



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Celebrating Excellence: Meet the 2026 Wisconsin Pork Association Scholarship Recipients**

WISCONSIN DELLS, WI -- The Wisconsin Pork Association (WPA) recognized scholarship recipients during the organization's annual meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026, which was held in conjunction with the Corn Soy Expo in Wisconsin Dells. Eight high school seniors and college students from across the state were awarded a total of \$7,750 in scholarship funds.

#### ***Whitmore Memorial Scholarship***

The Whitmore Memorial Scholarship was established as a legacy to the late Rex Whitmore, a master statesman and communicator who served as the first executive director of the Wisconsin Pork Association. Applicants for this scholarship must be a junior or senior at University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, or University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Preference is given to those pursuing an Animal Science degree or similar major.

Josie Bailey is the recipient of the \$1,500 scholarship.

Josie is a student at the University of Wisconsin–River Falls, majoring in Agricultural Education. Raised on a fifth-generation dairy farm in Tomah, Wisconsin, Bailey gained hands-on experience caring for livestock including raising and showing swine. Bailey was very involved in FFA and dairy youth organizations, and excelled in agricultural communications, discussion meets, and industry advocacy. Bailey plans to pursue a career in agricultural education, focusing on leadership development and strengthening connections between agriculture and the public. She is dedicated to advancing livestock education and advocating for responsible animal care and youth involvement in agriculture.

#### ***Gunderson Memorial Scholarship***

The Wisconsin Pork Association, in cooperation with the family of Buell Gunderson, established a scholarship program in 2007 to recognize the many contributions that Buell Gunderson made to the Wisconsin pork industry. Gunderson and his wife, Bernice, served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Wisconsin Pork Association for over 20 years and assisted in growing the organization from its initial roots to the successful organization that it is today. Consideration is given to youth who have established their own production herd, been involved in their family operation, or shown specific interest in pork production or livestock judging.

Sydney Watson and Mallory Cepress were each selected to receive a \$1,000 scholarship and Oscar Stowell was awarded a \$500 scholarship.

Sydney Watson resides in Edgerton, Wisconsin, and is planning to attend either UW-Platteville or UW-Stevens Point to major in Agricultural Business. Watson has been involved in the swine industry since she was young helping her family out on their show pig operation. Her passion for the industry has grown as she has increased her involvement in FFA, the Wisconsin Pork Association, and the Wisconsin

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Show Pig Association. Watson hopes to use her degree and passion to support producers, improve farm efficiencies, and help the agriculture industry adapt to changing markets and consumer expectations.

Mallory Cepress hails from Arpin, Wisconsin, and is currently attending Iowa State University. She is majoring in Animal Science with planned minors in Animal Nutrition and International Agriculture. Mallory's experience within the swine industry has given her the opportunity to grow as a leader, learn from industry professionals, and develop a true passion for the pork industry. She enjoys giving back to the swine industry, which has given her countless opportunities. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Cepress aims to build a career in swine nutrition, as well as own and operate a show pig herd.

Oscar Stowell is from Waupun, Wisconsin, where he lives on his family's livestock farm. He is active in 4-H and FFA and raises a small herd of sows that he breeds for show pigs. He serves as the swine representative on the Dodge County Meat Animal Sale Board and on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Ag Youth Council. Oscar plans to attend the University of River Falls majoring in Agriculture Education and Animal Science.

#### ***WPA Fredrich Memorial Scholarship***

The Fredrich Memorial Scholarship was established in 2018 through funding from the Southeast Wisconsin Pork Producers. This scholarship honors Clarence Fredrich who was actively involved in the Southeast Wisconsin Pork Producers Association. He was very supportive of youth programming in agriculture as well as community events and activities. This scholarship is offered to students in Walworth, Racine, and Kenosha counties.

Ashley Schaal and Callie Lohse were awarded \$1,000 scholarships and Rebecca Konkel received a \$750 award.

Ashley Schaal is from Burlington, Wisconsin, and plans to attend either Iowa State University or Purdue University to major in Agricultural Business. She grew up on her family's dairy farm and is actively involved in 4-H, FFA, Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society, and the Wisconsin Junior Poultry Association. Ashley currently serves on the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council and as the Racine County Agricultural Ambassador. She is grateful for the scholarship's support as she continues pursuing her educational and career goals in agriculture.

Callie Lohse is a native of Walworth, Wisconsin, and plans to attend the UW-Platteville, to major in Agribusiness and Animal Science. She is actively involved in FFA, 4-H, National Honor Society, the local equine club, and her church. Through her experiences exhibiting swine and other livestock, Callie developed a strong passion for the pork industry and agriculture. She values the opportunities the industry has provided and its emphasis on hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Callie plans to build a career that supports and strengthens agriculture on a deeper level, helping producers and contributing to the long-term success of the agricultural industry.

Rebecca Konkel is from Elkhorn, Wisconsin, and plans to major in plant science at UW-Madison. She is involved in FFA, 4-H, sports, and raises pigs, chickens, and dairy cattle. Through her various experiences, Rebecca has developed a passion for plant research. She hopes to pursue a career in agriculture where she can develop solutions to real-world problems and advance the agriculture industry for the better.

### ***Southwest Wisconsin Pork Producers***

WPA, in cooperation with the Southwest Wisconsin Pork Producers, is proud to offer this scholarship to high school or college students from Grant, Iowa, or Lafayette Counties. Established in 2021, the Southwest Wisconsin Pork Producers scholarship is awarded to a student who is passionate about the pork industry and who plans to pursue an agricultural career or degree.

Sophia Daugherty was this year's recipient of the \$1,000 scholarship.

Sophia Daugherty grew up on a small beef farm in Cuba City. She is majoring in agriculture education at UW-Platteville and works at the university Swine Center and See-Mor Grain. Breeding her own show pigs and selecting genetics has given her a robust appreciation for the pork industry. Sophia plans to pursue a career in public education and agriculture advocacy to continue teaching others the importance of our food system and animal agriculture's role in feeding America.

WPA congratulates these young people for their hard work and accomplishments and looks forward to seeing them develop into the next generation of agricultural leaders. For more information on scholarship offerings, visit [www.wppa.org/youth](http://www.wppa.org/youth) or call WPA at 608-723-7551.



Josie Bailey



Sydney Watson



Mallory Cepress



Oscar Stowell



Ashley Schaal



Callie Lohse



Rebecca Konkel



Sophia Daugherty

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Pork Association is to promote and protect the state's pork industry in order to ensure its success now and in the future.*