



# Community Foundation of Wabash County

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## Press Release

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## Community Foundation names finalists for 2009 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship

The Community Foundation of Wabash County has chosen five finalists from 26 eligible applicants for the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship (LECS). The two students selected as Lilly Scholars will receive four years of full tuition to the Indiana colleges they choose and an \$800 yearly stipend for required books and equipment.

The five finalists for the LECS are (in alphabetical order): Ellen Early, Southwood High School (SHS); Marissa Johnson, Manchester High School (MHS); Paige Martin Wabash High School (WHS); Laura Merriman, (WHS); and Hayley Pence (WHS).

Foundation Assistant Director Shelly Leifer says all of the finalists deserve recognition for their selection as a finalist.

“The applications for the Lilly Scholarship are all excellent. Being chosen as a finalist is no small accomplishment,” says Leifer.

Finalists were chosen based on academic performance, activities/work experience, community service, leadership ability, essays, and references. All of the finalists also completed a videotaped interview for review by the Foundation’s scholarship committee, which consists of volunteers from the community.

**Ellen Early** plans to study psychology with an emphasis on criminal psychology. During her high school career, she has excelled in her studies and in service to her school and her church. She is a member of the National Honor Society and has earned the Thomas A. Hendricks Scholarship at Hanover University. She also has been a member of the choir and Peers Educating Peers (PEP). She has volunteered as an altar server and lector at her church for nine years. Early says volunteering at her church has helped her break stereotypes and learn leadership.

“Every weekend I am available to do what needs to be done whether it is an altar server or a lector,” Early says, “I am there when my church needs me and I am always willing to help.”

**Marissa Johnson** is the student body president for MHS’s class of 2009. She has served on the student council and as class president since 2006. Johnson has played basketball and softball while earning the position of drum major for the marching band. In addition to her membership in the National Honor Society, Johnson has been on the presidential and highest honor rolls since 2005. She is the copy editor for the high school yearbook. She also serves as a senior leader in her church youth group and as a religious education teacher. Johnson says her many activities have challenged her to become a leader.

“I make it a personal goal of mine to be a good role model and a positive influence.” says Johnson.

**Paige Martin** says *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost is a poem that has influenced her perspective on school and life.

“Hearing this poem helped me fully understand what life is all about...taking chances and following my heart,” says Martin.

Being an individual has allowed her to be a leader in the classroom, athletics and other activities. Martin has consistently been named to the high honor roll. She is a member of the National Honor Society. She has played volleyball, basketball, softball and tennis for WHS and was captain of the varsity volleyball team this past season. She has participated in several activities including choir, PEP Club, Superbowl and Spellbowl teams among others. She has volunteered for several local groups including organizing activities for seniors at the Winchester Senior Center.

**Laura Merriman** has been busy with academics, music, athletics and volunteering during high school. A National Honor Society Member since 2006, Merriman has served as an officer for that club and as a member of student council since 2005. She has been a class officer since 2005 and currently serves as vice president. She played varsity volleyball and basketball and served as captain for both teams in 2008. She also has served as an instrumentalist for the Wabash Community Theater—a group she has been involved with since third grade. Some of the honors Merriman has earned include a National Merit Scholarship Letter of Commendation, Best of the Best Art Program and Varsity First Team Academic All-State (volleyball). Merriman considers this one of her greatest achievements.

“The truth is no matter how many laps, push-ups or down and backs I have to do, I will keep coming back for the relationships and experience athletics have given me.”

**Hayley Pence** exhibits leadership through her academic achievement and dedication to her goals. She has been class secretary for two years and is the captain of the varsity cheerleading squad. She works on the newspaper and yearbook staffs and participates in and serves as an officer for several other activities including National Honor Society, Key Club (secretary), Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Academic Bowl and Peers Educating Peers among others. In addition, she has earned a place on the high honor roll since 2004.

The time she spent “shadowing” Dr. James Bain last summer strengthened her lifelong dream to become a doctor. The fact that she has not missed a day of school since the fourth grade is evidence of her commitment to her education.

“I believe it is important to be at school every day,” Pence says, “Not only am I hurting myself if I miss days of school. I am hurting my entire class.”

The Foundation’s scholarship committee will narrow the field to two nominees and one alternate. The finalists’ names will be submitted to Independent Colleges of Indiana, Inc. (ICI) for approval of the nominees. The names of the Lilly Scholars will be announced in April.

ICI is a nonprofit corporation that represents 31 regionally accredited degree granting, nonprofit, private colleges and universities in the state.

The scholarships are the result of a statewide Lilly Endowment initiative to help Hoosier students reach higher levels of education. Lilly Endowment, Inc. scholarships are awarded only in Indiana counties with a Community Foundation. Since the program began 10 years ago, 2,697 scholarships have been awarded. The Community Foundation of Wabash County has awarded 25 Lilly Scholarships. The Foundation is responsible for the application process and candidate selection. It also maintains contact with these scholars as they conduct their studies and beyond.

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*The Community Foundation of Wabash County is a nonprofit public charity established in 1954. It serves the citizens of Wabash County by implementing their charitable aspirations, making grants, investing and safeguarding charitable assets, providing information regarding charitable endeavors, and convening citizens and linking resources to address issues confronting our shared lives. The Community Foundation of Wabash County is located at 218 E. Main St., North Manchester, Indiana. For more information, visit [www.cfwabash.org](http://www.cfwabash.org).*



**Photo caption:** The finalists for the 2009 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship represent three schools in Wabash County. The finalists are (left to right): Laura Merriman, Wabash High School (WHS); Ellen Early, Southwood High School; Paige Martin, WHS; Marissa Johnson, Manchester High School and Hayley Pence, WHS.