



OAR ANNOUNCES THE 2009 SCHWALLIE FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2009

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Arlington, VA – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) takes great pleasure in announcing the recipients of the Schwallie Family Scholarships for 2009. Each of the seven winners will receive a \$3,000 scholarship for the next academic year. OAR makes awards in three categories: students attending a four-year college, those attending a two-year college, and others attending a vocational/technical school that leads to a certification. To be eligible, an applicant must have an autism diagnosis, be accepted for enrollment as a full-time student, complete OAR's application form, and submit a personal essay.

This year OAR received 270 applications, more than triple the number in 2008. Four of the recipients will study at a four-year college, two will attend a vocational/technical school, and the final scholarship winner will pursue a two-year degree.

The 2009 Schwallie Family Scholarship recipients are:

1) Four-year undergraduate studies.

Elizabeth Boresow is from Leawood, KS and will be attending the University of Kansas in Lawrence. She is currently enrolled in a music therapy program, where she wishes to use her understanding to give back and help others. Elizabeth has already started this work by beginning a social skills group for students with autism at her high school, and has also testified before her state legislature regarding autism and transitioning.

Eric Dingess from Pittsburgh, PA will be attending the University of Pittsburgh this fall. During high school, Eric has participated in 10 clubs, and is the current President of the Mock Trial Club and Secretary of the Young Democrats Club. He plans to enter into law school and aspires to one day become Attorney General.

Mary Ellen Matthews is from Lombard, IL, and currently attends Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, where she is pursuing her childhood dream of becoming a veterinarian. Despite continual moves, Mary has sought out opportunities to gain experience related to veterinary medicine, including shadowing opportunities and cleaning jobs. In addition, she made every effort to join activities strengthening her math and science skills, such as the Varsity Scholastic Bowl Team and Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering.

Laura Spoerl from Appleton, WI is attending Alverno College where she is working to receive a degree in music therapy. After graduation, it is Laura's dream to become a board-certified music therapist and open her own practice. Her passion to help others with disabilities has also led her to help found the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative Youth Leadership Council and become a counselor for the Youth Leadership Forum, a summer camp for high school students with disabilities.

2) Two-year undergraduate studies.

Brendan B. Strong is from Wantagh, NY and currently attends Nassau Community College. In high school, Brendan was able to overcome the devastating loss of his father and graduate on the honor roll and with a Regents diploma. He is pursuing a major in liberal arts, but is considering changing to a degree in the field of criminal justice.

3) Trade, technical or vocational school winners.

Ryan Fox from Spokane Valley, WA will be entering North Seattle Community College's Watch Technology Institute, a school that only accepts 12 students each year. During his college career, Ryan pursued several different majors, but never found one that fully satisfied him. Ryan finally realized his calling when he visited a local watchmaker to learn more about the craft and subsequently applied to the Watch Technology Institute.

Eric Schreiber is from Stony Point, NY and has been accepted to Lincoln Technical Institute to pursue his deep interest in automobiles. After working on a production line for an international car audio manufacturer for two years, Eric decided to go back to school. Now at Lincoln Tech, he hopes to pursue a career working for Audi.

Congratulations to each of the winners and the parents and teachers who contributed to their development and success along the way.

The Schwallie Family Scholarship program, now in its third year, is the inspiration of OAR Board member Ed Schwallie, his wife, Marge, and the Schwallie family. Since its inception in 2007, 18 individuals with autism have received Schwallie Family scholarships.

In addition to thanking the Schwallies, OAR is also grateful for the reviewers, led by OAR Board Member Lori Lapin Jones, who had the most difficult job of narrowing down 270 well-deserving applicants to seven finalists. Last, but most certainly not least, OAR thanks everyone that has donated to OAR's Scholarship Fund in the past year. It is OAR's hope that the number of awards given each year will continue to increase as awareness and support for this program grows. For more information on donating, please visit <http://www.researchautism.org/support/donate/index.asp>.

For those interested in applying for a Schwallie Family Scholarship next year, you will find the guidelines and application form at <http://www.researchautism.org/news/otherevents/scholarship.asp>.

ABOUT OAR: The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is a national, nonprofit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome. OAR is

dedicated to promoting research that can be applied to help families, educators, caregivers, and individuals with autism find much-needed answers to their immediate and urgent questions.

Since 2001, OAR has awarded more than \$2.2 million to fund 112 applied research studies and published six community-friendly resource guides in its *Life Journey through Autism* series. OAR introduced the Schwallie Family Scholarship Program offering college and vocational school scholarships to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in 2007, and in 2009 and 2010 produced Operation Autism, www.operationautismonline.org, a web-based resource for military families touched by autism, and a companion resource guide, *Life Journey through Autism: A Guide for Military Families*.

For more information about OAR, please visit www.researchautism.org.