



The Phillips Scholar

The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc.

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Good News in the Time of COVID-19

This has been a difficult year for everyone, and our hearts go out to each of you who has lost a loved one, been laid off, or otherwise suffered from COVID-19. Amidst the chaos, confusion, fear and sadness however, we have been encouraged by good news from the community. Through this issue of **The Phillips Scholar**, we share those bright moments of 2020.

Despite these challenging times, we were able to administer over 500 awards this year. These included nearly 50 donor-funded scholarships and a special COVID Relief award that was provided to 40 Phillips Scholars this fall. Among our new awardees, we were able to include four wonderful Alumni Scholars thanks to the generosity of our alumni and their families. We were encouraged by the inspirational stories of Phillips Scholars like Michael Bednark and Abbott Joy, who used their particular skills and resources to make real differences in people's lives during the pandemic. We hope reading about all of the above in this issue of **The Phillips Scholar** will brighten your day!

“On March 20th, the economy came to a halt. People were getting sick and the front lines weren’t getting the resources they needed. Our values were put to the test. In 72 hours, we developed a face shield prototype for approval, built our supply chain, converted a warehouse into a manufacturing facility, created 156 new jobs for New Yorkers, and delivered 2.7 million shields to NYC over a 90-day run.” Michael Bednark

This is the remarkable story of Bednark Studio, the Brooklyn-based fabrication company founded by Phillips Scholar Michael Bednark, ('05 New York University). Before the horrific explosion of COVID-19 in New York City, Bednark Studio typically created sophisticated, high-tech retail experience displays for businesses such as Nike and Peloton. Bednark Studio, as a nonessential business, was forced to lay off some of its 120-person workforce. Worried about both his workers and the medical crisis, Michael Bednark knew he had to take radical steps. “This wasn’t about making money. This was about helping put people back to work and helping front-line medical workers who were saving New Yorkers,” said Michael.



In the course of a weekend, Michael and a skeleton staff had trial-and-errored their way to creating a protective face shield; their plastic supplier opened specially to provide rolls of a plastic polymer that could be disinfected without fogging, and the city's health department offered critical feedback on Sunday. After some tweaking, they had an approved design, one which they shared with other New York fabricators. Operating 24 hours per day, they turned out 30-35,000 face shields daily, ultimately providing 2.7 million units over three months.

But his service to New Yorkers didn't end with providing life-saving face masks and jobs. Concerned about the hard-hit restaurant industry, Michael ordered 160 boxed lunches every day from struggling restaurants for his production workers, throwing a lifeline to those local businesses as well.

“Don't assume someone else will do it. Do it yourself. Get out there and figure out what you love and how you can do it.” Michael Bednark clearly lives by this credo. He started his company right out of New York University in a garage, and has grown his business to a 60,000 square foot fabrication facility. Faced in March with an unthinkable situation, Michael pivoted dramatically, saving his company, creating jobs and protecting critical medical workers. And what was next in his COVID response? “When we learned you can get thicker plastic, we also started building dividers for Ubers and installed more than 4,500 in Ubers in NYC. We're still making those now.”

Michael Bednark has been featured on *60 Minutes* (April 5, 2020) and in numerous articles about heroic responses to the coronavirus in publications including *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *Reuters*.



Meet the 2020 Phillips Alumni Scholars

We have selected four new recipients this year who exemplify the characteristics of a Phillips Scholar: academic excellence, dedication to serving others, strong work ethic, and excellent character. All funds raised from our generous alumni and parent donors go towards sponsoring the four Phillips Alumni Scholars profiled below.

Luis Navarro arrived in the United States from Venezuela at the age of 17. Within three months, he was tackling a full course load at North Shore Community College (NSCC), navigating a new language and culture, and working to help support his family. A full plate for some, but not for Luis! A musician, he saw the need for a place for campus musicians to share their knowledge and forge bonds, so he created a Music Club, taking on all of the administrative work needed to create a new entity. With that experience and a growing desire to help others, Luis helped to launch the First-Generation Club, designed to help those students acclimate to NSCC.



Additionally, Luis served as Chief of Staff of the Student Government Association, primarily liaising with and advising the presidents of campus organizations how to best fulfill their purposes. He was very committed to the TRIO Programs at NSCC, which are designed to assist first generation and low-income students, recruiting other students and helping with programs. He also served as Vice-President of the Multicultural Society and helped with the mobile market for food-insecure students. Luis received numerous awards at NSCC, including four Distinguished Service Awards and the Lisa Milso Award for service and dedication to the student government.

Having earned his Associate's Degree in December 2019, Luis transferred to Suffolk University to complete his Bachelor's Degree in the multidisciplinary major Political Science, Philosophy and Economics. Now at a four-year college, Luis qualifies for a Phillips Scholarship award. Despite starting Suffolk during a semester truncated due to COVID-19, he is already, of course, involved in campus life.

Luis was honored to sing and play the National Anthem on his guitar at the NSCC commencement in May 2020. It is a breathtaking rendition of this patriotic song by one of the country's newest citizens.

Ariel Rodriguez ('24 Providence College) gained rare experience in high school as a youth philanthropist through the Greater Worcester Community Fund's program Youth for Community Improvement (YCI), helping to award grants totaling \$50,000 over two years. YCI grants are focused on youth achievement, mental health, and support for refugee and immigrant families, with a preference for nonprofits with a history of youth leadership. "We learned a great lesson in consensus building and also grew to look at our community in different ways than any of us had before." After reviewing the applications and making their selections each year, they were able to meet the grantees. Particularly meaningful was the group's award to the Nativity School of Worcester, the tuition-free independent middle school for underserved boys that Ariel had attended. "I was astonished that I was able to make an impact on people in the same position I used to be in."



Building on that experience, Ariel joined the Worcester Teen Leadership Council, where he helped organize a conference at Worcester's South High School to develop the youth voice, teach them about philanthropy and encourage them to work through organizations like YCI. After applying for and receiving both a \$1,000 grant and helpful feedback from the global organization Peace First, the group changed their name to Understand Youth Philanthropy and expanded the scope of their mission. "We decided to become more of an advocacy group that would give presentations to community foundations with philanthropy boards and advocate the importance of youth voices in leadership positions. Due to COVID-19, we had to change how we did that, so we decided to create a video to send to community boards and post on social media."

Ariel graduated from Saint John's High School in Shrewsbury, MA, and is now a first-year student at Providence College, where he is already quite involved (despite the pandemic) with the Providence Immigrant Rights Coalition, an advocacy group for DACA and first- and second-generation students that focuses on immigration issues. He also participates in OLAS, an Hispanic/Latinx cultural group, and Mentor RI, a mentoring program that matches at-risk youth with adult mentors.

For 10-year old **Kylee McCumber** it started with a simple question: why did some of her classmates eat breakfast at school? She was shocked to hear that they didn't have enough to eat at home, but then worried about what they ate over the weekend. And so was born Kylee's Kare Kits for Kidz, care packages of food to carry children through the weekend. At first, Kylee's goal was to help ten food-insecure children each week. She funded her initial efforts through yard sales, but the need grew quickly, and her project expanded through online appeals, food drives, "fill-a-truck" events and corporate sponsorships. An official 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, it now provides food to 570 children in the Leominster area. Kylee added drives for school supplies and also now provides meals over holiday breaks and through the summer months. Kylee was a frequent speaker throughout the area, as this program requires strong financial and volunteer community support to succeed.



What people didn't know was that Kaylee's own early history was marked by food insecurity. Until her grandmother became her guardian, her addicted mother could not care for her. In 2016, Kylee's mother died. "As the word spread about her passing, my community, the same community I had sought to help, was very supportive of me. Many people reached out and shared their stories of losing a loved one to addiction." This inspired Kylee to finally share the full story of Kylee's Kare Kits for Kids and why the mission is so close to her heart.

A first-year student at Bentley University now, Kylee is involved in the Women in Business Leadership Program. In her absence, "Kylee's Kare Kits for Kidz is still running strong. We have created our "Junior Team," a group of students in 5th-8th grades, who have learned how to pack the Kare Kits and hold fundraisers. One of the members of the Junior Team, Mia, is filling in as the interim "Kylee" while I am away at college."

Kylee McCumber graduated from The Winchendon School, where she received a scholarship for her service to others. As a four-year Service Learning Leader, she led a group that focused on food justice throughout the area. While at Winchendon, she helped to write and earn a grant for \$100,000 to partner with Tufts University on a hunger initiative for the elderly, which will be expanded to single-parent homes. Kylee is clearly living the credo that "regardless of your age, if you are passionate about an issue, you can take action and make real change."

Angelis Segura ('25 Wentworth Institute of Technology) could not have imagined all that she would become when she, her mother and brother left her father and other family members behind in the Dominican Republic to create a life in the United States. She faced new schools, a new language, and a new culture in a place where she was suddenly a minority. At the age of nine, she joined the Boys & Girls Club of Salem (B&GC), forging connections and developing skills that have proven fundamental to her many successes.

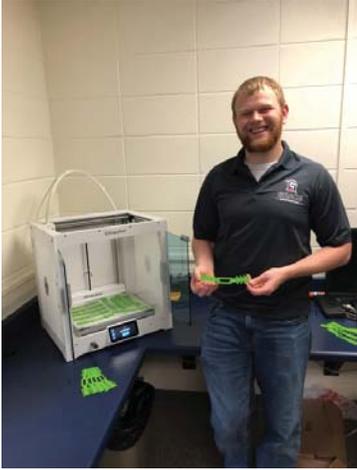


Serving as the four-year President of the Keystone Club, a B&GC program that focuses on three key areas-- community service, academic success and career preparation--her leadership skills grew exponentially. Angie helped organize service events, such as clean-up projects in the community and ice cream socials at the Senior Center, activities for younger club members, such as a Lip Synch Battle, and fundraising to attend the National B&GC Conferences to network, participate in workshops and bring back new ideas to improve the Salem Club. Angie also held the position of mentor to younger members, and twice she was named Youth of the Year, the Club's top honor.

At Salem (MA) High School, Angie drew on those experiences in her role in La Union Latina, a club designed to celebrate the Hispanic culture and to highlight Salem as a diverse and united city. She also demonstrated her concern for recent immigrants by reading the morning announcements in Spanish, so that they wouldn't feel left out. Academically a high achiever, Angie earned 12 transferable college credits through Salem High School's Forten Scholars Program, a partnership with Salem State University, where students prepare for future success through college level coursework while still in high school. Angie is grateful for the rigor of those classes as a prelude to college work.

Angie is a first-year student at Wentworth Institute of Technology, where she is majoring in Architecture.

Engineered to Serve Abbott Joy



Phillips Scholar **Abbott Joy** is a senior Engineering major at Grace College in Indiana. When Grace switched to remote learning in March, Abbott stayed in the area rather than returning home to Maine. A fellow engineering student quarantining at home contacted him about making and distributing ear guards for mask-wearing front-line workers. The guards help masks fit better and reduce headaches for mask wearers.

Abbott jumped at the chance to head up the initiative to engineer and produce plastic ear guards using the 3-D printers at school. Says Abbott, "The Grace engineering motto is 'engineered to serve.' This has been the first chance we've had to live up to it. We have delivered roughly 1,650 ear guards in total, the majority to nursing homes and assisted living facilities."

"However, we have learned that anyone who wears hearing aids benefits from these greatly so that their masks don't interfere with their hearing aids. So roughly 150 of the ear guards have gone to an audiology office to distribute to their patients, and another 200 or so to a local pharmacy with the same goal." His sisters also shared some at the nursing home where they were working.

"As for my future in engineering, it has definitely been an inspiration to pursue helping people in any way that I can. Healthcare workers have been working as hard as they can, and knowing that their days got a little bit better because of the ear guards makes me want to pursue even bigger projects in the future."

The Grace College Department of Engineering funded the project, and all ear guards were donated.

Words of Thanks

We are very grateful for the generous alumni and parents listed below. It is wonderful to see our former recipients reaching out to help others as they were helped. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

\$1,000 and above

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\$500 to \$2499

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\$100 to \$499

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THE STEPHEN PHILLIPS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND, INC.

The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc.

Post Office Box 870

Salem, Massachusetts 01970

www.phillips-scholarship.org

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