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Date: December 10, 2024

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Foundation Announces 2025 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Winners

The Wayne County Foundation is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship for Wayne County – Luke Cottrell of Lincoln High School and Willow Warren of Northeastern High School. Lilly Endowment Community Scholars are known for their community involvement, academic achievement, character, and leadership.

“We are honored to be recognizing Luke and Willow as the two recipients of the Lilly Scholarship” said Brian Schleeper, Director of Nonprofit Engagement.” They are both very worthy selections, and we look forward to seeing what they do in their next steps as a result of these awards.”

Each Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship provides for full tuition, required fees and a special allocation of up to \$900 per year for required books and required equipment for four years. The scholarship is for full-time undergraduate students leading to a baccalaureate degree at any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university. Lilly Endowment Community Scholars may also participate in the Lilly Scholars Network (LSN), which connects both current scholars and alumni with resources and opportunities to be active leaders on their campuses and in their communities. Both the scholarship program and LSN are supported by grants from Lilly Endowment to Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI) and Indiana Humanities.

In determining Wayne County’s Lilly Endowment Community Scholar nominees, consideration was given to Academic Performance, a Personal Insight and Statement of Plans Essay, Extracurricular Activities and Work Experience. After the field of applicants was narrowed down, nominees were submitted to ICI, the statewide administrator of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program, which approves the final selection of scholarship recipients.

“We were very impressed with the number and quality of all the applications we received,” said Rebecca Gilliam, Executive Director of the Wayne County Foundation. “Our Scholarship Committee reviewed materials from the best and brightest in Wayne County and are excited to be honoring Luke and Willow as the awardees of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.”

Lilly Endowment created the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program for the 1997-98 school year. Since then, grant funding in excess of \$490 million has supported more than 5,300 Indiana students who have received scholarships through the program.

The primary purposes of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program are: 1) to help raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana; 2) to increase awareness of the beneficial roles Indiana community foundations can play in their communities; and 3) to encourage and support the efforts of current and past Lilly Endowment Community Scholars to engage with each other and with Indiana

business, governmental, educational, nonprofit and civic leaders to improve the quality of life in Indiana generally and in local communities throughout the state.

The Wayne County Foundation was established in February 1979 and was one of the first twelve community foundations in the state of Indiana. It exists to foster and encourage private philanthropic giving, to enhance the spirit of community and to improve the quality of life in the Wayne County, Indiana, area now and for future generations. Over the last 45 years, the Foundation has received more than sixty-six million dollars in gifts and awarded over forty-two million dollars in grants and scholarships.

[Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) is an Indianapolis-based private foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of [community development](#), [education](#) and [religion](#). Although the Endowment funds programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion, it maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.

Since 1997, [Independent Colleges of Indiana](#) has administered the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program statewide with funding provided by Lilly Endowment. Founded in 1948, ICI serves as the collective voice for the state's 29 private, nonprofit colleges and universities. ICI institutions employ over 22,000 Hoosiers and generate a total local economic impact of over \$5 billion annually. Students at ICI colleges have Indiana's highest four-year, on-time graduation rates, and ICI institutions produce 30 percent of Indiana's bachelor's degrees while enrolling 20 percent of its undergraduates.

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