

2015 Student Awards: Scholarships forge link between donors and students

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The relationship between SUNY Broome students and Broome Community College Foundation donors can be seen as a sort of warp and weft, a thread of connection spun between those who love education and the next generation of scholars.

The Foundation's annual Scholarship Reception showed the tapestry woven from those threads – across generations and disciplines, passions and careers.

More than 650 people gathered May 7 in the SUNY Broome Ice Center for the main event, which then split into additional awards ceremonies for the College's four divisions. The Foundation awarded more than 170 merit-based scholarships recognizing more than 275 students, many of whom had the chance to meet the donor who made their scholarship possible.



Caitlin Kuhnen and Cory Della Stua receive the Coach Richard Baldwin Exemplary Student Athlete Award

The event recognizes the hard work of students, while congratulating and thanking the generous donors who helped make the students' education possible, said Foundation President Maureen Wilson.

"Thirty-nine 39 years ago tonight, I was sitting roughly where you are, graduating from a community college and having no idea where a community college education would lead me," SUNY Broome President Kevin E. Drumm told students. "You really can go anywhere with what you accomplished here."

New this year are the Paul & Mary Calice and Mildred Barton Memorial Scholarships, which went to four

divisional top achievers – Rebekah Kochmansky, Shelly Rusin, Carmella Seely and Taras Stets – as well as eight nine students in each division. The scholarships were made possible by local resident Emil Calice's historic gift of more than \$10 million, among the largest ever left to a community college. Calice, a career IBM employee, died in 2014 at the age of 89 and had never attended SUNY Broome. Several of Mr. Calice's relatives attended the award reception and stood up to be recognized.



Emil Calice's family members stand

Also new: the Dr. Harry Boyte and Dr. David Mathews Distinguished Deliberative Democracy Award, which honors a student involved in public deliberative. Recipient [Joseph Seidel](#), who is graduating this May, said he was honored to receive the award. The namesakes' work – Boyte is founder and codirector of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Minnesota and Mathews is president of the Kettering Foundation – have guided the College's own work in public deliberation, Seidel noted.

Joseph Seidel receives a scholarship, with President Drumm and Professor Lisa Strahley

"It's fun to see all of the students being recognized for our educational efforts," said Seidel, who has applied to Binghamton University. "It's a proud moment."

Donors give for a variety of reasons. Alex Bryden of American Legion Post 1645, located on Robinson Street in Binghamton, said his organization has been distributing three \$1,000 scholarships for as long as anyone can remember. This year's scholarships went to Magen Kaeckmeister, Lindsey Stevens and Stephany Weed.

Alex Bryden

"We do a lot with the community," he said "This is just one way to help."

For Angela Stephens, the James Lee Skorko Scholarship has deep meaning: it was established in memory of her husband, who died three years ago of bladder cancer. This is the second year of the scholarship, which is awarded to SUNY Broome students pursuing a program in computer studies. Skorko, who worked for the College's department of Information Technology Services, spent 30 years as a computer programming analyst.

The second annual [Lee Skorko Charity Open golf tournament](#), which will be held May 30 at Endwell Greens, raises funds for the scholarship. Last year, the tournament raised \$6,000. This year, organizers are aiming for a record-breaking \$15,000, Stephens said.

When you lose someone you care about, donations can have a special meaning, Stephens said. "I feel like he's here, really giving us his blessing," she said.

This year's James Lee Skorko Scholarship winners are Harold Regan and Benjamin Ross.

President Kevin Drumm and SUNY Broome students Andrew Nelson (far right) and Melinda Pitman (right) award the Peer Scholarship to Jimm McDaniels (left)

Other scholarships also have a memorial focus. The Steven L. Arnell Entrepreneurial Spirit Scholarship, which went to [Veronica Carrasquillo](#) and Danielle Walker, remembers a highly respected businessman who died of ALS in 2012.

The Communications Association of the Southern Tier scholarship, on the other hand, went to a student in the communications field: Nathan Dean. Dean, who graduated in December, currently works for News Radio WEBO.

“I’m appreciative, especially because of who it’s from,” he said of the scholarship. “These are people I hope to work with some day.”

For Deborah Gaul, a student in the Physical Therapy Assistant program, scholarships are allowing her to stay enrolled.

A breast cancer survivor whose daughter has also survived cancer, Gaul is currently gymnastics coach for the Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome, where she also teaches Pilates. Recently, her husband underwent a corneal transplant, and the resulting financial crunch almost put college out of reach.

Enter Judith C. Peckham – and the \$2,500 scholarship established in her name. The scholarship, established by Peckham’s husband in her honor, is for non-traditional students who are active in the community.

“We feel it’s important to honor that contribution early on,” Peckham said of community involvement. The College, too, is important to her, as a former longtime SUNY Broome Trustee and former BCC Foundation board chair.

“This is going to pay for one of my semesters,” said Gaul, who also received the Brian and Margery Mather Scholarship for Married Students and the Alumni Association Scholarship for Tutors.

Going forward, SUNY Broome graduates can become donors themselves. Some have an early start via the SUNY Broome Student Giving Peer Scholarship, in which students raise money through bake sales and campus events. This year’s scholarship recipient was Jill McDaniels.

Giving can be an act of devotion to an institution that helped set the donor’s life course.

“This is the 55th anniversary of my graduation from this college,” donor Brian Mather announced after awarding a scholarship to Deborah Gaul.

Deborah Gaul receives the Mather Scholarship.

Click below for the complete list of scholarship recipients.

[Spring 2015 Student Awards Recognition Reception Content](#)

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