

## Full rides

### Lilly Scholar recipients are grateful for life-changing call

By **Shelley Swift** | Daily R eporter  
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HANCOCK COUNTY – Seventeen-year-old Emma Mann was chasing around a toddler at the house where she babysits last week when she got a call that would change her life.

Eighteen-year-old Maitlyn Griner was studying for a math exam in her bedroom that afternoon when she got the same call.

Both girls were selected as this year's Lilly Endowment Community Scholars for Hancock County, which awards them full four-year scholarships to the Indiana college of their choice.

The Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program has been making dreams come true for select high school seniors each year since 1998.

More than 5,000 Indiana students have received Lilly scholarship money – totalling more than \$439 million – since the program's inception.

"I can't even begin to say how grateful we are," said Maitlyn's mom, Stacy Griner.

Without the scholarship, Maitlyn wouldn't have been able to afford the tuition at her first-choice school – Butler University – where she hopes to study forensic science next fall.

"Even with the money they were offering it was still going to be too expensive," she said.

But not anymore. Janet White, education officer for the Hancock County Community Foundation, said it's an honor to play a part in rewarding the best and brightest students within the county each year.

But good grades aren't the main part of the selection process.

A student's community service accounts for 40% of the overall selection process, said White, followed by 20% each for



**From left:** Lilly Endowment Scholarship winner senior Maitlyn Griner of Mt. Vernon High School. // Lilly Endowment Scholarship winner senior Emma Mann of New Palestine.  
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the application, essay and interview.

"It's just amazing to see the young people in Hancock County who have served in so many different capacities. To meet those finalists each year has been very uplifting," she said.

The Hancock County Community Foundation serves as county liaison for the Lilly Endowment, sorting through stacks of applications to whittle them down to a set of eight finalists based on community

"I'm especially proud of the work I've done to promote mental health," said Maitlyn, who said she's made great strides in battling anxiety.

Emma, a senior at New Palestine High School, has also turned her own personal experience as motivation to do good in the world.

When her aunt, Julie Lamb, was diagnosed with colon cancer nine years ago, 9-year-old Emma brought her a teddy bear to make her feel better.

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involvement, academic achievement, character and leadership.

The selection process is completely anonymous, with the applicants' names hidden until endowment members interview the finalists in person.

Maitlyn, a senior at Mt.

Vernon High School, knew she was facing some stiff competition.

"It's very humbling to be chosen, especially when you see the amazing things the other applicants have done," she said.

For the past four years Maitlyn has served as the only Indiana member of the national D.A.R.E. Youth Advocacy Board, traveling as far as Ireland and Hawaii to spread the word for the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program.

She's visited local fifth grade classrooms to inspire students to lead drug-free, healthy lifestyles, and has made several public service announcements for media outlets. She's especially proud of implementing the D.A.R.E. curriculum at Mt. Vernon Middle School.

Maitlyn is also active in enhancing student life at Mt. Vernon High School, where she's been a part of student council for the past four years, now serving as executive president.

She is chairman of her school's Choose Kind and Mental Health Week committees, and has also been involved in the Marauder Mob and Marauder Mentors programs, helping incoming freshmen to get plugged in and comfortable at the school.

Her aunt was so moved by the gesture, Emma was inspired to start Emma's Peace Bears, an initiative that has provided hundreds of teddy bears to those facing cancer and chemotherapy over the years. Each bear comes with a handwritten note with words of encouragement.

Over the years Emma has raised \$10,000 to purchase the bears, and has donated more than 500 of them to different states and countries.

In addition to running the peace bear program, Emma also gives back regularly through her school.

Since she was a freshman she's helped out in the essential skills classroom, fueled by her desire to become a special education teacher someday.

She's also helped integrate students into the high school experience by inviting them to parties and taking some of them to Friday night football games. This past summer, she hosted a backyard party for essential skills students at her home, where the group enjoyed an outdoor viewing part of the Olympic trials.

Emma's big sister Kendall — a freshman at DePauw University — was a Lilly scholarship recipient last year, making theirs the first Hancock County family with back-to-back Lilly scholars.

It's a huge honor for any student to achieve — especially two sisters who are just a year apart, said White. "They both deserved it," she said.

Mary Gible, president of the Hancock County Community Foundation, said she's consistently impressed by the caliber of Lilly Scholar applicants



**From top:** Lilly Endowment Scholarship winner senior Emma Mann of New Palestine is pictured along with her father, Jeff Mann. // Lilly Endowment Scholarship winner senior Maitlyn Griner of Mt. Vernon receives a special charcuterie tray along with other gifts from the Hancock County Community Foundation's Janet White. **Tom Russo | Daily Report er**

each year.

"I've been doing this 16 years and every year I'm just blown away by the individuals we have the great pleasure to meet.

It's an honor and a privilege," she said, as she greeted both of this year's recipients at the foundation's office on Monday.

Both girls were given a bouquet of flowers, a decorative charcuterie tray, a yard sign and a bag of "foundation swag" to take home with them.

Gible said she hopes the swag bag helps remind the accomplished students of their roots here in Hancock County, and expressed hope that they would both return here to work after college.

"Hancock County needs you," she told them. "As you go out and pursue life, never forget where you came from, and know that we'd love to have you back here someday."

