



For Immediate Release
Public Information: (202) 293-5330
unionplus.org

PRESS RELEASE

AFSCME Members, Family Members Awarded 2025 Union Plus Scholarships

Winners Honored for Achievement and Union Values

Washington, D.C. – Union Plus recently awarded \$250,000 in scholarships to 193 students representing 38 unions, including 27 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 33 states. The AFSCME winners are:

- **Lillian Adey of West Seneca, New York.** Adey, whose mother, Melanie Adey, is a member of AFSCME Council 66, Local 2567, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Matthew Alstad of Cohasset, Minnesota.** Alstad, who is a member of AFSCME Council 65, Local 580, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Zizy Alvarado of Richmond Hill, New York.** Alvarado, who is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 372, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Aggie Burstein of Olympia, Washington.** Burstein, who is a member of AFSCME Council 2, Local 3758, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **BellaRose Clarke of Brooklyn, New York.** Clarke, whose mother, Christine Richards, is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 2627, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Lori Ann Concepcion of Honolulu.** Concepcion, who is a member of AFSCME Local 928, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Stephen Robert D'Alessio of Arlington, Virginia.** D'Alessio, who is a member of AFSCME Council 20, Local 3719, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Emily Guzowski of Merrick, New York.** Guzowski, whose mother, Melissa Guzowski, is a member of Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000 Sub Unit 865, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Cole Hofstad of Royalton, Minnesota.** Hofstad, whose mother, Dawn Hofstad, is a member of AFSCME Council 65, Local 2564, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Joanna K. Janik of Harriman, New York.** Janik, who is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000, Sub Unit 836, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Makenzie Noelle Jordan of San Lorenzo, California.** Jordan, whose mother, Marisa Jordan, is a member of AFSCME Council 57, Local 829, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Natalia Mariela King of Tustin, California.** King, whose father, Peter King, is a member of AFSCME Council 36, Local 2002, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

- **Kaydence Lyn Knutson of Fergus Falls, Minnesota.** Knutson, whose mother, Deborah Knutson, is a member of AFSCME Council 5, Local 735, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Veronica Destiny Kowalewski of Tully, New York.** Kowalewski, whose father, Patrick Kowalewski, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local Sub Unit 528, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship. Veronica was a 2023 Union Plus Scholarship recipient.
- **Ferlin Llanto Lamoste of Wahiawa, Hawai'i.** Lamoste, who is a member of Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA)/AFSCME Local 152, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Nevaeh Precious Lofton of Baltimore.** Lofton, whose father, Craig Lofton, is a member of AFSCME Maryland Council 3, Local 227, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Sawyer William Lusby of Mount Vernon, Illinois.** Lusby, whose mother, Leeann Cockrum, is a member of AFSCME Council 31, Local 1048, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Madison Marker of Flushing, Michigan.** Marker, whose mother, Jennifer Marker, is a member of AFSCME Michigan Organizing Committee 925, Local 875, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Mary McLinden of West Chester, Ohio.** McLinden, whose father, Peter McLinden, is a member of AFSCME Council 8, Local 3396, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Lois Gayole Monroe of Cable, Ohio.** Monroe, who is a member of Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE)/AFSCME Local 4 Sub Unit 693, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Aicha Pitroipa of Bronx, New York.** Pitroipa, who is a member of AFSCME District Council 37, Local 420, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Nicholas Rey Rota of Medford, New York.** Rota, whose mother, Christine Rota, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000 Sub Unit 614, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Alysse Scott of Hamilton, Ohio.** Scott, whose mother, Yvette Scott, is a member of OAPSE/AFSCME Local 4 Sub Unit 727, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Kavya Shah of Laurel, Maryland.** Shah, whose mother, Mittal Shah, is a member of AFSCME Maryland Council 3, Local 1072, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Ryan Robert Sherry of Roaming Shores, Ohio.** Sherry, whose mother, Edna Sherry, is a member of OAPSE/AFSCME Local 4 Sub Unit 419, has been awarded a \$3,000 scholarship.
- **Ethan Skalski of West Seneca, New York.** Skalski, whose mother, Tracy Skalski, is a member of CSEA/AFSCME Local 1000 Sub Unit 815, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.
- **Jordanna Takaki of Hilo, Hawai'i.** Takaki, whose mother, Kori Takaki, is a member of HGEA/AFSCME Local 152 Sub Unit 6, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Jordanna was a 2023 Union Plus Scholarship recipient.

“The resilience, determination, and achievements of this year's scholarship winners is inspiring,” Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. “We are proud to support these students from hardworking union backgrounds as they achieve their educational goals.”

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Meet Some of the 2025 AFSCME Honorees

Matthew Alstad

University of North Dakota (UND)

University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota: Bachelor of Science, business administration (2011)

Grand Rapids [Minnesota] High School (2007)

Matt will begin the Master of Business Administration program at UND this fall. He hopes to earn the credentials to validate his professional experience and strengthen his leadership ability. Matt is chief financial officer (CFO) and controller for Itasca Medical Care (IMCare), a health care program administered by Itasca County [Minnesota] Health and Human Services; he has served in this role since 2019. He is also chief steward of AFSCME Local 580, a member of the negotiations team, head of the investment subcommittee, and representative for Local 580 and Itasca County with state legislators. "A union thrives when treated with care and respect," Matt said. "Through strong leadership, hard work, and a commitment to our guiding principles, we have achieved 100 percent membership, established member action teams, and rebuilt the strike fund. Our goal is to leave it stronger than we found it so that future generations can reap its benefits."

AFSCME Local 580 President Betsy Whirley said Matt is an ambitious young leader who communicates with wisdom and poise. "I have watched Matt grow in confidence and become a trusted advisor, infusing new thoughts and ideas into our local," Whirley said. "He intentionally takes on new challenges, looking for ways to grow his skill set and approaching issues with a broad lens. Members find him a willing listener to all voices and value his treatment of them with dignity and respect. Matt exemplifies AFSCME's core values of dignity and fairness in the workplace, excellence in public service, solidarity, integrity, diversity, and opportunity for members to prosper."

Activities: Special Olympics local weightlifting chapter founder; Turkey Trot for Tots 5K organizer; Itasca County Veterans Services fundraiser events organizer

Employment and volunteerism: CrossFit Itasca owner (2014-2020); Clifton Larson Allen tax associate (2013-2014); Gartner Studios staff accountant (2012-2013); Majeski Jahnke and Company LLC tax intern (2009-2011); Dinomights youth ice hockey coach; food pantry volunteer; church audio tech volunteer

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Zizy Alvarado

Queens College, The City University of New York (CUNY)

Queensborough Community College (QCC), CUNY: Associate in Arts, liberal studies (2025)

Zizy recently earned an associate degree from QCC, and she is concurrently an early elementary education major at Queens College. She aspires to help shape the academic foundation for young children and foster a love for learning. Zizy hopes to contribute to educational reforms focused on individualized learning and inclusivity. She is a paraprofessional teacher assistant at Public School 82Q – The Hammond School in Queens and was a school aide at the elementary school prior to being elevated to her current role in December 2024. Zizy is a first-generation high school graduate and first-generation college student. She also is the first member of her family to be associated with a union, but she hopes her AFSCME membership is a legacy for future generations in her family. “AFSCME has given me the tools and confidence to fight for fairness and equity for myself and for others who may be in vulnerable positions,” Zizy said. “Membership has profoundly shaped my worldview, inspiring me to pursue a career in education with a focus on social justice.”

Noelia Diaz, associate professor of English at QCC, said Zizy is a curious, engaged, bright individual who is an asset in any classroom. “Zizy’s work is consistently outstanding, demonstrating dedication and care,” Diaz said. “She had to learn how to navigate her educational experiences without the support other students can count on from their families, a challenge she faced with determination and resiliency. Zizy will undoubtedly benefit from the Union Plus Scholarship. Her qualities of empathy, patience, thoughtfulness, and a strong work ethic make her an excellent recipient.”

Honors: QCC Barbara and Harry Sperber Scholar; QCC dean’s list

Employment and volunteerism: local food bank; community clean-up

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Aggie Burstein

San José State University: Master of Library and Information Science (2013)

University of California, Santa Cruz: Bachelor of Arts, linguistics (2009)

Fallbrook [California] High School (2006)

Aggie will begin the three-year Master of Arts in Education clinical mental health counseling program at Seattle University. A librarian at Timberland Library in Olympia, Washington, since 2014, Aggie aspires to offer support to people on their journey of self-discovery, healing, and growth, especially those affected by trauma and substance abuse. Former Timberland Library supervisor Mary Rulewicz said working with Aggie made her a more effective librarian and a more compassionate person. “Aggie consistently demonstrates exceptional patience and a deep commitment to connecting every patron with the resources they need,” Rulewicz said. “Their ability to relate to people from all walks of life is truly inspiring and transformed the way I approached my own work. Aggie’s ability to build meaningful relationships with people of all backgrounds and needs is a remarkable asset in any setting.”

The child of two union parents, Aggie joined AFSCME in 2014 and served as Local 3758 president from October 2019 to April 2022. In that time, Aggie negotiated multiple collective bargaining agreements, including a complete overhaul of the contract in one cycle and an 8 percent across-the-board wage increase in another. “The need for solidarity and collective action has never been greater,” Aggie said. “In an era of increasing union busting and antiworker sentiment, unions play a crucial role in protecting the rights and livelihoods of working people. I am proud to be a leader in this movement and to continue fighting for a more just and equitable workplace for all.”

Activities and honors: Partners in Prevention Education (PiPE) board member, Olympia; Crisis Clinic of Thurston and Mason Counties [Washington] crisis advocate; Olympia Zine Fest co-founder, organizer; Seattle University Merit Scholar; Timberland Library Employee Recognition Program service and collaboration certificate; Timberland Library 10-year certificate

Employment and volunteerism: Oak Park [Illinois] Public Library (2012-2013); Stickney [Illinois]-Forest View Public Library (2011-2013); Chicago Public Library (2010-2012); Olympia Crisis Text Line; Olympia Pizza Klatch Support Group; Emma Goldman Youth and Homeless Outreach Project, Olympia

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Lori Ann Concepcion

Chaminade University of Honolulu

University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa: Bachelor of Arts in sociology (1998); Master of Education in educational administration (2005)

Mid-Pacific Institute, Honolulu (1993)

Lori is an organizational leadership for adaptation and change doctoral candidate at Chaminade and expects to graduate in July 2027. She has worked at Honolulu's East-West Center (EWC) since 2011, serving as Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP) coordinator since May 2023. In this role, Lori develops and implements professional development programs for Pacific-region leaders and supports community engagement programs in Hawai'i. "With my doctorate, I am hoping to be able to contribute more to the curriculum development side of the programs instead of just coordinating the logistics of the overall program," Lori said. "I also hope to become better versed in Pacific Regionalism and how I can help to advance regional priorities, such as leadership development, to reach goals aligned with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent."

Both of Lori's parents were International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) members, and her mother worked for the union. Lori joined AFSCME in 2012 and currently is Local 928 vice president and secretary. Fellow Local 928 member Jerelyn T. Watanabe is community engagement and development officer for the PIDP. "Lori's leadership in Local 928 brings awareness of the importance of our union to our day-to-day operations at the East-West Center," Watanabe said. "Skills she has learned in the doctoral program and relationships she has formed have increased the depth and breadth of her work at the East-West Center and positively impacted leaders and other stakeholders locally, nationally, and in the Pacific region."

Activities and honors: Mid-Pacific Road Runners Club; Merrie Monarch Festival; Chaminade Merit Scholar

Employment and volunteerism: EWC program assistant (2011-2018); EWC assistant program officer (2018); EWC program officer (2018-2023); PA'I Foundation volunteer

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Stephen Robert D'Alessio

George Mason University (GMU)

The College of William & Mary (W&M): Bachelor of Arts, government and English literature (2015)

Glen Rock [New Jersey] High School (2011)

Stephen is a public administration master's candidate at GMU and expects to graduate this fall. He aspires to work on environmental policy at the city or county level. Stephen is a paralegal specialist with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Environmental and Natural Resources Division (ENRD), where he has worked since 2016. He has been recognized by the Washington Legal Clinic for his pro bono legal assistance for clients dealing with housing insecurity. Stephen said AFSCME has benefited him as a worker and as a person. "At all stages of my career, unions ensured that I would be respected and allowed to do my best work," he said. "The success that I have had as a Department of Justice employee is attributable to the resources and connections that I have as an AFSCME member. Wherever I go with my career, I will always be a union supporter."

ENRD supervisory paralegal Mark Fuller said Stephen's positive attitude, affability, and confidence place him on track for success in the GMU master's program. "Stephen has demonstrated a commitment to public administration goals through diligent work at our federal agency and substantial volunteer efforts outside work," Fuller said. "The regulatory enforcement work Stephen supports at our agency touches on environmental, social, health, and economic aspects of public policy as implemented through statutes and regulations with the goal of conserving and improving the environment. I have been particularly impressed with Stephen's legal research, writing, and analytical skills, which indicate a foundation for success in higher-level academic work."

Honors: W&M summa cum laude graduate; W&M government department honors; W&M Honor Council Jefferson Cup; W&M Seven Society Leadership honoree; multiple ENRD outstanding performance awards; DOJ Assistant Attorney General's 2024 Award for Excellence

Employment and volunteerism: Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee research fellow (2016); Arlington [Virginia] Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2); EcoAction Arlington reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot committee chair; Sierra Club of Northern Virginia transportation electrification committee

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Emily Guzowski

Sanford H. Calhoun High School (CHS), Merrick, New York (2025)

Emily will begin the five-year entry level speech language pathology master's degree program at Misericordia University in Dallas, Pennsylvania, this fall. She will earn a Bachelor of Science in health sciences as part of the program. Emily aspires to become a speech pathologist and wants to help others communicate while advocating for their needs. During her senior year at CHS, she was a speech pathology intern at nearby Harold D. Fayette Elementary School. CHS English teacher Tanya Cestaro said Emily is a gifted, compassionate, and driven student with a bright future. "Emily's academic achievements, leadership skills, philanthropic work, and creative talents made her an outstanding presence in our building," Cestaro said. "She is an exceptional young woman, and I am confident she will continue to make an impact on the world in the academic sphere and beyond."

In addition to her mother, Melissa Guzowski, being an AFSCME Local 1000 member, Emily's father, Steven Guzowski, is an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 3 member. She realized the value of her parents' union memberships in 2019 when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. "As an AFSCME member, my mom was provided critical protections that made all the difference in her ability to focus on recovery without the added pressure of job insecurity or financial strain," Emily said. "I am so thankful to AFSCME for negotiating for better health insurance plans, lower out-of-pocket costs, and higher coverage. I have spoken with people with the same diagnosis, and I truly believe she has better access to care compared with non-union workers."

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; Science National Honor Society; National English Honor Society; Mu Alpha Theta math honor society; World Language Honor Society; National Art Honor Society; CHS Key Club; CHS Glamour Girls; CHS Cooperatively Overcoming Problems Effectively (COPE) program; CHS varsity cross country team captain; CHS varsity track and field; Spotlight Dance Studio; All-County Art Exhibition featured artist

Volunteerism: CHS Art Expo; North Merrick Library; Harold D. Fayette Elementary School; various food, clothing, toy drives

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Joanna K. Janik

Orange County Community College, The State University of New York (SUNY): Associate in Applied Science, criminal justice–police (2025)

Joanna recently graduated from SUNY Orange and will begin pursuit of a bachelor's degree this fall at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She is coordinator of the City of Newburgh [New York] Risk Reduction Response Project known as Fearless! Hudson Valley or Safe Homes of Orange County. She also is an Early Case Assessment Bureau (ECAB) administrative clerk for the City of Newburgh. Joanna has worked with victims of domestic violence and human trafficking for more than 20 years, and she aspires to become a family law attorney. "I am passionate about supporting individuals who are impacted by violence, and getting my degree will open doors to my commitment to serve others in need," Joanna said. "Working with victims of domestic violence can be incredibly rewarding because it allows you to make a tangible difference in someone's life. It's about empowering people, helping them regain control over their lives, and witnessing their resilience and strength."

A single mother of three college students, Joanna wants to show her children that it is never too late to achieve your dreams. She proudly joined AFSCME Local 836 last year, and she is thankful for the ways in which the union has aided in her journey. "AFSCME membership has provided me with multiple opportunities for training and development programs to help me advance in my career," Joanna said. "Constant support for learning and skill strengthening is available through online resources and classes, which ultimately will enhance my job performance, satisfaction, and growth. I already have seen and experienced the positive impact AFSCME has on our lives."

Activities and honors: Leadership Orange Educate, Develop, Grow, Evolve (EDGE) Program; New York Police Department 120th Precinct Community Council; Staten Island Community Agency for Senior Citizens; Orange County Citizen of the Month (March 2019); New York State Assembly Certificate of Merit; Joint Membership of Health and Community Agencies (JMHCA) Human Services Award; U.S. Sen. Jen Metzger (NY) Certificate of Recognition; New York State Sen. James Skoufis Commendation; State Island Wellness Group Outstanding Community Service Award

Employment and volunteerism: Chester Public Library Board of Trustees; Safe Horizon Domestic Violence police program; Richmond County Office of the District Attorney; Pine Tree Elementary Hudson Valley Girls on the Run coach

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Ferlin Llanto Lamoste

*Western Governors University (WGU), Millcreek, Utah: Bachelor of Science, business administration management (2023); Master of Business Administration, health care management (2025)
San Agustin National High School, Sagbayan, Philippines (2011)*

Ferlin will begin a Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work dual degree program this fall through the William S. Richardson School of Law, the professional graduate law school of the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa. She works for the Hawai'i State Department of Health's Chronic Disease Management Bureau and hopes to pursue a program specialist position after completing the dual degree program. Ferlin's ultimate goal as a lawyer is to defend immigrants, single mothers, and victims of domestic violence. "The combination of law and social work degrees will equip me with the legal expertise and the compassionate approach needed to advocate effectively for marginalized groups," Ferlin said. "I am preparing myself to be a powerful voice for those who need it most, working tirelessly to create systemic changes that will uplift and empower vulnerable communities."

Licensed agriculturalist Diocy Mara worked with Ferlin through the Adoration Sisters of the Holy Face of Jesus, a religious community of sisters in both active and contemplative mission in Cebu City, Philippines. "I witnessed Ferlin's dedication, perseverance, and passion for serving others," Mara said. "During her time with our community, she was diligently involved in various activities, including teaching catechism, organizing feeding programs for street children, and assisting in community outreach efforts. Her strong work ethic and focus on improving the lives of those around her left a lasting impression on all of us. I strongly believe that Ferlin will excel in her educational and professional endeavors."

Honors: Adoration of the Sisters of the Holy Face of Jesus outstanding community service award; Premier Financial Alliance recognition of excellence; UH Kap'iolani Community College community health worker certification

Employment and volunteerism: licensed life insurance agent; Nabunturan Community Health Center nursing aide, Davao Philippines (2015-2016); Adoration of the Sisters of the Holy Face of Jesus; Flowers of May events

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Mary McLinden

Lakota East High School (LEHS), Liberty Township, Ohio (2025)

Mary will attend the University of North Carolina (UNC) Wilmington and plans to major in political science. She aspires to become a criminal prosecutor advocating for women and eventually sit on the Supreme Court of Ohio. Mary shadowed Ohio Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy, an experience that solidified her desire to become a judge and reinforced her desire to effect systemic change. LEHS speech teacher Dave Honhart said Mary displayed a maturity beyond her years as a sophomore in his public speaking class, and she was thereafter his student assistant for the course. "Mary carried herself as a professional who is ready for the professional world," Honhart said. "At times, she offered tips to students who were currently taking the class, but she also gave them the space to have their own speech experience. Mary is an inspirational, compassionate, and highly intelligent leader who will bring a lot to the UNC Wilmington community."

Throughout her life, Mary has joined her father, Peter McLinden, at numerous AFSCME meetings, organizing drives, picnics, parties, elections, and work-rights ballot initiatives. Peter is a labor-employment attorney and the former executive director of the Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council. Mary attended her first AFSCME meeting when she was eight weeks old. "I have learned to understand and appreciate working people's rights, the value of solidarity, unity, and strength in numbers," Mary said. "I truly believe that all work has dignity and that every worker deserves respect, fair treatment, and a voice in the workplace. I want to carry forward the principles I learned from AFSCME — to advocate and fight for fairness, equality, and justice in my future career."

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership Foundation ambassador; Warren County [Ohio] Youth Court; West Chester-Liberty [Ohio] Youth in Philanthropy (YIP); LEHS theater; LEHS high honor roll; LEHS Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. writing contest winner; LEHS Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) Be Bold Scholar

Employment and volunteerism: ABC Pediatric Therapy intern; Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center College Hill fundraiser organizer; Animal Friends Humane Society foster, volunteer; LEHS school counselor student aide; St. Susanna Catholic Church volunteer

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Lois Gayole Monroe

Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC): Associate of Applied Science, business management (2021)
Urbana [Ohio] High School (1997)

Lois plans to pursue a degree in web design and development at Clark State Community College (CSCC) in Springfield, Ohio. This will allow her to obtain an alternative teaching license for the purpose of teaching technology courses in public high schools. She hopes to further her education with a master's degree in educational technology, which would allow her to teach college credit courses at the high school level. Lois has worked for the Triad Local School District (TLSD) since 2013 as a paraprofessional librarian. Triad Elementary School principal Patrick C. Johnson said Lois has been a tremendous asset to the school. "Lois has been excellent in her role and has found ways to expand and support other areas of the student experience," Johnson said. "She builds rapport and shows compassion to all students with whom she interacts while supporting each student to achieve their educational goals."

Lois joined AFSCME in 2018 and has served as Local 4 secretary since 2020, during which time she has been directly involved in contract negotiations to secure better wages, working conditions, and benefits. "This role has taught me the importance of unity and perseverance in the face of challenges," Lois said. "Without the support of AFSCME, many of us would lack the resources and protections necessary to perform our jobs effectively. AFSCME has profoundly shaped my career and personal life, reinforcing my belief in collective action, fair wages, and workplace protections. I will continue to champion the rights of my colleagues, family, and community members, ensuring that the principles of fairness and solidarity remain strong for future generations."

Activities and honors: Champaign County [Ohio] Preservation Alliance; TLSD Music Boosters president; Champaign County Historical Society trustee, education committee chair; Ohio Parent Teacher Association Board of Directors district advisor; EGCC summa cum laude graduate; Phi Theta Kappa international college honor society; three-time TLSD employee of the month

Employment and volunteerism: Madison-Champaign Educational Service Center (ESC) paraprofessional (2011-2017); Simon Kenton Chili Festival and Hoopla Parade; Champaign County Balloon Festival

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Aicha Pitroipa

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College (HCC) of the City University of New York

Aicha is an allied health major at HCC and expects to graduate with an Associate of Applied Science in radiologic technology in December 2026. She has worked as a patient care associate (PCA) at Harlem Hospital Center (NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem) since August 2023. Aicha previously worked in two other medical centers as a clinical laboratory assistant, medical assistant/patient care technician, and nurse aide. She is passionate about working in the health care field because she enjoys caring for and helping others achieve their best health. Stella Roth, who has mentored Aicha as a workforce mentor for the Bronx-based nonprofit organization Part of the Solution (POTS), said she is responsible and dedicated. “Aicha has expressed excitement and enthusiasm for roles that include serving others, promoting positive health, and building relationships with clients and patients,” Roth said. “She works well under pressure and is a reliable employee.”

After joining AFSCME in 2023, Aicha quickly decided to become involved and wanted others to know about the benefits of working together within a strong union. “Unions do remarkable things for the working class: improve wages, cover expensive health care, increase savings opportunities for a comfortable retirement, and help workers pass down their hard-earned union gains to their children,” Aicha said. “AFSCME teams help to lower workplace accident rates by ensuring safer working practices and reducing stress related ill health caused by working long hours or being bullied, among other things. Safer workplaces benefit us — the workers — and employers by significantly reducing costs associated with illness and accidents. We are glad to be part of AFSCME, and we are thankful for the representation and benefits.”

Certifications: phlebotomy technician; electronic health records (EHR) specialist; CPR

Employment: African Services Committee testing center assistant

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Nicholas Rey Rota

Patchogue Medford [New York] High School (PMHS) (2025)

Nicholas plans to major in computer science when he begins college this fall. He is considering Stony Brook University, Hofstra University, and Cornell University. His goal is to become a software developer, specializing in innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence or game development. Nicholas is passionate about creating solutions that merge creativity and logic, and he hopes to contribute to projects that improve how people interact with technology. PMHS computer science teacher and computer science club advisor Cindy M. Moshman-Southworth said Nicholas is a highly motivated student who is unafraid to face challenges. "Nicholas' keen intellect and relentless work ethic allowed him to excel in my Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science A course, consistently earning top grades," Moshman-Southworth said. "What sets him apart is his genuine passion for the STEM [science, technology, engineering, mathematics] field and his ability to think critically and creatively."

Christine Rota, Nicholas' mother, has been an AFSCME member since 2002 through the Civil Service Employees Association, AFSCME's largest affiliate. Nicholas said growing up in a union family has shaped his understanding of hard work, fairness, and solidarity. "AFSCME has also influenced my own aspirations and values," Nicholas said. "It taught me the importance of standing up for others and the power of teamwork — lessons I apply in school, on my robotics team, and as a mentor in coding. For my family and me, AFSCME represents security, opportunity, and the belief that collective effort can make a real difference. It's a legacy I'm proud to be connected to and one I hope to carry forward in my own life."

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica (national Spanish honor society); National STEM Honor Society; PMHS FIRST Robotics competition team; PMHS coding and computing club president; PMHS math team; PMHS Key Club; Rotary Club Student of the Month (December 2024); Brookhaven [New York] Hispanic Heritage Award; The College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program; New York State Seal of Biliteracy

Volunteerism: Bay Elementary School STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics) Night

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Ryan Robert Sherry

Mercyhurst University (MU)

Jefferson [Ohio] Area High School (JAHS) (2024)

Ryan is a cybersecurity major at MU and expects to graduate in May 2028. He aspires to work for a government agency before entering the private sector and eventually starting a cybersecurity consulting company. Ryan earned college credits at the University of Cincinnati through his high school's College Credit Plus dual enrollment program. Jefferson Area Local School District band director Fred A. Burazer said Ryan was an ambassador for the music program and an intelligent young man with a bright future. "Ryan exhibits excellence, respect, and maturity in everything he does," Burazer said. "I counted on him for his musicianship but also for his leadership and example. His skill set will translate seamlessly into collegiate life, into the workforce, and with any organization he represents."

Edna Sherry, Ryan's mother, joined AFSCME in 2019, and he is thankful for her union membership. "AFSCME has played a vital role in shaping our lives," Ryan said. "It has provided my mother with a framework for professional growth and fair compensation, which in turn has brought stability and new opportunities to our family. The Union Plus Scholarship is a tremendous help. Knowing that it is available to me because of my mother's dedication and involvement in AFSCME makes me proud and grateful."

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; Ashtabula County [Ohio] Youth Leadership Program; JAHS philanthropy club; Ashtabula County Honors Jazz Band; JAHS marching band captain; JAHS stage, symphonic bands; JAHS track and field; taekwondo junior black belt; JAHS honor roll; JAHS academic letters recipient; Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) solo snare drum award; Ohio District Symphonic Band state superior award

Volunteerism: Roaming Shores Polar Bear Plunge; Giddings Park event; VFW dinner; beach clean-up

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org

Learn More About the Union Plus Scholarship Program

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 34th 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 \$5.9 million in educational funding to more than 4,200 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: 6,213 applications were received this year from 69 unions and all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories, and six Canadian provinces.

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

About Union Plus

Union Plus, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, uses 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. In addition to the scholarship program, Union Plus offers the College Program with exclusive tuition discounts, financial aid, and grants, providing union members and their families the opportunity to earn an affordable, online degree that fits their schedule, interests, career goals, and budget. Union Plus also provides a wide range of other benefits, including financial services and money-saving programs, including exclusive everyday discounts on wireless service, travel, and more. Visit unionplus.org to explore Union Plus's 30-plus benefits.

###

Media Contact: Catherine Heyward, cheyward@unionplus.org or (202) 778-9818

Union Plus | 1100 First Street, NE □ Suite 850 □ Washington, D.C. 20002 □ Phone (202) 293-5330 □ unionplus.org