

## Lilly Scholarship Recipient Returns Home to Work

Written by Administrator

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When local students are awarded scholarships, it is always hoped that the students will successfully complete college and maybe even return to work back home in their community. In any event, Indiana's so-called 'brain drain' deeply concerned state leaders in the late 1990s after statistics showed many graduates were leaving the state.

Lilly Endowment Inc. established their Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program in 1998, after concern that Indiana ranked near the bottom of the 50 states in the percentage of residents age 25 and older who hold a baccalaureate degree. The program was designed to raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana and increase awareness of the potential of Indiana's community foundations to improve the quality of life of the state's residents.

There are 26 students in Scott County who have been awarded the prestigious scholarship since 1998, which pays for four years of tuition and required fees, and \$800 per year for books and required expenses at any public or private college in Indiana. Eight of those students are currently attending college for their baccalaureate degrees, while the remaining are attending graduate school or have graduated and pursued their various dreams.

Scott County is unique in that it can boast a 100 percent graduation rate of its Lilly scholars, compared to the state rate of 88 percent. While this is a testament to the outstanding work the students have done while in school, it may also be attributed to the selection process performed by the scholarship committee as they search for the most qualified, well-rounded student.

Each community foundation, which administers the Lilly scholarship program locally, is entitled to recommend their own selection process, which is then approved by Independent Colleges of Indiana, who administers the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program state-wide. Some counties may choose to select recipients based solely on financial need, while others factor in other criteria. In Scott County, the Scott County Community Foundation's scholarship committee looks at several factors to choose the most qualified applicants who will represent the county well. Students are selected based upon scoring from financial need, community involvement, extra-curricular activities, work, academics and essays. Finalists are then interviewed, and the top student from each school district is chosen as a recipient.

Scott County recipients have chosen a variety of majors, from teaching and communications degrees to nonprofit administration and working in the healthcare field. Several have chosen to continue their education, working toward or having earned their master's degrees, and a few have even continued on with doctorate degrees.

One of a few local Lilly scholars has returned to live and work in Scott County. Evan West is a 2002 graduate of Austin High School. He went on to attend Purdue University, later transferring and graduating this past spring from Butler University with a Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

"I have always felt the need to return to our area after completing my college education," wrote Evan in his scholarship application essay. Evan has done just that, returning to Scott County to work alongside his father, Ron West, at Hancock's Drug Store, and also at Austin Pharmacy. He and his wife, Christa, reside in Scottsburg.

When Evan received the Lilly scholarship, he felt he had worked hard to get it, and he wanted to "hold up" his end and come back to the community to work. Being involved in the community while in high school, Evan liked this area and saw there were opportunities here. He had worked at the pharmacy during high school and summers and felt comfortable, and so made the decision to return.

"Get experience in your major to make sure it's what you want to do before you get out of school and go on to work," advised Evan. He believes there are a lot of opportunities in Indiana,

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this community and the surrounding areas.

While many students plan to return to their community upon graduation, sometimes job and life opportunities take them elsewhere. However, Evan is a face that residents in Scott County can see every day and know that students can succeed in college and back in their own communities.

This year's Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship applications are currently being evaluated by the Scott County Community Foundation's scholarship committee, with the recipients to be announced in the spring.

If you would like to read about Scott County's current and past Lilly scholars, visit the website at [www.scottcountyfoundation.org](http://www.scottcountyfoundation.org). For more information on the Scott County Community Foundation, call 752-2057 or email [info@scottcountyfoundation.org](mailto:info@scottcountyfoundation.org).