

Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund sets records in 75th anniversary

By Mike Miller and Rebecca Seymour

OCONOMOWOC — The Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund is awarding more college aid this year than ever before. The non-profit group was created by Oconomowoc Enterprise founder C.W. Brown and has been funding college dreams for local high school seniors since 1947. The fund has awarded more than \$3.4 million dollars to 663 deserving students.

During its 75th anniversary the OSF is breaking a single-year record by awarding more than \$200,000 to 17 talented local scholars.

Tanner Braatz will receive \$12,000 over four years as the winner of a scholarship from the DeBink Family Foundation. The son of Steve and Jacie Braatz of Oconomowoc has always looked for solutions to problems, so he will major in engineering at UW-Platteville. He wants to improve sustainable energy systems to create a cleaner earth. Tanner competed on the tennis team all four years at OHS and was named MVP one year when he showed up for practice every day despite a broken hand. His teachers say Tanner has a rare persistence to keep doing better and never settles for good enough. They call him "incredibly bright, genuine, and one-of-a-kind."

Leah Breach hopes to "create impactful, world-changing decisions" as she pursues a degree in business with a focus on green and sustainable management at Liberty University in Virginia. The daughter of Julie and Nicholas Breach of Oconomowoc has volunteered hundreds of hours for area nonprofits and school organizations. A member of DECA since she was a freshman, Leah was named "member of the year" and served as co-president of the marketing club for two years. She was also a member of the National and Business Honor Societies and competed on the OHS JV tennis team. Leah will receive \$12,000 over four years as the winner of a scholarship from the Richard R. and Karen Bertrand Charitable Fund of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation.

Charles Davis ranked second in the class of 410 seniors at OHS. He has competed in Robotics all four years of high school and led the robotics design team since his freshman year. He also won local and national awards for his performances in theater and drama. The son of Lee and Beth Davis of Oconomowoc wins an M. Jane Hartnett Scholarship worth \$12,000 over four years. Teachers call Charles "wise beyond his years" with "strong analytical skills and solid character." He will study Aerospace Engineering at Purdue University with dreams of exploring far into space and "possibly colonizing another planet someday."

Jonas Ewart wins the Future Leader Award funded by the Thomas Mulder family, receiving \$37,400 over four years to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study math and social sciences, with



Photo submitted by Rebecca Seymour/Special to the Enterprise

Students who were selected to receive scholarships through the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund gathered before the annual OHS Academic & Community Honors Night held Monday at the Oconomowoc Arts Center. Pictured from left, front row: Natalie Jacobson, Madeleine Thenhaus, Caroline Halaska, Kaylee Morgan, Sabrina Sandholm, Addison Mulder, and Leah Breach. Back row: Zachary Fitzgerald, Tanner Braatz, Charles Davis, Jonas Ewart, Parker Knepprath, Eli Miller, Aiden Foerster, and Carson Schneller. Not pictured: Natalie Gricius and Brodie Schwandt.

aspirations to attend law school. The son of Kathy and Jason Ewart of Oconomowoc excelled academically, is a National Merit finalist, played percussion in the Wind Symphony, Jazz Bands and Pit Orchestra, and was the first Oconomowoc percussionist to make the WSMA High School State Honors Band in more than 20 years. Jonas competed on the OHS JV and Varsity tennis teams, was the leader of the Varsity math team, co-president and tutor coordinator of Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society, and member of the National Honor and Social Studies Honor Societies. In his essay, Jonas wrote, "Scholarships allow students like me to give something to the world. By investing my talent and hard work with generous financial gifts, I'll be able to make a difference."

Zachary Fitzgerald wins \$5,000 from the George Andrew Markham Memorial Fund on behalf of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation, which he will use to pursue trumpet performance at DePaul School of Music in Chicago. Zachary started playing trumpet in the 6th grade at Nature Hill Intermediate School. He was a section leader in Arrowhead High School's Wind and Jazz Ensembles, selected for WSMA High School State Honors Band, Orchestra, and Jazz Ensemble, and has performed with Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra ensembles since 2016. The son of Melanie and Patrick Fitzgerald of Oconomowoc also competed on the AHS Varsity wrestling team and with Trinity Academy of Irish dance, competing in local, regional, national, and international Irish dance competitions since 2009.

Aiden Foerster likes to say, "you can't argue with numbers." And he has put up some impressive ones. Aiden is the valedictorian of the OHS class of 2022 with a grade point average of 4.63. He is a member of the Math and Science Honor Societies, tutored students in both those subjects, and played four years of baseball and basketball at OHS. The son of Chris

and Denelle Foerster of Oconomowoc will receive \$12,000 over four years as the winner of a scholarship from the Richard R. and Karen Bertrand Charitable Fund of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation. Teachers call Aiden "a strong leader in and out of the classroom." He will attend Auburn University in Alabama and major in engineering - hoping to use his math skills "in a productive way to make the world a better place."

Teachers say **Natalie Gricius** is "the best kind of role model ... always thinking of others." She taught Sunday school classes and youth basketball and volunteered to help homeless families. Natalie played varsity basketball all four years at OHS, plus four years of soccer and two years on the swim team. The daughter of Jason and Kelly Gricius of Oconomowoc finished in the top 5% of her class. She will receive \$12,000 over four years as the winner of another M. Jane Hartnett Scholarship. Natalie dreams of becoming a nurse practitioner "to help and comfort people when they're going through difficult times." She will attend Carroll University in Waukesha.

Caroline Halaska wins an Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund scholarship worth \$12,000 over four years. Caroline earned the International Baccalaureate Diploma, and was a member of the National Honor, Math, English, and Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Societies. She played percussion and bass guitar in the Wind Symphony, Jazz Bands, and Pit Orchestra and held leadership positions in the OHS DECA marketing club since her freshman year. The daughter of Meghan Halaska of Ixonia and John Halaska of Johnson Creek will attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study biology and pre-med. In her essay, she wrote, "Not only do I have a love for biology, but I want to be able to give back with my education and help others around me. I want my education to be more than just for me."

Natalie Jacobson, the daughter of Todd and Laura Jacobson of Oconomowoc wins an Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund award of \$12,000 over four years. Teachers say she "embodies what it means to be authentically thoughtful and conscientious." Natalie earned the International Baccalaureate Diploma and was a member of FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America), the National Honor, Rho Kappa Social Studies, and Spanish Honor Societies, and Students for Service. She will study medicine at Wheaton College in Illinois. Her dream is to become a nurse practitioner in a hospital setting — "reassuring patients, giving life-saving medications, and changing people's lives."

Parker Knepprath ranked third in the senior class at OHS. He will receive \$12,000 over four years as the winner of a Hilbert Scherffius Scholarship on behalf of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation. Parker has tutored students in math, science, business, English and Spanish, earned varsity letters in soccer, basketball, and tennis, and volunteered at food pantries and local rehab centers. He was a member of the Mu Alpha Theta Math, Business, Science and Spanish Honor Societies, and was elected to lead the student body in chants and cheers during OHS sporting events. Because he loves to "calculate numbers, analyze data, and solve problems," the son of Tim and Robin Knepprath of Oconomowoc will major in business at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Eli Miller will receive \$12,000 over four years through the Hilbert Scherffius Scholarship on behalf of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation. Eli played percussion in the Wind Symphony, Jazz Bands, and Pit Orchestra, and was a member of the Tri-M Music and Spanish Honor Societies. He received the Best Drummer and Best Guitarist awards from Jazz Unlimited and the Lee Guse Memorial

Jazz Scholarship from Civic Music MKE. He has competed at the State level since his freshman year on the OHS Varsity cross country team, and played on the JV and Varsity tennis teams, all while challenging himself through a rigorous academic course load including honors, AP and IB classes. The son of Christa and Nathan Miller of Oconomowoc will attend the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire to study computer science and applied guitar/composition.

Kaylee Morgan wants to land a graphic design position at a local company and eventually start her own small business. The daughter of Brian and Tina Morgan of Oconomowoc transferred to OHS during her junior year. Teachers say she "quickly acclimated to her courses and her peers" and that she is "incredibly talented." Kaylee will attend Waukesha County Technical College as the winner of \$3,000 over two years from the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund.

Addison Mulder's commitment to excellence academically and through extracurricular activities and volunteerism has earned her \$12,000 over four years through the Hilbert Scherffius Scholarship on behalf of the Oconomowoc Area Foundation. The daughter of Caryl Mulder, and Matt and Michelle Mulder of Oconomowoc will attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. to study physics and nuclear engineering. Addison earned the International Baccalaureate Diploma, was president of Student Council and held leadership positions in the National Honor, Science, Math, and Tri-M Music Honor Societies. She was a scholar athlete, competed on OHS Varsity soccer and cross country teams, and played clarinet in the Wind Symphony. The Women and Girls Fund of Waukesha County selected Addison to be the recipient of this year's Young Woman of Tomorrow Award.

Sabrina Sandholm is set to become the first member of her family to ever attend college. With help from a \$12,000 award from the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund, the daughter of Michael and Kimberly Sandholm of Oconomowoc will study marketing and sustainability at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sabrina sang in the choir all four years at OHS, was a member of Future Business Leaders, National Honor, English, and Tri-M Music Honor Societies, and DECA marketing club, and competed on the JV tennis and track teams. Her employer says Sabrina has developed "poise, confidence, and grace under pressure and is always looking for ways to be helpful."

Carson Schneller has been described by his teachers as a "model student in terms of academic ability and integrity, with strong character and the ability to work well with others." The son of Wendy and Richard Schneller of Oconomowoc wins the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund four-year \$12,000 scholarship to help support his studies in actuarial science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Carson was president of the International Thespian Society, a member of the National Honor, Delta Epsilon Phi German Honor, and Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Societies, and competed on the Varsity math and Racoon Tech Robotics teams for four years. Carson was also a member of the OHS JV cross country, track, and tennis teams. The well-rounded student spent a lot of his time on the stage with the OHS Players theater department and with OHS Gold Vibrations vocal jazz group.

Brodie Schwandt wins a two-year \$3,000 award from the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund. He started taking courses at Waukesha County Technical College during his senior year and liked it so much that he decided to continue there for a two-year degree in Automation and Robotics. After that, he plans to go to a four-year college to major in Electrical Engineering and Business. The son of Ben and Erika Schwandt of Oconomowoc played football and lacrosse at OHS. Teachers say Brodie is "respectful, has a positive attitude, and continually strives for excellence."

Madeleine Thenhaus, the daughter of Michael and Linda Thenhaus of Oconomowoc, wins \$12,000 over four years from the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund. She graduated in the top 10% of her class, was a member of the National Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Student Council, and soccer and track teams. Teachers say Madeleine can somehow "find the positives in negative situations." She has been accepted into the Biological Sciences program at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, where she will study neuroscience and biology. Madeleine's dream is to be a physician's assistant in a hospital neurosurgery department.

For more information about how to help college dreams come true for deserving local students, visit the Oconomowoc Scholarship Fund website at onomowocscholarshipfund.org.