



CHARLOTTE  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



# A CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS

The CCF Scholarship Luncheon

May 21, 2025

Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club





**Congratulations and gratitude to everyone  
we're celebrating today:**

Students of all ages pursuing advanced education and training, their family and friends, and the community supporting them—scholarship donors (and loved ones that many funds memorialize), volunteer application reviewers, and the CCF Board of Directors and staff.

## PROGRAM

### WELCOME

Deelynn Bennett

*CCF Board Member & Scholarship Committee Chair*

### THE 2025-26 CCF SCHOLARS

Carolyn Gorton

*CCF Scholarship Coordinator*

### OTHER RECOGNITION AND SPEAKER INTRODUCTION

Shelley Strickland

*CCF CEO*



#### **SPECIAL REMARKS:**

**DeShon Jenkins**  
*Principal, The Academy*

Originally from Louisiana, DeShon Jenkins holds two master's degrees in Elementary Education and Educational Leadership. After a stint playing with the Miami Dolphins in the late eighties, he transitioned to education, beginning his teaching career in 1991. He then served as a behavior specialist before becoming an Assistant Principal on the pivotal day of September 11, 2001.

Following 20 years as an Assistant Principal in Broward County, Mr. Jenkins moved to Charlotte County in 2015, gaining experience at all levels. He spent two years at Meadow Park, six years at Murdock Middle, and is currently in his second year as the Principal of the Academy.

**Closing, Dr. Strickland**

## Virginia B. Andes Health Care and Scholarship Fund



Virginia B. Andes, who moved to Charlotte County in 1995, would volunteer and strategically give to the community she came to love through the Charlotte Community Foundation (CCF) in ways that would forever transform the County—particularly CCF and the Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic (Clinic) in Port Charlotte, which provides no-cost primary and semi-urgent medical services and prescription medication to the uninsured in Charlotte County. The Scholarship Fund is for local residents who are at least two years into a healthcare degree, undergraduate or graduate, who have financial need and who agree to volunteer at the VBA Clinic or the Englewood Community Care Clinic.

Amanda Beaudoin  
Alicha Chery  
Kylie McQueen  
Jessica Meyers  
Ashleigh Miller  
Amalya Saint Fleur  
Jolene Smith-O'Connor  
Elaina Soijeune  
Alyssa Truisi  
Kaylee Ziegelbauer

## Nora Penton Beatty Memorial Scholarship Fund



Joanne Amendola-Phenix established the fund to honor the life of her mother, Nora Penton Beatty, an intelligent, gentle and caring nurse who died at only 52. Education was important to Nora, and she would be delighted by helping nursing students to reach their life goals and pursue the profession she loved. She believed in Jeremiah 29:11.

Sydney Duverneau  
Olivia Oliver

## Betty Conley Brooks and Robert Charles Brooks Memorial Scholarship Fund



The scholarship program was established to reflect the Brooks' strong belief in the value of higher education and their mutual commitment to learning, leadership, and academic success. Betty Conley and Dr. Robert "Charles" Brooks retired to Punta Gorda in 1981. Betty lent her gifts and talents to the community as a volunteer. She held a master's degree from North Carolina State University and retired as Director of Systems, Personnel Policy Development and Research in the Office of State Personnel. Robert Charles Brooks served in the Air Force during the Korean War, received his PhD in economics from Duke University, and retired as an economics professor at North Carolina State University. Applicants should have a proven record of academic achievement and use the scholarship to help find success and usefulness in a chosen field that ideally improves the economy in Charlotte County.

### PURSUING A 2-YR. COLLEGE/STATE SCHOOL DEGREE

Amy Callison  
Penelope Din  
MacKenzie McDowell  
Meghan Olby  
Daniela Perez  
Dylan Smith  
Raelyn Tillman

### PURSUING A TECHNICAL SCHOOL/CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Nathan Bradford  
Daphna Damour  
Lakeidia Gray  
Alexandra Hernandez  
Brianna Mayer  
Jaden Palmer  
Jayden Reynoso  
Aniah Robinson

## **PURSuing A 4-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY DEGREE**

Jordyn Burkey  
Abigayle Crago  
Alia Crooks  
Gisele Davis  
Gabriella Donhauser  
Carmen Galvan-Cuevas  
Elizabeth Lawson  
Madison Planer  
Maria Restrepo  
Ayahna Rosado  
Naysa Saint Fleur  
Thor Scaperrotta  
Angelina Semprevivo  
Madeline Strauss  
Keira Vasquez

## **Cherian Family Scholarship Fund**



Mrs. Sushila Cherian established the fund to memorialize and honor her late husband Dr. J.V. Cherian, a successful otolaryngologist and caring philanthropist. Dr. and Mrs. Cherian shared a belief in investing time and energy into the local community and its residents for the betterment of the local community as a whole. Both scholarships are for female Charlotte Co. public high school graduating seniors or alumnae with financial need attending or accepted to an accredited FL institution: one award for education in any field except cosmetology and another to pursue an associate or bachelor's degree in the medical field.

## **CHERIAN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR GENERAL STUDIES**

Cianna Pullen

## **CHERIAN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR THE MEDICAL FIELD**

Dayani Telles

## David Gerdel Memorial Scholarship Fund



Mrs. Gerdel established the David Gerdel Memorial Scholarship in memory of her late husband, David Gerdel. Mr. Gerdel believed in helping a promising student succeed by eliminating the obstacle of financial need. He loved being an engineer and the fund reflects this by providing for both an undergraduate and a graduate (master's or doctoral) award for a local resident with financial need to pursue post-secondary and ongoing education in engineering or physical science.

### DAVID GERDEL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Garek Sledziewski

### DAVID GERDEL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

Jaylee Ciaschini

## Michael Gulvezan General Education Memorial Scholarship



The scholarship for a graduating CCPS student was established in honor and memory of Michael Gulvezan by his wife JoAnn. The scholarship was created as a way to help local youth to pursue higher education in any field of study.

Ava Hall



## Health Professional Scholarship Fund



Retired healthcare industry professionals anonymously established the scholarship to provide local residents with financial need entering into or already enrolled in a health professions degree program—at the 2- or 4-year level—with funding to further their education as health care professionals.

Jordan Adams  
Sandy Bruce  
Gabriella Charles  
Juan De La Cruz  
Sophia Dickerson  
Vicki Do  
Avianna Hill  
Saskya Laroche  
Brighton Marshall  
Melody St-Vil  
Humaira Weger  
Gina Zamora

## **Dr. Dennis Munholand Memorial Fund**



The scholarship was established by the Harbor Heights Peace River Rotary Club to honor Dr. Dennis Munholand, a prominent dentist in Port Charlotte for more than 20 years who helped mentor young people, fostered charities, taught others, and cared for his patients. The scholarship supports post-secondary education in the field of dentistry, dental hygiene, or dental assistance.

Oriana Russo

## **Phyllis A. Schwartz Memorial Scholarship Fund**



George and Phyllis Schwartz spent 30 years in DeSoto County after teaching careers in New Jersey. George was what used to be termed a “shop teacher” and although Marilyn was designated as a home economics teacher, she was also assigned to students with special needs. The scholarship provides for a graduating DeSoto County High School senior who wants to enter the skilled trades or pursue a degree in education, ideally special education.

Tyler Powers

## **Doug Thatcher Memorial Scholarship Fund**



Doug was a registered nurse and a medical sales representative, and the Advanced Orthopedic Center of Charlotte County paid tribute to him with this scholarship for a Charlotte High School graduating senior pursuing nursing. Patients, physicians and his coworkers looked to Doug as a leader in the medical community. He was a dedicated husband, father, grandfather and friend who impacted all he met.

Maryah Taylor

## **The CCF Scholarship Fund for Charlotte County: Supporting Future Local Leaders Like Leo Wotitzky**



CCF established the fund in 2005 to honor Leo Wotitzky, its founding member and first chairman. Wotitzky was committed to the community and to the cause of public education, being foremost an educator as well as a legislator, newspaper editor, attorney, and businessman. Following Wotitzky's passing at age 93, his former high school student, mentee and fellow CCF founder Vernon Peeples and his wife Edna Jane Peeples, also a former student of Wotitzky, made a significant gift to the fund—with the goal of having other Charlotte County residents continue to give to the fund for Charlotte County residents. Applicants should exhibit the spirit of Leo Wotitzky through a commitment to working hard, helping others, and serving the community—hallmarks of true leadership.

While financial need is a consideration, commitment to others and to Charlotte County as demonstrated beyond mere academics through service and leadership are the most important selection criteria for applicants who are graduates of CCPS, in keeping with Wotitzky's commitment to public education.

Mailee Minitello  
Diana Oliver  
Marissa Szeker

# CCF SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE



Thank you to the committee of local seasoned educators and health care professionals who volunteered their expertise and time in reviewing the scholarship applications!

**DEELYNN BENNETT**

*Committee Chair*

**Amy Perkey**

**Ann Berger**

**Barbara Davis**

**Barbara McCauley**

**Chrisanna Wright**

**Crystal Smith**

**Fran Holleran**

**Herb Bennett**

**Dr. Jackie Greene**

**Jeanie Sifrit-Reed**

**Jeanne Marquez**

**Lee Ann Gunning**

**Mary Jo Holleran**

**Melodie Brunett**

**Michael Barnes**

**Pam Schlundt**

**Patricia Smith-Kizilay**

**Rosalie Mack**

# CCF BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Jill McCrory, Chair**

**Dr. Robert Peterson, Vice Chair**

**JoAnn Tompkins, Secretary**

**Kim Savasuk, Treasurer**

**Deelynn Bennett**

**Debra Cooper**

**Reppard Gordon**

**Mark Odell**

**Terry Wright**

## MISSION

Foster philanthropy across Charlotte County to enhance  
our community for generations

# **2025-26 CCF SCHOLARSHIPS**



**208 applications**

**20 volunteer scholarship reviewers**

**65 student recipients**

**Split between traditional students  
(graduating high school (H.S.) seniors)  
and working adults (out of H.S. 2 + yrs.)**

**\$260,000 in total scholarship support!**





To support more scholarships for local students,  
contact us or click here:



**The CCF Scholarship Fund for Charlotte County:  
Supporting Future Local Leaders Like Leo Wotitzky**

The CCF fund named for a legendary local leader is the Foundation's general scholarship fund, where gifts of any size combine to help advance the educational pursuits of local residents.

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