

Smyth Foundations, Health Trust award dozens of scholarships

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The Smyth County Community Foundation celebrated students' achievements and hope for the future by awarding multiple scholarships that ranged from support for healthcare studies to golf.

This year, the SCCF partnered with the Smyth County Educational Foundation to use one online application in the hope of making the application process easier and encouraging more students to seek support for their continued education. The two foundations also worked together to market the scholarships, according to Lynda Helton, SCCF executive director.

Students could apply for five different scholarships, some of which presented multiple awards. Combined the two organizations awarded 26 scholarships totaling \$30,000.

The Danny Cress Scholarship and Smyth County Educational Foundation Scholarships were only open to high school seniors. Those two awards and the Freeman Scholarship were given by the Educational Foundation.

Foundation representatives attended the end-of-year awards assemblies at Chilhowie High School, Marion Senior High School, and Northwood High School to award 18 scholarships. Then, another set of awards were presented during a special ceremony at Holston Hills Golf Course.

The SCCF also partnered with the Smyth County Community Hospital Health Trust, which is continuing to grow the Changing Lives Through Healthcare Scholarship.

The Health Trust, a subsidiary of Ballad Health Foundation, had long worked to bolster the health and wellness of the community's residents. Raising money for more than a decade to support a variety of projects such as helping fund a local infusion center and diagnostic equipment to improve cancer care and eye care. It also sponsored health camps for youngsters, after-school projects, a playground and other equipment for children with

disabilities, a baseball diamond and other endeavors. It was also instrumental in bringing urgent care services to the county.

However, following the COVID pandemic, Gary Peacock of the HealthTrust said the greatest healthcare need has been workers. The health trust shifted its focus to a legacy program that would create homegrown healthcare staffers.

Its 2024 scholarships were its inaugural award with about \$10,000 being given to students. This year, \$14,000 in scholarships were given to support 11 community members of any age pursuing healthcare careers.

Each year, the Educational Foundation provides six to eight scholarships to graduating seniors from Smyth County high schools. These awards don't specify a specific degree or career path.

The SCEF Freeman Scholarship was created by the Freeman family in memory of sisters Carla Freeman Sweet and Cynthia Freeman. Carla was a special education teacher, and Cynthia was a music teacher. This scholarship is for Smyth County high school graduates who are pursuing a degree in choral music, then to music education, special education and general education majors.

For 2025, five scholarships were given to graduates.

Danny "Chico" Cress was celebrated as Marion Senior High's biggest fan, and he loved every sport that the school offered. To carry on his support for Scarlet Hurricane athletes, his family created a scholarship in his name to support one MSHS senior varsity athlete planning to attend college, technical school or other higher education program.

The SCCF awarded one Judy Taminger Scholarship. Judy Taminger worked as an educator at the Blue Ridge Job Corps for more than 20 years and then led the community literacy non-profit for about 15 years. The scholarship supports students pursuing a degree in education and are required "to have a heart for community like Judy's."

This year, the SCCF also presented five Louise Blevins Leslie Girls Golf Scholarships.

This scholarship awards a golf package to Smyth County High School girls interested in pursuing golf. The scholarship provides each recipient with golf clubs and bag, appropriate gloves, shoes, and attire, golf balls and tees, and lessons.

The recipients agree to play on their high school golf team for the upcoming season.

Marvin Leslie established the scholarship in honor of his late wife who loved the sport. He hopes the award will introduce more women to the sport and build a lifetime of love for the game.

Luau at the LakeTo support its scholarships and community grants, the SCCF will host a fundraising Luau at the Lake on Aug. 16 at 6:30 p.m. on the beach at Hungry Mother State Park.

With a Hawaiian theme, the luau will feature a dinner buffet with Coconut Shrimp, Pulled Pork Sliders, Teriyaki & Pineapple Glazed Chicken along with savory sides and desserts.

Buy luau tickets or help sponsor the event or learn about the SCCF's work, by visiting <https://smythccf.org/>.

Tickets can also be bought or donations made by mailing a check, payable to Smyth County Community Foundation to 1 Health Way, Marion, VA 24354.

Interested individuals can also follow the Smyth County Community Foundation on Facebook to learn more.