Where Local Good Grows

Hendricks County Community Foundation

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Hendricks County Community Foundation Announces 2026 Lilly Endowment Community Scholars

The Hendricks County Community Foundation is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2026 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship for Hendricks County: Isaiah Gray of Plainfield High School, Ifeoluwa Olokode of Brownsburg High School, and Dheer Pandya of Avon High School. Lilly Endowment Community Scholars are recognized for their community involvement, academic achievement, character, and leadership.

Isaiah Gray is the son of Adam Joseph Gray and Jennifer Mckowen Gray. He made the All-Region Honor band twice, served as captain of the Math Academic Super Bowl team for three years, and ran cross-country at Plainfield for three years, leading teammates during his senior year. Isaiah has been participating in robotics since third grade. After aging out of the VEX IQ Robotics Competition, he became a co-coach at Brentwood Elementary for team 11860 and the co-coach at PYRE robotics for team 46168. He plans to attend Purdue University to major in engineering to become an aeronautical engineer.

Ifeoluwa Olokode is the daughter of Elizabeth Olokode and Adenekan Olokode. She serves as president of the Brownsburg Key Club, vice president of the Senior Class of 2026, and participant in both National Honor Society and Science National Honor Society. Ifeoluwa commits time to tutoring kids in her neighborhood and is a Sunday school teacher at her church. She plans to study biology and follow a pre-med program to continue to medical school. Her ultimate goal is to provide access to quality healthcare in obstetrics and gynecology and advocate for everyone, especially Black women.

Dheer Pandya is the son of Yogesh Pandya and Mugdha Pandya. He has served as director of international projects and director of rotary partnership in the Avon High School Interact Club, violist for the symphony top-orchestra at Avon, and has held the title of vice president for the Avon High School Bring Change to Mind Club. Dheer also volunteers time as a developmental swimming instructor and participates in other community volunteering opportunities. He plans to attend the University of Notre Dame and major in Neuroscience, with the career goal of clinical neuropsychologist.

The Hendricks County Community Foundation received more than 400 scholarship applications from Hendricks County students. After the applications were reviewed, ten students were chosen to be interviewed. Finalists included:

Audrey Brown, Plainfield High School
Sabreen Cheema, Plainfield High School
Emmaline Conners, Plainfield High School

Abigail Kuhn, Plainfield High School
Funmilope Olorunfunmi, Danville High School
*Faith Opafola, Brownsburg High School
Kylee Regalado, Tri-West High School

*Faith Opafola was selected as a 2026 Lilly Scholarship Recipient, but has declined the award due to another scholarship opportunity.

Each Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship provides full tuition, required fees, and up to $900 per year for required books and equipment for four years of full-time undergraduate study leading to a baccalaureate degree at any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university. Scholars also join the Lilly Scholars Network (LSN), which connects them with resources and opportunities to lead on campus and in their communities. Both the scholarship program and LSN are supported by grants from Lilly Endowment to Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI).

In nominating Hendrick County's Lilly Endowment Community Scholars, the committee considered Unique Circumstances, Academics, Financial Need, School Activities, and Outside School Activities. After narrowing the field of applicants, nominees were submitted to Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI), the statewide administrator of the program, for final selection.

Since its inception in 1997–98, Lilly Endowment has supported this program with tuition grants totaling more than $505 million, benefiting over 5,400 Indiana students. The program's primary purposes are:

- To raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana.
- To increase awareness of the beneficial roles Indiana community foundations play.
- To encourage and support Lilly Scholars' engagement with Indiana leaders to improve quality of life statewide.

HCCF Lilly Scholars (from left): Isaiah Gray, Ifeoluwa Olokode, Dheer Pandya

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The Mission of the Hendricks County Community Foundation: To be a trusted community partner in understanding needs, aligning resources, and empowering people to address today's priorities and create lasting impact. Our vision is Hendricks County as a place where everyone has the opportunity to have a fulfilling life and the tools they need to build a stronger future together. The Community Foundation manages assets of over $39 million in a collection of funds created by individuals, families, businesses and organizations for charitable purposes. In 2025 the Community Foundation gave over $2.35M in grants to charitable organizations and scholarships to local students. For more information, call 317-268-6240 or visit **www.hendrickscountycf.org**.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.:

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in Eli Lilly and Company. The Endowment supports community development, education, and religion, with a special commitment to Indianapolis and Indiana.

About Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI):

Founded in 1948, ICI serves as the collective voice for Indiana's 29 private, nonprofit colleges and universities. ICI institutions employ over 22,000 Hoosiers and generate a local economic impact of over $5 billion annually. Students at ICI colleges have Indiana's highest four-year graduation rates and produce 30% of Indiana's bachelor's degrees while enrolling 20% of its undergraduates.

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