

Tennessee PA Foundation Report

By Frank Warren, Foundation Treasurer

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and recognize our 2022 Foundation Scholarship recipients once again. Scholarships were awarded during the Annual TAPA Awards Recognition Ceremony at FallFest on Oct. 3rd. For those who were not in attendance at the conference, a total of \$5,000 in scholarships were awarded to eight PA students representing five different PA programs in Tennessee.

Below are our scholarship recipients who submitted worthy applications reviewed by the TAPA Board of Directors and awarded based on past achievements, extracurricular activities, GPA, future goals and financial need.

The recipients of the JC Carey Memorial Scholarships were as follows:

Ashley Whittaker from the Bethel PA Program received a \$250 scholarship. She previously earned a Bachelor of Science from Austin Peay University. She has a great interest in Tennessee legislation and is currently her class's AAPA representative and was previously in the APSU Student Government for three years, serving as the Chief Justice in her senior year. She looks forward to graduating and working in a nonprofit clinic near her hometown, serving as a preceptor to other PA students, and continuing to work legislatively through TAPA and wherever she is able.

Hannah Shoffner is attending the Lipscomb PA program and also received a \$250 scholarship. She has a Bachelor of Science from Middle Tennessee State University. She has been an active fundraiser/walk participant for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention since 2015. Her career goals, in addition to working in the psychiatric field, are to "help lessen the burden on patients seeking mental health care, increase education on how to care for acute mental health patients in the hospital, and provide the access to resources or awareness of resources available to hospital staff."

Mark Blackmon from the Trevecca Nazarene University PA program has a Bachelor of Science from Middle Tennessee State University, and he also received a \$250 scholarship. He is the MTSU PA Class Chaplain. He hopes to work in a hospital environment and looks forward to "the close team dynamics that result from having so many specialists in one setting" and broadening his continual educational experience beyond graduation.

Molly Valentine is attending the Middle Tennessee State University PA Program and received a \$750 scholarship. She has bachelor and master's degrees from the University of North Georgia. She also has an Associate of Science from Georgia State University, a Medical Physiology certificate from the University of Florida, and a Health Science and Healthcare Management certificate from Nashville State Community College.

She has been an adjunct instructor, community education, and group fitness leader for 11

years. She feels the “innate responsibility to lift up others around me” and looks forward as a PA to work in rural underserved communities, probably in primary care.

Rachel Lydy is attending Trevecca Nazarene’s PA program and also received a \$750 scholarship. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University, Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Health and Rehabilitation Science. She also graduated from North Central State College with an Associate of Applied Science, majoring in Physical Therapy Assistant. She was a volunteer at the American Red Cross and Ohio Health Shelby Hospital.

Her experiences of growing up in rural Ohio with a large Amish and Mennonite community and close family experiences of serious disease have helped determine her goals and will help “shape and mold” her into a “caring, knowledgeable and skilled physician associate.” She looks forward to ultimately representing the PA profession “in a positive light by pursuing excellence, honor, respect and altruism in everything I do”. She hopes to work in an underserved community.

Cassandra Mihalko is our final recipient of a JC Carey Memorial Scholarship and is attending the Bethel University PA program. She also received a \$750 scholarship. She is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Biochemistry. She is a Red Cross volunteer.

She has studied abroad and learned Spanish in her undergraduate training and seeks to serve the Hispanic community in family medicine due to the disparity of care here in Middle Tennessee for this growing group of people. She also cares for and inspires her three younger siblings. “As a woman of Christian faith, I have been immensely blessed with the opportunity to attend school and better my life and the future of my family.”

The Foundation would also like to recognize the two recipients of the James Montag, Jr Military Service Scholarship for PAs:

Brianna Roberts is attending the South College-Knoxville PA program and received a \$500 scholarship. She has previously received degrees from the George Washington University with an A.S. in Health Science Laboratory Technology, and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke with a Bachelor of Science in Pre-health Professions. Before PA school, Brianna was an active-duty U.S. Army soldier training and working as a medical technician at Womack Army Medical Center and Landstuhl Medical Center. “As a veteran, I have a passion for caring for fellow veterans.” Her lifelong goal is to “have a leadership position within the Department of Veteran Affairs so that I can be a veteran meeting the unique health needs of the veteran population.” She also hopes to become a professor to teach and mentor aspiring PAs after completing a DMS bridge program. She is the first person in her family to pursue becoming a medical healthcare provider.

Maranda Vecchio is also a recipient of the James Montag Jr. Military Service PA Scholarship, receiving a \$1,500 scholarship. Maranda is attending Middle Tennessee State University’s PA Program. She is a previous graduate of East Tennessee State University with a Bachelor of

Science, and she also earned an Associate of Science degree from Fortis Institute. Maranda served as member and team leader of the 42nd Aero-medical Dental Squadron in the U.S. Air Force for five years where she discovered her passion for the healthcare profession. "I believe that all people, regardless of their socio-economic status, deserve medical providers who offer high quality, professional and compassionate care." She spoke of discipline and sacrifice by herself and her husband as a military family and "hard work and dedication putting you on the path to reach your goals" to be an example to her daughter that she too can do anything.

Thank you to all our past year contributors who have helped these deserving students move forward with their education and training. I would like to express my particular gratitude to some who year in and year out continue to be major supporters of the Foundation.

Thank you to Jim Montag for funding the James Montag Jr Military Service Scholarship for many years now. And special thanks to Ed Wise, who as one of our most dedicated, long serving and respected PAs in the state of Tennessee, for quietly being a major yearly contributor to the Foundation in addition to passing his knowledge on to so many future PAs in Knoxville.

Finally, to Melissa Watson, who also quietly makes monthly contributions for many years now also and as fellow PA and friend makes a difference in more ways than most and even she realizes. There are many others who make one time or monthly donations and help make these scholarships available, but I wanted to highlight these three because they have been dependable, steady donors over the years, working members of TAPA, and attendees of TAPA conferences. Being a PA for me has been greatly enhanced in counting them as fellow PAs and friends along with many others not mentioned here.

I would encourage all PAs, but especially our younger PAs, to become involved with TAPA, its conferences, regional dinners and meetings because the learning, networking and friendships gained will change the trajectory of your career and future and make it much more rewarding.

I hope everyone has a blessed and healthy 2023 and hope as you are all blessed you will consider making a yearly or monthly contributions to the Tennessee PA Foundation which can be set up as automatic payments through the TAPA office. The benefit to you may be a tax deduction as the Foundation is a 501©3 charitable organization recognized by the IRS, or it may be the satisfaction of serving and giving to the needs of others. The benefits to the students who receive these scholarships will come in the life of their careers to their patients and their families because someone made a difference at the right time in their education.

Thank you all for what you do as a PA and citizen in your communities.