

Released June 2026

The Essex Foundation Announces 2026 Scholarship Recipients

Establish Additional Grant to Expand Recognition & Support of Local Student Achievement

Essex, CT – Every year since 2019, The Essex Foundation (TEF) board members gather in June to select one candidate to receive the Elizabeth Barnes Callender and Mary Francis Barnes Memorial Scholarship Award. Presented to honor the bequest and memory of the late “Diz” Callender and her sister Mary, the \$3000 grant is available to one local graduating high school senior or graduate, or an Essex resident who is pursuing studies related to land conservation and preservation at a two or four-year college, a technical school, or graduate school, or taking accredited courses in biology, botany, agronomy, ecology, horticulture, floriculture, forestry, landscape design, or environmental science. With this year’s applicant pool overflowing with so many local, high-achieving, community minded students, the Foundation board members decided to establish an additional \$3,000 award with no restriction on field of study. The Essex Foundation Scholarship will be awarded annually to one Essex student of high academic achievement and community involvement enrolled in a post-secondary school program.

Antonia (Nia) Marchese, who lives in Essex and recently graduated from Valley Regional High School (VRHS), is the 2026 The Elizabeth Barnes Callender and Mary Francis Barnes Memorial Scholarship recipient. Lucca Giordano, also an Essex resident and recent VRHS graduate, is the first recipient of The Essex Foundation Scholarship award. Ms. Marchese will study Landscape Architecture at the University of Florida, Gainesville with hopes to eventually become a Landscape Architect Imagineer at Disney. Mr. Giordano will be pursuing a degree in Mechanical and Materials Engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.



“We are always impressed with the high caliber of our local young people,” commented TEF President Strickland Hyde, “Ultimately Nia and Lucca stood out not only for their excellence in the classroom but also for their commitment to doing their part to truly make the world a better place.”

The Essex Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Essex residents by providing funding for needs not met by other organizations or sources. The Foundation relies on donations from individuals, businesses, and other community groups to fund special community projects and needs that benefit Essex residents. More information can be found online at www.theessexfoundation.org or by emailing contact@theessexfoundation.org.

#

#

#

Pictured Above: Strickland Hyde (left) and Marla Bogaert (right) of The Essex Foundation present Valley Regional High School graduates Lucca Giordano and Nia Marchese each with a \$3000 scholarship award to help fund their undergraduate studies this fall.