



# Scholarships of the Satchel

**L**etter carriers have a long history of helping their union brothers and sisters. At the national level, there's the NALC Disaster Relief Fund, designed to aid members after natural disasters; Nalcrest, our affordable, amenity-rich Florida retirement community; and the William C. Doherty and John T. Donelon Scholarships, to help children of NALC members pay for college.

The scholarships don't end at the national level. Several branches and state associations offer academic gifts of their own. Each branch and state association that does so has its own way of doing this, and the criteria, and available funds, differ widely, but the common thread is there: A helping hand when it is needed.

## The whos

While the main reason a scholarship is created is to help members' children—and increasingly, grandchildren—with academic expenses, another very common purpose is to honor members who have died. For example, South Florida Branch 1071's **Harold**



Scholarship winners from  
St. Louis Branch 343

**Ault & EJ Wilson Scholarship** was established in memory of two longtime branch activists; Boise, ID Branch 331's scholarship is named in memory of former president **Jim Schmidt**, who died on a hunting trip in 1996.

But it's not always about what activists have done for carriers. Portland, OR Branch 82's **Judith Hyde** Scholarship honors a letter carrier who did her utmost to raise HIV awareness decades ago. Hyde adopted an HIV-positive child in the late 1980s and later took a year off from work to walk across the United States to draw attention to the then-still-taboo infection, "back in the Ryan White days," Secretary-Treasurer **Matt Pierce** said. (Ryan White was a boy with hemophilia who became famous in the 1980s for contracting AIDS from a blood transfusion.) When she reached Ohio, she discovered that she had liver cancer and was unable to finish her walk.


In the spirit of its namesake, "the main thing we judge people on is a letter of recommendation on current

community service," Pierce said. Applicants also must write an essay on "what problems they see in the local community, and what they are [doing] or would like to do about it," he continued.

## The hoops

The criteria used for granting scholarships are different for every branch—and they might surprise you. The grade-point average (GPA) cutoff for Seattle, WA Branch 79's scholarship is 2.0, and SAT scores need only reflect the national average. **John Sweeney**, a retired member of Branch 79 who has overseen the scholarship from its beginnings in the 1990s, said the idea was to cast a wider net, offering a chance "not just to the best students." In addition to their unconventional requirements, the scholarships are chosen by random drawing rather than by judges.

For the West Virginia State Association's scholarships, there are only two requirements for eligibility: being the dependent of an NALC member and



Judith Hyde on her walk  
across the United States

# Northern light

**A**pril Juliussen, a steward with Anchorage, AK Branch 4319, entered her daughter, Audrey, in the branch's scholarship contest in 2013. The branch offers two scholarships a year, chosen by random lottery.

Audrey took home a \$1,000 prize and went on to study at Stanford University. She graduated with honors in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in biology.

She is now in Portland, OR, taking science classes in preparation for medical school at the Oregon Health and Science University.

Audrey is an Alaska Native—mom April is a “shareholder” in AHTNA, a group of roughly 2,000 mostly Ahtna Athabascan people of southcentral Alaska, and her dad, Bob, is an Aleut, a tribe based in the Aleutian Islands and the western portion of the Alaska Peninsula.

**Jim Raymond**, president of Branch 4319, explained that Stanford offers a “regular” graduation ceremony as well as separate ones for various cultures.

Audrey took part in the regular ceremony as well as one for Native Americans. For the latter, she wore an intricately beaded moose-hide gown made by elders in the community. “It took them about a month to make,” Raymond said. “It’s a very traditional process where they have different native elders contribute, and each [design] on the dress represents something... That’s an heirloom that will stay with the family.”

After graduation from Stanford, Audrey came to the branch picnic where they select the scholarship winners and thanked everyone present for helping her through. “Everybody gave her a big standing ovation,” Raymond said.

Upon graduation from medical school, Audrey plans to return home to work at the Alaska Native Medical Center.



being accepted into an institution of higher learning. “We tried to make it very easy,” President **Joe Paden** said. “I was one of the people who pressed upon [the scholarship committee]—don’t make it just for kids who have a 4.0,” he said, adding with a laugh, “I didn’t have a very good GPA and I went to college. I would’ve liked a scholarship if someone would’ve given me one.” As with Seattle, the applicants are chosen by random drawing. “It’s more a lottery than a contest,” Paden said.

Not all scholarships are just for traditional colleges. This year, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 opted to include a trade-school gift in its program. “We are a union and not every kid is destined for college,” explained branch editor **Tom Schulte**. “This year, for the first time, we offered three college-bound scholarships and one vocational school/trade school scholarship,” he said. It was awarded to a student who had taken 30 hours of welding classes and wanted to continue his work at Ranken Technical College. “Our only requirement was that the trade school be accredited,” Schulte said.

## The funding

A common source for money is a branch’s general fund. Though the Seattle branch has about \$100,000 in its scholarship fund, the branch’s general fund bolsters the amount. “The idea was to have it self-sustaining over the years, but with the low interest rates we haven’t been able to do that,” Sweeney said.

South Florida Branch 1071’s **John Seymour** Memorial Scholarship was created thanks to a generous endowment willed to the branch by its namesake.

Among other funding sources, the West Virginia State Association raffles off hunting rifles.

In Portland, OR, “we used to have to fund-raise,” said Secretary-Treasurer Pierce. That all changed when communications giant T-Mobile needed a spot for a substation—and the branch office parking lot was the only place available. T-Mobile pays a rental fee of \$800 a month to the branch for 110 square feet on its lot. In 2018, the branch was able to increase its scholarship amounts from \$500 to \$2,000 because of this. “Manna from Heaven,” Pierce said.

In St. Louis, the money comes in large part from the general fund. However, this year, “we sent out a solicitation letter to the parents of our former winners as well as to the former winners themselves to ‘pay it forward’ to the next group,” Schulte said.

They were pleasantly surprised by the generous response and set that money aside in a scholarship interest-bearing

account. “We are also in discussions with the branch trustees to perhaps have a 50/50 drawing” at regular branch meetings with the money earmarked for the scholarship fund, Schulte said.

It is not necessary to contact NALC Headquarters to set up a scholarship fund, but branches or state associations that are interested in doing so can contact national Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine for tips and pointers on how to go about it.

## Changes over the years

A recent drop-off in scholarship applications has been noticed by several branches. St. Louis’s Tom Schulte said that, in the first 15 years of the branch’s 29-year-old scholarship, the number of applications never dipped below 24 and was sometimes as high as 36.

“And then there was a significant drop-off,” he said.



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"We had several meetings to try and account for the drop-off and we concluded that the gap in the postal hiring freezes left a generational gap where the older employees' children were already out of school and the new hires didn't have high school-aged children," he said.

It had gotten so low in Seattle that the branch began offering scholarships to the grandchildren of members as well as the children. Several other branches do the same.

In Portland, OR, the Hyde scholarship form was printed on one full page of a recent *B-Mike* newsletter, and on another page was a small announcement that only one application had been received.

Apparently, word got out just in time: The due date was April 1, and the branch received eight more applications by March 31. "Advertising made a big difference," Pierce said.

There have been some other changes over the years.

In news that letter carriers may not be surprised to hear, the art and craft of writing has diminished in this digital age. "Dr. [Barbara] Anderson, who heads the evaluation team, has been telling me for years that the quality of the writing of the essays by the applicants has depreciated over the last 10 years, as if writing is no longer viewed as a necessity," Schulte lamented.

On the other hand, Seattle's Sweetney is very impressed by how much community service work has grown during his tenure overseeing the scholarship. "When my kids went to school, that's pretty much all they did," he said with a chuckle. Now, he's noticed, students may have a high GPA but also are involved with church, community service or employment. "It's just amazing how many students are involved," he said.

### Success stories

After its scholarship's 20th year, the St. Louis branch sent out a letter to find out what past winners were up

to. "Of the first 100 winners, we had two doctors, a number of accountants, research scientists and a lot of teachers," Schulte said.

One student stood out for Portland, OR's Matt Pierce. "We got a fantastic [application] from a young lady last year," he said. She worked at a suicide hotline for 15 hours a week; her letter of recommendation was from the group she volunteered for. She is now studying at Stanford University to become a psychiatrist and specializes in working with people who have served in the military. She "went above and beyond," Pierce said.

A sidebar on some of the scholarships offered by NALC branches and state associations, by no means comprehensive, is below. If you have a child or grandchild about to enter college or trade school, check with your local branch and state association to see what they offer. For more about NALC's national-level scholarships, go to [nalc.org/scholarships](http://nalc.org/scholarships). **PR**

**T**he following is a partial list, by no means exhaustive, of branches and state associations offering scholarships. If your local branch or state association is not on the list, check with them to see if they do.

#### Region 1:

Escondido, CA Branch 2525  
Greater East Bay, CA Branch 1111  
San Diego, CA Branch 70  
San Jose, CA Branch 193  
Santa Barbara, CA Branch 290  
Sparks, NV Branch 2778  
Watsonville, CA Branch 857

#### Region 2:

Anchorage, AK Branch 4319  
Boise, ID Branch 331  
Portland, OR Branch 82  
Seattle, WA Branch 79

#### Region 3:

Illinois State Association

#### Region 4:

Arizona Merged Branch 1902  
Oklahoma City, OK Branch 1358  
Tulsa, OK Branch 1358

#### Region 5:

Iowa State Association  
Kansas State Association  
Missouri State Association  
Nebraska State Association  
Kansas City, MO Branch 30  
St. Louis, MO Branch 343

#### Region 6:

Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56  
Hammond, IN Branch 580  
Indianapolis, IN Branch 39

Niles, MI Branch 775  
Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126  
South Bend, IN Branch 330  
South Macomb MI Branch 4374

#### Region 7:

Minneapolis, MN Branch 9  
St. Paul, MN Branch 28

#### Region 8:

Mississippi State Association

#### Region 9:

Florida State Association  
South Florida Branch 1071

#### Region 10:

Texas State Association

#### Region 11:

Canton, OH Branch 238  
Cincinnati, OH Branch 43  
Columbus, OH Branch 78  
Dayton, OH Branch 182

Watertown, NY Branch 302  
Youngstown, OH Branch 385

#### Region 12:

Great Valley Merged, PA Br. 4317  
Harrisburg, PA Branch 500  
Philadelphia, PA Branch 157  
Southeast PA Merged Branch 725  
South Jersey Br. 908

#### Region 13:

Virginia State Association  
West Virginia State Association

#### Region 14:

Boston, MA Branch 34  
MA Northeast Merged Branch 25  
New Haven, CT Branch 19

#### Region 15:

New Jersey State Association  
New Jersey Merged Branch 38  
New York, NY Branch 36