



OAR Announces 2010 Schwallie Family Scholarship Winners

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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 2010. Each of this year's 18 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 a record-breaking 371 applications. Ten of the recipients will study at a four-year college, seven will pursue a two-year degree, and the final scholarship winner will attend a vocational/technical school.

The 2010 Schwallie Family Scholarship recipients are:

1) Four-year undergraduate studies.

Robert Clifton Boling graduated from Hinsdale Central High School in Hinsdale, Illinois and has been accepted to attend Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has many interests, such as biology and chemistry, and has completed an internship as an engineering research assistant at the Argonne National Laboratory. He will be attending the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard College in the fall.

Amanda Dane was accepted to Hobart and William Smith College in Geneva, New York in hopes of becoming a lawyer in the future. Her goal is to “help others in a situation similar to [hers].” She has graduated third in her class from her high school after much dedication and hard work.

John Fornear graduated from Upper St. Clair High School in Pennsylvania and is excited to attend Penn State Erie, The Behrend College in Erie, Pennsylvania. His goal is to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering in order to “design objects to make life better for people.” He wants to redesign prosthetic limbs to improve their function and appear more realistic.

Isaac Harrell is a freshman attending Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Oregon. He graduated from high school with a 3.8 grade point average, and remains successful at the University level. Isaac is pursuing his studies in accounting and has other interests in zoology and music. He also enjoys playing the guitar, drums, and singing.

Valerie Luise Hedger will be attending the Texas Christian University this fall after her graduation from Mansfield High School. She is an incredible Varsity softball player, and has given back to the community by volunteering at a therapeutic horse ranch. While attending MHS, Valerie was a student of art and even entered VASE, a competition for visual artists. Though Valerie may have some difficulty with words, she has the gift to communicate through her artwork.

Mariel Horn has been accepted into the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music at Catholic University in Washington, DC. She has found a passion for singing and acting, and even attended the Long Island School of the Arts. This helped her become successful with her academics. "Attending LIHSA has completed me as a high school student. It is like being near sighted, but then correct glasses make the difference. You can see!" Her hope is to have a career in theater.

Spencer Klessens is hoping to pursue his dream career in video game design by attending the University of Alaska Anchorage. This is a goal for him because he loves to play video games and wants to create them for the public. In addition to video games, Spencer likes to take Tae Kwon Do classes, which has taught him respect and discipline.

Dana Pelligra has been accepted to Rutgers University in New Brunswick in hopes of getting involved with their animal science program. She is interested in working with animals because she feels she has a strong connection with them. As she states, "they don't judge me the way humans do... they judge me on how I treat them." Through her efforts, Dana has proven her great love and fascination for animals. Dana's award was funded by a special donation from the Council of the New Jersey Knights of Columbus, marked especially for a deserving individual from the state of New Jersey.

Olivia Scalzetti recently graduated from Archbishop Ryan High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is looking forward to attending the Moore College of Art and Design in her hometown in hopes of becoming a writer and illustrator. She has a true love of art, which is one of the most important things in her life. One day, she aspires to be a voice actor as well.

Alan Stentiford is attending Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York in the fall and hopes to major in Drama and English with a minor in Musical Theater. Alan has maintained honor roll status all throughout middle and high school and has a passion for acting, singing, art, and the piano. He hopes to show others "how to use [a disorder] as a benefit and how to find their passions and then use their abilities to enhance what they love to do" in his future.

2) Two-year undergraduate studies.

Craig Allaby is currently enrolled at Middlesex Community College in Lowell, Massachusetts. He is working on his Associate's Degree in Computer Science-Information Technology and would like to continue on in a further education once he receives his degree. Craig has been building and repairing computers since he was in high school and hopes to own a computer repair shop once he has finished his education.

Joshua Blanks earned an advanced diploma from Windsor High School and will be attending Thomas Nelson High School in Hampton, Virginia beginning in the fall. His goal is to receive an associate's degree in Social Science with a concentration in Education. Joshua would like to further

his education by transferring to a university and majoring in Special Education. He says he “wants to be a role model and mentor for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and encourage them to live up to their potential.”

Matthew DeGeyter of Indiana recently graduated from Penn High School, and will begin to earn his associate’s degree in the fall at Ivy Tech Community College. Matthew has loved sports since a young age when his father used to read him the sports news articles every morning, and he hopes to pursue a career in sports broadcasting. “I understand that in today’s world being a young adult that I have certain responsibilities to live up to. One of these is to further my education and make my parents proud.”

Cassandra Gabel will be attending Southeast Community College in Lincoln, Nebraska. She will be pursuing her education in the Visual Publications program and start her own business once she has completed her college education. In high school, she was a member of the National Honor Society and Speech Team, was involved in 4-H, and was even Treasurer of the Art Club. Cassandra states, “With my future, I will be able to do anything I can put my mind to.”

Kelsey Grippin recently graduated from Wilson Central High School in Lebanon, TN, and will be attending Volunteer State Community College in the fall. Kelsey enjoys volunteering with Southern Stars, where she helps with equine therapy for children with special needs- many of whom also have autism. Through her volunteer work, Kelsey grew to love working with horses, and plans to major in Animal Science at Volunteer State.

Alicia Hill plans to attend Palomar Community College beginning this fall, and hopes to one day teach children with autism. “I could really help these children and their families out, because I have gone through most of what they themselves will eventually have to go through,” says Alicia. In addition to playing in the percussion section of her high school band, Alicia also enjoys anime and art.

Joseph Ragland, a rising sophomore at J Sargeant Reynolds Community College, is on the Dean’s List and a member of honor societies Phi Beta Lambda and Phi Theta Kappa. Joseph completed over 300 hours of community service in high school, and is currently involved with organizations such as Easter Seals Project Success and the Autism Society’s 5K Walk/Run. Joseph is currently pursuing his degree in Accounting.

3) Trade, technical or vocational school winners.

Christopher Tandler grew up in Northwestern Wisconsin and plans to pursue a career as a woodworker, “a profession that is becoming a lost art,” says Chris. He is involved in Blue Hills Manufacturing, and Chris’ most recent accomplishment includes building a roll top desk. Chris will receive his Technical Diploma from the Wood Technics program where he will gain the skills necessary to succeed in the industry.

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 fourth year, is the inspiration of OAR Board member Ed Schwallie, his wife, Marge, and the Schwallie family. Since its inception in 2007, 25 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 Members Lori Lapin Jones and Lisa Hussman, who had the most difficult job of narrowing down 371 well-deserving applicants to 18 finalists. OAR sends a special “thank you” to the Somerville Council of the New Jersey Knights of Columbus and Ms. Lisa Hussman, whose generous donations allowed OAR to again raise the number of scholarships offered in 2010 to 18. 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>.

ARLINGTON, VA – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is pleased to announce the results of its seventh annual Graduate Research Grant Competition. This competition, open to graduate students pursuing Master’s or Doctoral degrees, awards up to \$1,000 and \$2,000 respectively to those conducting research related to autism spectrum disorders. This year, OAR will make seven awards totaling \$13,000 to six doctoral students and one master’s student conducting research related to autism. With today’s grants, OAR has awarded \$108,000 in research grants to 59 graduate researchers since the inaugural competition in 2004.

OAR received 21 research proposals this year. In evaluating the research proposals, two members of OAR’s Scientific Council reviewed and scored each proposal. The reviewers’ task was to identify the studies that best matched OAR’s research priorities and whose potential outcomes were most relevant for families. In keeping with OAR’s dedication to quality research, only the best of the best were selected for funding.

Commenting on this year’s competition and grant recipients, Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D., OAR’s Scientific Council Chairman, noted, “This was an impressive group,” said Gerhardt, “The range of research interests and quality of the winning proposals suggests that the future for autism research is in good hands with these young researchers.”

The 2010 grant recipients are:

Brian Barger, University of Georgia – Doctoral Grant

Temperament in Autism: A study using the inventory of children’s individual differences

Dana Battaglia, CUNY Graduate Center – Doctoral Grant

Word Association in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Toward a Model of Lexical Access

Cristan Farmer, Ohio State University – Doctoral Grant

Characterization for Aggressive Behavior in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Veronica Pamparo, University of Washington – Doctoral Grant

Improving the Quality of Shared Book Reading Experiences for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The effect of dialogic reading on early literacy outcomes

Mi Na Park, University of California – Doctoral Grant

Improving Social Communication Impairments in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders through Self-Management

Andrea Reinholz, University of Washington – Masters Grant

Social Support for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Cheryl Shaffer, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Doctoral Grant

Parenting Stress in Mothers of Preschool Age Children Newly Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

For information on the 2011 Graduate Research Grants Program, please visit [OAR's Web site](#) or contact Alyssa Kruszyna, Director, Business Operations and Communications, (703) 243-9717.

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.