



2025 – 2026 John H. Haake Branch 343 Scholarship Report



... By Pam Stepney and Tom Schulte

We are pleased to announce the three 2025-2026 John H. Haake Scholarship winners. They are:

Charles Andrew Heppe

Aniya Tais Bradley

Jacob Robert Webster-Brown

2025 marks the 35th year the John H. Haake Scholarships have been awarded to deserving sons, daughters and grandchildren of active, retired and deceased letter carriers from Branch 343. We congratulate not only the students who participated in this year's competition, but also their proud parents and grandparents.

As in previous years we have secured the services of Dr. Barbara Anderson ex-officio from National Education Association - St. Louis, who has served as the chairperson of our independent selection committee since the inception of the scholarship program back in 1990. She, along with her committee, evaluates the credentials of each of our applicants and selects our three John H. Haake Scholarship winners. As in all previous years, the decision of the judges is final.

Over the course of the last several years, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of scholarship applicants. We attribute that to the postal hiring freeze in the early 1990s into the early 2000s. This created a huge gap between older letter carriers, whose children have already graduated from high school and the newly hired, who may not have high school aged children. To that end, we modified the brochure in 2020 to include the grandchildren of active, retired, and deceased members and changed the four \$1,500 college scholarships to three and added a \$1,500 scholarship to a student interested in attending an accredited vocational/trade school.

Many of the professional trades are desperate to find interested individuals seeking to learn a skill working with their hands. We believe that earmarking one of our scholarships to an accredited trade school would be beneficial to a son or daughter learning a skilled trade that requires a shorter time period, at less cost than a college degree, and offers a lucrative opportunity for financial success.

Our awards presentation took place at the regular branch meeting on June 12 and we were very pleased that all three of our awardees were present along with their parents and family members. Each of the scholarship winners were presented to the branch membership and a brief profile was read highlighting their accomplishments and their aspirations. (See profiles on the following pages). The recipients were then presented with a certificate from Branch 343 President John McLaughlin.

The scholarship committee was very impressed with the academic credentials of all our applicants, as well as the leadership qualities exhibited in their extracurricular activities and the hopeful tone and insightful nature of their essays. Although only three of the students have been awarded scholarships, all the applicants are to be commended for their accomplishments.

The scholarship committee would like to thank John Haake for his leadership and vision in establishing this program 35 years ago. The scholarship program had been a dream of John's for many years, and we cannot think of a more fitting recognition of his efforts to bring his dream to fruition than the fact that it bears his name.

Thanks also to Branch 343 President John McLaughlin, Exec. VP Brian Litteken and VP Financial Secretary Marvin Booker for their ongoing support and guidance in continuing the scholarship program. On a personal note, I would like to recognize the dedication and commitment of my fellow scholarship committee member Pam Stepney who keeps the membership apprised of the applicants and all the critical deadlines our students must meet in her monthly branch reports.

Each year, we reevaluate the criteria we require to participate in the next year's scholarship awards. This year will be no exception as we will take a hard look at the requirements necessary to make the selection process competitive. Over the last three years, there has been a significant uptick in the number of applicants, due, no doubt, to the decision that was made by the scholarship committee to include the grandchildren of active, retired and deceased members. In fact, this year, many of our applicants were the grandchildren of our membership.

To this year's applicants, we would like to extend our best wishes in your personal academic endeavors. Judging from the excellence of our candidates each and every applicant was aptly qualified, and we wish you all success in your college careers and beyond.

In the September issue of the Mound City Carrier, we will publish the application for the 2026-2027 John H. Haake Scholarships. For now, please spread the word to any Branch 343 union member who will have a son, daughter, or grandchild entering their senior year in high school in the fall. The deadline to apply for next year's John H. Haake Scholarship is December 31, 2025.