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## **For Immediate Release**

# **Hancock County Community Foundation Introduces 2019 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Finalists**

**GREENFIELD, Ind. (October 11, 2018)** – HCCF has the privilege of administering the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship (LECSP) in Hancock County. Each year, HCCF applies for the opportunity to recommend two graduating students to Lilly Endowment for the full four-year tuition scholarship award. Should they accept the application, HCCF implements and supervises the process for selection.

Eligible applicants must be ranked in the top 15% of their graduating class and plan to pursue a baccalaureate course of study, to be completed in four years, at any accredited Indiana public or private college or university. Student applications are submitted online and reviewed blindly (without name or contact information) by third-party professional readers represented by experienced out-of-county, community foundation personnel. The third party selects eight finalists, two students from each Hancock County public high school, who best meet the scholarship criteria. Community service is the primary criterion for qualification. Financial need is not a consideration for the LECSP.

The eight finalists were interviewed in October by a volunteer committee identified by HCCF, all of whom adhere to a strict conflict of interest policy. This committee has the difficult task of selecting two students from the talented pool of eight finalists and submitting their recommendation to Lilly Endowment for approval. Pending approval, the awards will be announced in December. The eight finalists will be honored at their respective school corporation's board meetings in November.

To be eligible to apply for the LECSP in Hancock County, students must be Hancock County residents, attend one of the four Hancock County public high schools, be ranked in the top 15% of their graduating class, and plan to pursue a baccalaureate course of study, to be completed in four years, at any accredited Indiana public or private college or university.

Below are the stories of the eight finalists:

## Abby Brown

*Eastern Hancock High School*



As Abby Brown's principal, Mr. Pfaff, puts it, "She has accomplished a great deal and built quite a record here, but it is her character and concern for the welfare of others that sets her apart from her peers." Abby Brown of Eastern Hancock High School has twice been elected as president of the class of 2019 by her peers. She has led the Drama Club as president for two years and has been involved in Show Choir and Band all four years of high school.

Her work outside of the walls of Eastern Hancock High School is equally dedicated.

As a member of the Neighbors Against Substance Abuse (NASA) Youth Council, she has helped plan and produce two youth summits, which included a full day of workshops to influence students from the four area school systems to recognize and stay away from substance abuse. She and her school mates also taught the eighth graders about the dangers of marijuana use and debunked the cultural myths surrounding it.

Abby has served four years on the Hancock County Community Foundation's Y-GIVE Youth Board – Youth Granting, Investing, Volunteering and Engaging in Hancock County. She says that the experience of projects like volunteering time and resources to the Greenfield Head Start program, Happy Birthday Hancock County, and serving, along with other board members, as an interviewer and decision maker to choose a high school junior to receive an award they can pass on to a nonprofit organization, "has been a very valuable experience and taught me how to be a better member of our community."

Church leadership also plays a major part in Abby's life. She has served the past three years as a vocalist on the Youth Worship Team at Wilkinson Church of Christ. Her youth pastor, Nolan Hall, states, "While her vocal talents give me plenty of reason to keep her on the team, her passion is what makes her personality so contagious on the worship team." She practices and performs every Sunday afternoon during the school year. As a member of the Youth Leadership Team, Abby participates in a group helping to plan how to make the most out of Sunday nights at Wilkinson, also planning trips and outreach events. Another role that Abby just started is volunteering in a new special needs ministry.

This summer was the first experience Abby had as a Staff Assistant for Royal Family Kids Camp, a national organization dedicated to providing a week of camp for children with a history of foster care placement. She says of her experience, "I intend to participate again in the years to come. I found that even though these kids have been through so much, they are just kids who want to be loved and cared for."

Abby plans to enter a career as a speech pathologist, in order to help children who have barriers to speaking develop the ability to communicate clearly with others.

## **Caitlyn Cox**

*Eastern Hancock High School*



With a goal of becoming a research geneticist working with embryos, specifically dairy cow embryos, Caitlyn Cox is passionate about the dairy business and hopes to have a hand in making milk production more efficient. She states, “With this chosen career path, I would like to be employed by a company that values community service and sees its importance.”

Cox’s interest in the dairy business has grown through her involvement in 4-H where she has held many leadership roles in the Country Kritters 4-H Club and exhibited several projects, including Dairy at the Hancock County 4-H Fair each year. Her 4-H Leader, Vickie Ramsey praised her leadership qualities. “She serves as a great role model for all members of the club. She takes these leadership positions to heart and puts the club’s needs and interests first.”

As she attended meetings and activities at the fairgrounds, the flower beds caught Cox’s attention. At first, she started cleaning out the flower beds annually in an effort to help beautify the fairgrounds property. Last year, she decided to embark on a more encompassing maintenance plan of the beds. She has pulled weeds, pruned shrubs, sprayed for weed prevention and mulched the areas. During her junior year she completed 23 hours of flower bed maintenance. Caitlyn declares, “It is my goal to improve upon the image of the fairgrounds in order to allow the visitors of our fair facilities to further enjoy the sight.”

The patients of the Shriners’ Children’s Hospital in Lexington, KY have benefited from Caitlyn’s service efforts. Working since eighth grade with the Daughters of the Nile, a service group connected to Shriners, she has sewed 442 pillow cases, 900 pillow inserts, 58 blankets and 90 pre-operation dolls. Marcia Moses, chairperson of the sewing projects states, “With the help of (Caitlyn), we were able to double our goal and sent over 1,100 of the small pillows for the children to use. She has a wonderful outlook on life and really enjoys helping others. When (she) commits to a project, it will be accomplished.”

Dairy farming continues to be a passion. Cox is an active member of the Indiana Junior Holstein Association. She started out as a Junior Reporter during her freshman and sophomore years, and served as a District Representative during her junior year. This year, Cox is Indiana Holstein Princess and promotes the dairy industry and Holstein breed to the public. She is also active in the Hancock County Dairy Producers, where she is responsible for recording minutes and recognition posters. As an employee of Engleking Holsteins, she is involved in many facets of the dairy industry that she hopes to continue to be a part of after graduating from Purdue University.

## Ethan Elsbury

*Greenfield-Central High School*



Ethan Elsbury's dream of creating a garden that would benefit his school and community started in July, 2016. In the 2017 growing season, the Greenfield-Central Community Garden produced 27 pounds of lettuce, 58 onions, 63 pounds of green beans, 105 ears of corn, 143 cucumbers, 232 radishes, 237 carrots, 274 potatoes, 361 peppers and 2,623 tomatoes. This harvest is served at four different school cafeterias which benefits 2,800 students. He states that the purpose of this project is "for students to be able to see and taste the difference between store-bought produce that has been shipped versus that which was grown locally." He has been recognized in Hancock County for this project as the recipient of the Martha Beckenholdt Youth Philanthropy Award in 2017 and as one of five Indiana Distinguished Finalists for the National Prudential Spirit of

Community Award.

His passion for Agriculture has driven other community service projects that Elsbury has been involved in through Greenfield-Central FFA and Hancock County 4-H. He is currently working on a project through FFA, in partnership with Eastern Hancock FFA, called "Safer Hancock County". This committee is exploring ways to, "educate teenagers and adults on the dangers of distracted driving, inform them on how to be defensive drivers, and how to co-exist with farm equipment when encountered on the road." This committee was formed in response to the loss of a young life in an automobile accident involving a piece of farm equipment.

As a member of the Hancock County Cool Clovers 4-H Club, Elsbury has assisted his 4-H Leader, Rhonda Beeker with the Foods Auction at the Hancock County Fair, transporting foods to the auction site and helping with set up and clean up.

"Whatever the task at hand may be, he is always very focused, enthusiastic and dependable and accomplishes the goals he sets for himself and always strives to make the best better," says Beeker.

Elsbury's work ethic is further evidenced by the fact that he, by his own description, has grown from a shy third grader to a two-time Indiana State Fair 4-H Demonstration Contest winner. His FFA Advisor, Scott Jacobs shared, "As an FFA member in the Greenfield-Central FFA Chapter, he has distinguished himself by participating in various FFA Activities and community service projects. He has served as the chapter treasurer, reporter and president. Moreover, he has also been elected to serve the eight-county, twenty-chapter District 8 FFA as their Vice President for the 2018-19 school year. This is a testimony to his leadership development."

Other activities Elsbury has participated in include food drives, raising money for Riley Children's Hospital, Adopt-a-Family, and Salvation Army Bell Ringer. He also serves the Maxwell

Intermediate School by helping each year with the Book Fair. A new project has been Read to Feed, an FFA project designed to promote literacy and agricultural education in middle school classrooms. Elsbury also finds time to work several hours a week for Paugh Farms during planting and harvest seasons.

Elsbury plans to attend Purdue University, majoring in Agricultural Systems Management and continue contributing his time and talent to the agriculture community in Hancock County after he graduates.

## **Cade Gentry**

*Mt. Vernon High School*



His desire to cultivate relationships, provide medical assistance and serve others are reflected in Cade Gentry's future career choice of becoming a physician's assistant. These qualities are also evident in his service to his high school and his community.

Gentry states that his first year of service on the Hancock County Hope House Youth Board has been an eye-opening experience. When asked if he had the time, talent and treasure to enact a positive change in Hancock County, what would it be, and why, Cade responded: "If I had the resources to enact a tangible change in Hancock County, the change would be providing a better lifestyle for anyone living in poverty.

Considering that I have all the resources and time, I would make a safe-haven, so to speak, in an area in the center of every Hancock County town with the same purpose." He goes on to explain that he would provide money management classes and train the residents in skills for attaining and retaining a job.

Other volunteer efforts and activities include United Way Christmas Service, National Honors Society service projects, Best Buddies at MVHS, The Green Team (school recycling), Spirit Club, Mt. Vernon Youth Basketball Camp, Neighborhoods Against Substance Abuse (NASA), Mt. Vernon Youth Football League, and Traditions at Brookside Senior Living.

Many of Gentry's high school activities have contributed to his development of leadership skills. He has attended Academic Leadership Academy, which is designed to empower students to take lead roles in their classrooms and on their athletic teams, specifically uplifting other peers from classes or teams. He also serves as a member of Marauder Mentoring for incoming freshmen and served as leader of group activities during Freshman Orientation day. Gentry was chosen to serve on the Mt. Vernon Superintendent Advisory Council as student body representative, attending monthly meetings, taking notes and acting as a voice for the MVHS student body.

Gentry's former basketball coach, Travis Daugherty says, "I can speak just as highly about Cade the person as I can Cade the athlete. His positive energy and outlook are qualities I wish more

high school-aged kids possessed. He treats people well and willingly looks out for others. When things get challenging, many kids his age fold under the pressure or wilt in the face of adversity. Cade has demonstrated a strong will and a mental toughness that has inspired those around him, and I know that rare quality will serve him well in all areas of his life moving forward.”

## **Luke Horner**

*New Palestine High School*



Fr. Chris Wadelton, whose church was the beneficiary of Luke’s Eagle Scout project stated, “The points of the Scout Law, of which (Luke) is very familiar, describe him well: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Brave, Clean and Reverent.”

Horner’s Eagle Scout Project took about one year (239 hours of work) to accomplish. His assignment was to create a safe and clean space behind the St. Philip Neri Catholic Church’s Youth House for the youth to come together to learn and worship. Horner had to obtain materials and donations for the project, organize volunteers from his Scout Troop and the community and make a formal proposal to have his project approved. He shared that one of the most crucial responsibilities was making sure the work environment was safe for the volunteers. The result was removal and installation of a better patio, new steps to the youth building, planting a flower garden, adding picnic tables and various statues, as well as sodding the grassy areas.

Other Scout activities that Horner was involved in include three tours with Crossroads of America Scout Band when the band performed at several national landmarks, and participation in Troop 244 where he achieved ranks of Tenderfoot Scout, Second Class Scout, First Class Scout, Star Scout, Life Scout, Order of the Arrow, and is currently being considered for the rank of Eagle Scout.

Involvement at Holy Spirit Catholic Church had also been an important part of Horner’s life. He has served as altar boy for the past seven years. He is also part of the AV team, helping with audio and video equipment. He assists at the annual confirmation retreat and helps out at the annual Holy Spirit Festival and Vacation Bible School.

Horner says, “Having the opportunity to help others to connect closer to God, and take another step in their spiritual journey has been such a positive experience for me, as well as the people which I sponsored.”

Horner is also active in New Palestine High School where he participates in National Honors Society, National Spanish Honor Society, National Science Honor Society, Academic A Team, Football and Chess Club. He enjoyed helping with National Science Honor Society Kids Camps in

2017. This is a Saturday activity where he was able to teach elementary students about geocaching and reading GPS coordinates, as well as using science to make “bath bombs.”

Horner’s interest in science has supported his dream of becoming a Physical Therapist. His experience of receiving extensive treatment for scoliosis was a big part of that career decision. He says, “I feel that physical therapy is a great way to help people by using my leadership skills to motivate my patients.”

Horner’s Scoutmaster, Mark Crawford, says, “Overall, (Luke) is hard working and personifies the values of citizenship, integrity, and honor while maintaining an excellent academic record and serving his community.”

## **Matthew Kelley**

*New Palestine High School*



Appreciation of math, science and the environment have shaped Matthew Kelley’s life as well as his future. Kelley plans to pursue a career in Aeronautical Engineering, focusing on the dynamics and control of aircraft. According to Kelley, this knowledge contributes to optimizing flight path trajectories and efficiencies, helping to reduce fuel consumption and emissions.

As the person in charge of Imagination Station at the New Palestine United Methodist Church’s Vacation Bible School the past two years, Kelley has introduced approximately 350 children to different scientific principles, relating observable things happening in the scientific world to how God loves us.

Kelley states, “By participating in this section of the VBS experience, I was able to share my interests and abilities in the sciences while teaching life-fulfilling lessons to the children of my community.”

His love for science and engineering also shows in his selection of an Eagle Scout Leadership Project, which he recently completed. The project involved converting an old culvert into a gravel walking path/bridge for the environmental education trail at Sugar Creek Township Park. The old culvert area had to be cleared and 27 tons of crushed stone were distributed over a 6-foot by 30-foot area. The new gravel bridge provides a safe walking path over the culvert connecting the two sides of the environmental education trail established by Dani’s Dreams. Kelley contributed 90 hours of preparation and labor into this project.

As a member of the Science Honor Society at New Palestine High School, Kelley enjoyed volunteering in the science camps designed for local elementary school students. For the biology camp, he was responsible for the station providing specimen slides, teaching students to use a microscope and showing them different parts of a plant cell. At the chemistry camp, Kelley taught about chemical reactions, showing the students how to coat a penny with zinc.

For earth and space camp, he presented information about the planets and demonstrated gravitational forces.

Participating in varsity soccer and golf have also contributed to Kelley's leadership and service opportunities. He was selected as captain of the NPHS Soccer team his senior year, and has volunteered in the NPHS Booster Club Concession Stand. Kelley has also become certified in and worked as a Soccer Official in the Indiana Soccer League. Other activities at school include Quiz Bowl, Academic Super Bowl, Robotics Team, Spanish Honor Society, and Student Council.

His former Scout Cubmaster, Joe Wehrheim, praised Kelley's efforts: "He is one of those scouts you can always count on to come through on anything he is asked to do. He is a young man of great character, faith and principles, and will accomplish everything he sets his mind to do. He lives every day by the Scout Oath and Scout Law."

## **Esther Michael**

*Greenfield-Central High School*



Esther Michael spent two weeks of her 2017 summer in Uganda, Africa, working on various service projects including fixing a broken well and teaching and playing with street children. This experience of service echoes through all the aspects of this Greenfield-Central student's life, including her intent to study business management and entrepreneurship.

"Creating solutions inspires me," says Michael. "Filling a need excites me. I journal ideas and they grow by the week. My own ventures, meeting successful entrepreneurs, and studying success stories have convinced me this is my passion."

As a result of her experience in Uganda, she is currently preparing for a half marathon to raise money for World Vision to provide clean water to impoverished African communities. She has also stitched and painted notebooks and hand poured jar candles to sell in order to raise money for the cause.

In order to pay for her Uganda trip, Michael solicited donations by requesting autographs from celebrities, then selling the autographed photos. She received autographs from former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, singer TobyMac, NFL football star Tim Tebow and Duck Dynasty star Korie Robertson, among others. The support she raised was double what she needed, so she was able to help pay the cost of the trip of other students on her team. This is one great example of how Entrepreneurship and Service are intertwined in Michael's world.

Another business/service project dear to Michael's heart is Cuppa Hope, the coffee shop at Hope Center Indy, a residential campus for women rescued from human trafficking. Since February, she has volunteered at the coffee shop for four hours on Saturday mornings. She

participated in an off-site training from making espresso drinks, and has trained other volunteers on espresso and frappuccino machines and techniques. Other training opportunities have included how to handle the PTSD attacks that some residents experience, and suicide prevention techniques.

“She has always stepped up and has always shown great responsibility when I have needed her, says Heidi Mescall, Manager of Hope Center Indy. “She has an amazing heart, and an amazing need to volunteer and help others. She is always the first to show up and last to leave when we have events and programs. She is personable, compassionate, and dedicated to everything she does.”

At school, Michael is involved in National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, G-CHS varsity soccer, and G-CHS Cougar Pride Marching Band. In addition to volunteering and maintaining a high GPA, she is also participating in a 20-hour per week High School Co-Op position with Elanco Animal Health.

Paul Romoser, pastor at Brookville Road Community Church says, “She has positioned herself to be one of the main players in our student ministry. This has been accomplished by spending time with peers, reading books on leadership, attending leadership training sessions, organizing and planning events, being transparent to her peers and most of all showing people she really cares about them. She lives by a high moral standard and is unselfish with her time. She is a person of integrity. She is the real deal.”

## **Emma Walker**

*Mt. Vernon High School*



Emma Walker has turned a medical crisis into a positive force for her life. After suffering a debilitating condition and working hard through physical therapy to regain the use of her legs, Walker discovered that she would like to emulate her caregivers who showed her joy, knowledge and compassion. She feels drawn to working in areas that require detail-oriented best practices and precise work.

She states, “I am very excited to apply my gifts and talents to the career of nursing.” A minor in sign language will enable her to better serve patients or their family members with hearing disabilities. She is currently a member of the American Sign Language Club at Mt. Vernon High

School.

Along with physical healing, Walker is also very interested in emotional healing and has helped to start a group called the Lifeline Club. After experiencing the loss of a young man who had

taken his own life, during her junior year in high school she worked with Mr. Williams, the Mt. Vernon Middle School principal, to develop a club to support students who had struggles.

“During the funeral I was struck with the amount of grief and sadness by those he had left behind,” says Walker. “I wondered if he would have had a safe place to share his struggles, would he still be here.”

She and a friend started Lifeline for students that focused on creating a safe place for middle school students to share their struggles and to get support and love in their time of need from their high school mentors. At this time the group has five to ten people attending.

“The group has been very successful helping many, many teens through crisis; as well as organizing a suicide awareness walk and displaying positive, uplifting signage in our school’s hallways. (Emma’s) bravery, courage, vision, and attention to detail are exceptional,” says Williams.

Other activities at school include serving on the Prom Committee, National Honors Society, Freshman Mentor, and Yearbook editorial staff. Walker also works eight hours per week as a PSA Caregiver for At Home Preferred, where she is getting a jump start on her future nursing career.

Another service project dear to Walker’s heart is one that her family founded after delivering Christmas gifts to low-income families who were sleeping on the floor. For three years Lay Me Down to Sleep has collected and provided bedding, beds and mattresses to needy families.

Sharing her faith is also a priority for Walker, and she has assisted with a prom for young adults with disabilities and Good Neighbor Weekend with Northview Church; the Outlook Youth Sports Program and Outlook Christian Preschool with Outlook Christian Church; and Life Action Family Camp in Michigan as a member of the kitchen team. Walker also served at The Awakening, a spiritual retreat designed for high school teens. The organizer of this retreat says: “(Emma) was quick to offer help, and did not leave until everything was set up for the next event. It was truly a pleasure to watch her grow and serve these young teens. Whatever she chooses to do in life, she will do so with integrity and humility.”

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*HCCF provides philanthropic leadership by encouraging giving, learning, community pride and civic engagement. Working with caring individuals, families, and organizations to create or grow existing permanent endowment funds is critical to the organization’s mission. These funds generate income that is distributed in the form of grants and scholarships to enrich and enhance life in Hancock County, as well as support the donor’s favorite charitable causes, both at home and afar forever. HCCF has granted more than \$14 million since its inception in 1992.*