

46th Annual



ROCK ISLAND-MILAN
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

INNOVATION • OPPORTUNITY • SUPPORT

Austin Academic Achievement Awards
and
RIMEF Scholarships



May 13, 2026

Austin Academic Achievement Top Ten Awards

Recognition of 67 Top Ten Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors

Austin Academic Achievement Departmental Awards

Scholarships totaling \$35,000 awarded to Seniors from ten Academic Areas

Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation Scholarships

\$180,450 in scholarships awarded to the Class of 2026

\$215,450 in AAAA and Named Scholarships Awarded to the Class of 2026. These awards would not be possible without generous donations to the RIMEF from individuals, families, businesses, and organizations. Thank you.

Tonight's Ceremony is generously sponsored by Bally's Quad Cities:



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Austin Academic Achievement Awards

The Austin Academic Achievement Awards (AAAA) is a Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation program rewarding the academic excellence of Rock Island High School students. Every year, the Top Ten students of each class are recognized and two seniors in ten academic areas are awarded scholarships. Departmental scholarship recipients are selected by their teachers and awarded \$2,000 for 1st place and \$1,500 for 2nd place for the following academic areas:

- Business
- Career & Technical Education
- English
- Fine Arts - Performing
- Fine Arts - Visual
- Math
- Multilingual Learners
- Science
- Social Studies
- World Languages

These awards are presented annually at the Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation's *Austin Academic Achievement Awards and Scholarship Night*.

History

The Academic Achievement Awards program was originally established by the Illinois Chamber of Commerce in 1980 to recognize academic achievement in all Rock Island County high schools. When the Chamber made the decision to end the program in 2010, Rock Island High School teacher and community leader Chuck Austin turned to the Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation (RIMEF) to ensure the awarding of academic excellence continued for Rock Island High School students. In 2018, the RIMEF renamed the awards the "Austin Academic Achievement Awards" to honor Chuck and his commitment to the continuation of this worthwhile program. In 2022, the RIMEF added two academic areas to the awards: Multilingual Learners (formerly EL) and the Fine Arts area was divided into Visual Arts and Performing Arts.

Since 1981, nearly 800 Rock Island High School seniors have received scholarship assistance through the Austin Academic Achievement Awards. Including this evening's awards, the RIMEF has provided over \$400,000 in scholarships to 31 of these deserving Rocky graduates. Each year, the program and scholarships are made possible by the generosity of alumni, businesses, and members of our community who understand the value of acknowledging the academic achievements of our students. The RIMEF is grateful for this support from our AAAA contributors in helping our RIHS students further their education.



Top Ten Academic Achievers

Freshmen:

Farah A. Alhamdan	Kaelynn Renae Ablavi Gbenyo	Rory Cecelia Rockwell
Brayden Michael Baguss	Alexander Michael Gonzales	Alexandra Guadalupe Tinoco Ruiz
Christopher John Blackburn	Claire Gustafson	Asha Renee Trahan
Leo Roger Braddy	Olivia Ann Hedeem	Cooler Tu
Bryanna Taleese Brand	La’Vayah Dayjah Lynn Hunter	Harper Olivia Vance
Oliver Christian Cooley	Evangelina Desiree Kendall	Eh Wah
Lillian Rose Dale	Faith Renae Lovelady	Ariana Estela Williams
Solange Dorika	Dannika MariaLu Martinez	Jaxson Lee Forest Willis
Gumwendia Paul Ehimwenman	Angel Marie McGowan	Cameron Washington Yoder
Henry Price Ferguson	Rafael Oden Perez	Nevaeh Zapata
Isabell Angel Gansz	Ashley Veraly Rivera Argueta	

Sophomores:

Lillian Emma Carls	Charlotte Paige O’Hern-Maidak	Isabel Elizabeth Marie Ruberg
Jada Elizabeth Gottcent	Louise Corinne O’Melia	Joseph Elliot Tavernier
Christianne Grace Hare	Jenny Paw	Izabel Anahy Vega
K’Moo Eh Hser	Luke Michael Phares	Gloria Karen Wah
Eden Alivia Lovelady	Isabel Elizabeth Marie Ruberg	Chloe Avilla Wiese

Juniors:

Nathan Christopher Hale Anderson	Addyson Joyce Lincoln	Kylee Ann Raygor
Elliot Matthew Batz	Karley Marie Loveless	Ywa Tar Hay Say
Alaina Elise Bonja	Liam James Muir	Madelyn Elizabeth Schrempf
Charles Abraham Cooley	Nathan Andrew Pothoven	

Seniors:

Milli Glo Gidaszewski	Nahimana Alicia Key Martin	Eh Dah Soe
Braden Michael Gilliland	Claire Ellen O’Hern-Maidak	Averi Yvonne Vroman
John Sel Htoo	Olivia Lynn Riecke	
Gabriel William Mahn	Olivia Claire Seidlitz	

Austin Academic Achievement Awards - Departmental Scholarships

	<i>First Place - \$2,000</i>	<i>Second Place - \$1,500</i>
Business	Brandon Rush, Jr.	Hae Moo
Career & Technical Education	Jenna Kitterman	Yazmin Tinoco Ruiz
English	Gabe Mahn	Olivia Seidlitz
Fine Arts - Performing	Tyler Whitten	EJ Mumma
Fine Arts – Visual	Adrian Mills	Aubrey Doss
Math	John Htoo	Owen Klapperich
Multilingual Learners	Martha Abuke	Leon Agelix
Science	Averi Vroman	Lauryn Barker
Social Studies	Claire O’Hern-Maidak	Nahimana Martin
World Languages	Henry Mass	Annabelle Avegnon

Austin Academic Achievement Award Assistance: Ann Austin, Janet Moline



Thank You to Our AAAA Contributors



Donations received 5/2/2025-5/1/2026

Individual/Family

\$1,000+

Nanette Albracht
Ann Austin
Nancy & Doug Hultquist
Karen Habberthur Leonard
Margaret Sheeran & Tom Manteuffel
Linda & Art Milton
RI/Milan Booster Club
Wendel Swan
Linda Wheelan

\$500 – \$999

Richard Arnell
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\$250 – \$499

Cheryl Faidley & Dee Ahuja
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Class of 1955
Kathy & Dan Davis
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Sandy & Dennis Spurgetis
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Molly Teigland

\$100 – \$249

Helen Bai
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Nancy & Bill Hass
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Linda Hillis
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Joyce & Mike Mullinix
Karen & Jerry Murphy
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Karen & Pete Nyman
Jeanne & David O'Melia
Rhonda Osbourne
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Ellen & Roger Pohlman
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Jana & Dave Strickler
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Gary Sullivan
Debbi & Bob Swanson
Marie & Richard Timmer
Shari & Robert Tomich

(\$100 – \$249 cont.)

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Alice & Kevin Traylor
Jan & Jerry Tutskey
Margaret Tweet
Peggy Ander Vorona
Darla & Ralph Walters
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Sandy & Don Wentler
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Laura & Louis Belby
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Martha & Jeff Dismar
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Mary Beth Reiff Harvey
Peggy & Ed Lieblein

Up to \$99

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Rita & Bill Martin
Carla & Tom McGreevey
Mary & Jeff Newcomb
Dee & Paul Noe
April Palmer
Sue & Jay Pienta
Becky Pracht
Kathy DeSmet Qualls
Rob Schab
Mary Ann & Randy Slusser
Cindy & David VanLandegen

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In-Kind Contributors

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Whitey's Ice Cream

Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation Scholarships

The RIMEF has 57 named scholarships funding 100 individual scholarship awards this year. These scholarships provide over \$180,000 in financial assistance to Rock Island High School graduates. Any Rock Island High School senior may qualify for one or more of these awards to further their education. We offer scholarships for those planning to attend a vocational school, junior college, or a traditional four-year college/university. The RIMEF is the largest single provider of scholarships just to RIHS Seniors having awarded over \$1.75 Million in scholarships starting with the first Hass Family Scholarship given in 1998.

Each RIHS senior's scholarship application package includes our online application, high school transcript, letter of recommendation from a teacher or coach, and a 500-word essay illustrating how the assistance will help them achieve their dreams and how they will use their education to make a difference.

New scholarships starting with the Class of 2026:

Alla Family Foundation Excellence Award

Established by Dr. VR and Mrs. Nirmala Alla to recognize and reward a student of academic excellence. Award: \$2,000

Lela and Virgil Arnett Scholarship

Established in the memory of the Arnetts who raised three RIHS graduates, The scholarship supports a student pursuing a career requiring community college, vocational/technical/trade school or healthcare education. Merit is evaluated by school, community, and personal activities with preference given to students demonstrating a strong work ethic and service commitment. Award: \$1,000

Bouchareb Family Scholarship

Established in honor of Rachid and Therese Bouchareb, first-generation immigrants who owned and operated a beloved local restaurant for over 40 years while raising three successful RIHS graduates. The scholarship supports first or second generation immigrant students pursuing studies in medicine or nursing. Award: \$2,500

Kindness Wins with Madison Keys Scholarship

Established through the Kindness Wins Foundation to award one female and one male currently active on the RIHS Tennis Teams. Students must complete hours of community service. Award: \$1,500 each

South Rock Island Township Scholarship

Established for a student residing in South Rock Island Township who has a history of public or community service. The student may attend any type of trade, 2-yr community/junior college, or 4-yr college/university. Award: \$1,000

Our community is fortunate to have alumni, individuals, organizations, and businesses who appreciate the impact the Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation has made on the lives of RIMSD students. In return, they have provided thousands of dollars in scholarships to help our Rocks continue to succeed. RIMEF scholarships send the message to our community that these students and their futures matter. The RIMEF and its scholarship benefactors support these students' goals of furthering their educations and fulfilling their dreams.

Any individual, family, organization, or business may establish a scholarship through the Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation. With a minimum donation, setting criteria, and a determined award amount, you can provide a scholarship opportunity for our deserving Rock Island High School seniors. Please contact the RIMEF at 309.581.2154 or rimef@rimisd41.org for additional information.

Scholarship Committee:

Cara Banks

Bryan Blew

Barb Cady

Meghan Cooley

Rachel Gustafson

Robin Jorgesen

Eric Rowell

Kym Vandygriff

LaShanta Williams



Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation Scholarships



Complete scholarship descriptions and criteria can be found on our website: www.rimef.org

Allah Family Foundation Excellence Award - \$2,000

Recipient: Olivia Seidlitz

Nell Althoff Family Memorial Scholarship - \$2,500 each

Recipients: Quinn Feigley, Ethan Ignatius, Christer New, Claire O'Hern-Maidak

Lela and Virgil Arnett Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Honesty Vesey

Charles O. Austin Leadership Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Gabe Mahn

Bally's Quad Cities Scholarship - 3 awards

Recipient, \$3,000 award: Millie Gidaszewski

Recipient, \$2,000 award: Braden Gilliland

Recipient, \$1,000 award: Camryn Fineran

Carole S. Barkan Memorial Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Olivia Riecke

Boeye Family Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Mallory Hudnall

The Bouchareb Family Scholarship- \$2,500

Recipient: Angelo Mojica

Grant W. and Virginia M. Brissman Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipient: Aubrey Massie

Class of 1961 Scholarship – \$1,500 each

Recipients: Kampbell Allen, Mackenzie Bennett, Samuel Bizimana, Iphe Carr, Teegan Conwell, Dominic Eygabroad, Mugisha Ezekiel Niyonzima, Amine Gay, Abraham Gomez, Matteo Gomez, Francesca Guyette, Londyn Harris, Aubrey Massie, Gavin Morgan, Thereza Mustafa, Christer New, Josiah Putnam, Fazila Qubadi, Amaiah Robinson, Chukiwa Sudi, Avian Thomas, Alexander VandeWalle

Class of 1963 “First in the Family Scholarship” - \$1,500 each

Recipients: Adrian Mills, Paloma Tapia, Yazmin Tinoco-Ruiz

Class of 1965 Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Alliene Downing

Stanley H. Coin Business Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Eh Dah Soe

Donald E. Devinney Business and Business Education Scholarship - \$10,000

Recipient: Matteo Gomez

Troy H. Ellis Scholarship - \$1,500 each

Recipient: Mallory Hudnall

Barbara Fackel AVID Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient:

Olivier Obedi

Ben D. and Nancy K. Brown Farrar Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: George Tate

Jim and Doug Franz Memorial Scholarship: \$1,500

Recipient: Zaynah Hassan

Rick Gilliland Scholarship - \$500

Recipient: Mallory Hudnall

Barbara Fackel AVID Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient:
Olivier Obedi

Ben D. and Nancy K. Brown Farrar Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: George Tate

Jim and Doug Franz Memorial Scholarship: \$1,500

Recipient: Zaynah Hassan

Rick Gilliland Scholarship - \$500

Recipient: Mallory Hudnall

Ray and Elva Haberthur Memorial Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Ndyayishimiye Abia

Hass Family Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipient: Aubrey Doss

Heart of a "Rock" - \$1,000

Recipient: Mugisha Ezekiel Niyonzima

Amy Helpenstell Liberal Arts Scholarship – \$1,000

Recipient: Yaretzi Jimenez

"Failure is Not an Option" the Candice Hinze Williams Scholarship – \$2,000

Recipient: Quinn Feigley

Jerry and Sue (Farrow) Horton Scholarship – \$4,000

Recipient: Tamina Gunasheva

Derek James Jackson Art Scholarship - \$500

Recipient: Alexander VandeWalle

Tim Joannides and Family Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Emmah Jones

Tyler John Memorial Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Lauryn Barker

Judith A. Katz Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipient: Alexandra Alva

Donavin J. Keim Scholarship - \$500 each

Recipient - Football: Avian Thomas

Recipient – Wrestling: Dominic Eygabroad

"Kindness Wins" with Madison Keys Scholarship - \$1,500 each

Recipient/Female: Averi Vroman

Recipient/Male: Matteo Gomez

Knights of Pythias Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Jenna Kitterman

R. Decker Magee Memorial Scholarship - \$500

Recipient: Daniella Leahy

The Marler Clark Science Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Nahimana Martin

Mollie Montgomery Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Kylee Littlejohn

Nature's Treatment of Illinois Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Merrell Mars

Herb Niemann Scholarship - \$1,200

Recipient: Alexander Burgmeier

R. Dale Owen “Be the Light” Memorial Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Matteo Gomez

Charlie White/Richard Klatt Purple Tuna Creativity Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Alexander VandeWalle

Darrell and Mary Anne Reynolds Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipients: Chukiwa Sudi

Darrell and Mary Anne Reynolds Automotive Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipients: Abraham Gomez

Miles W. Rich Family Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipient: John Htoo

Jayovontae “Jaree” Roberts Scholarship - \$500 each

Recipient, Education: Mallory Hudnall

Recipient, Music: Quinn Feigley

Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation Scholarship - \$1,000 each

Recipients: Jackson St. Amand, Henry Mass, Nishimwe Tresor

Rock Island-Milan Education Foundation Merit Scholarships - \$500 and \$1,000

Recipients, \$500: Owen Klapperich, Daniella Leahy, Audrey Long, Evan Regur

Recipients, \$1,000: Ethan Ignatius, JaMarrie Lee, Gracelynn Veys, Bella Wilson

Fred Houlton “Service Above Self” Rock Island Rotary Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Tyler Whitten

Rock Island Township Scholarship - \$1,500

Recipient: Aimal Rahmani

Chet and Louise Schultz Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: Chukiwa Sudi

Schwiebert Family Scholarship - \$2,775

Recipient: Noah Witmer

William and Saralie Shallman Memorial Scholarship - \$2,500

Recipient: Easter Naing

South Rock Island Township Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: William Hampton

Terry Stephens Memorial Scholarship - \$500 each

Recipient, Baseball: Josiah Putnam

Recipient, Softball: Mallory Hudnall

Thoms Family “Above and Beyond” Scholarship - \$5,000

Recipient: Gabe Mahn

Steven and Mabel M. Velge Track and Cross-Country Scholarship - \$6,000 each

Recipient, Female: Iphe Carr

Recipient, Male: Gabe Mahn

Elizabeth Kennel Williams Scholarship - \$2,000

Recipient: William Hampton

Women’s Computer Science, Math, & IT Scholarship - \$500

Recipient: Hae Moo

Rosemary Woodward Scholarship - \$1,000

Recipient: Addison Pannell

DW Young Memorial Scholarship - \$4,000

Recipient: Olivia Seidlitz

Class of 2026 Scholarship Recipients



Ndyayishimiye Abia



Martha Abuke



Leon Agelix



Kampbell Allen



Alexandra Alva



Annabelle Avegnon



Lauryn Barker



Mackenzie Bennett



Samuel Bizimana



Alexander Burgmeier



Iphe Carr



Teegan Conwell



Aubrey Doss



Alliene Downing



Dominic Eygabroad



Quinn Feigley



Camryn Fineran



Amine Gay



Millie Gidaszewski



Braden Gilliland



Abraham Gomez



Matteo Gomez



Tamina Gunasheva



Francesca Guyette



William Hampton



Londyn Harris



Zaynah Hassan



John Htoo



Mallory Hudnall



Ethan Ignatius



Yaretzi Jimenez



Emma Jones



Jenna Kitterman



Owen Klapperich



Daniella Leahy



JaMarrie Lee



Kylee Littlejohn



Audrey Long



Gabe Mahn



Merrell Mars



Nahimana Martin



Henry Mass



Aubrey Massie



Adrian Mills



Angelo Mojica



Hae Moo



Gavin Morgan



EJ Mumma



Thereza Mustafa



Easter Naing



Christer New



Mugisha Ezekiel Niyonzima



Claire O'Hern-Maidak



Olivier Obedi



Addison Pannell



Josiah Putnam



Fazila Qubadi



Aimal Rahmani



Evan Regur



Olivia Riecke



Amaiah Robinson



Brandon Rush, Jr.



Olivia Seidnitz



Eh Dah Soe



Jackson St. Amand



Chukiwa Sudi



Paloma Tapia



George Tate



Avian Thomas



Yazmin Tinoco-Ruiz



Nishimwe Tresor



Alexander VandeWalle



Honesty Vesey



Gracelynn Veys



Averi Vroman



Tyler Whitten



Bella Wilson



Noah Witmer

