambell has volunteered at the Hancock County Food Pantry to pass out food. She also volunteered at the JB Stephens Elementary School Library. She has been involved in community service through her participation in Student Leadership Academy, Interact Club, and Spanish Honor Society. She has volunteered with Kids Soccer Camp and to work at the concession stand through her participation in soccer. She has also been a member of National Honor Society, Class Council, student council, Junior Prom Committee, and Best Buddies.

“If I had the time, talent, and treasures to enact a positive change in Hancock County, I would start by reducing the mental health cases. I want to open multiple mental health prevention buildings all around Hancock County and hire people to go to schools and help students with early detection, so they can go get help early on,” Kambell says. “Mental health needs a bigger spotlight, more honesty about the topic, and more people to feel unashamed to start a conversation about how it affects people. With the addition of mental health prevention buildings and trained professionals talking to schools about it, the mental health cases in Hancock County will decrease for the greater good.”

Isabella Witte
Eastern Hancock High School

Isabella Witte, daughter of Mike and Jana Witte of Wilkinson, intends to become a clinical nurse specialist. She would like to attend Purdue University to pursue this goal.

“I am choosing to become a nurse because I want to make a difference in the lives of people through their health. Health is extremely personal and essential. Being a nurse would allow me to help people

when they are at their lowest and make them feel comforted and safe. Reading about the bravery of nurses during the pandemic has only made me believe more in this profession,” she says.

Isabella has been involved with the Lisa Muegge Feast of Plenty for many years with her 4-H club. For the past three years, though, her involvement has become more personal. She explains, “I knew I wanted to do something that would combine my passion for agriculture and allow me to learn something new. I chose to raise turkeys to contribute more to local families in need with The Feast of Plenty. I had never worked with turkeys, but I was excited.”

She started with 13 turkeys in 2018, contributing for the Thanksgiving meal, growing to 25 in 2019 and 30 in 2020, growing them from pullets to 45-50 pounds where they could be used for the meal. She estimates this year’s turkeys will provide more than 1,400 meals worth of meat. In 2018 she also created a program called Inspire Kindness with a goal of allowing students to discover new ways to show kindness through activities and games such as crafts and relays. She started with K-6th grade at Eastern Hancock Elementary and then expanded the program to the Boys and Girls Club of Hancock County. She has also participated in many community service projects through her 4-H Club. She has been involved in FFA, student council, National Honor Society, and tennis.

“If I had all the resources I needed to enact a positive change, I would provide the proper resources to all Hancock County students to help them reach their post-secondary education or workforce goals. Whether that is a four-year college, trade school, community college, receiving a certification, other post-secondary education options, or going directly into the workforce, I want to give them the tools to be successful in earning a living wage after high school graduation. I would do this by creating a unique program in each Hancock County high school. I want this program to help students identify and reach their post-secondary goals. This program would help students find the right school, job, or program, educate them on ways to help pay for their education, guide them through the application process, and facilitate each student on how to fill out scholarships and other financial aid opportunities,” Isabella says. “Imagine if every student had the support and assistance they needed to begin a career post-high school that gave them viable options for income, savings, and healthcare.”



