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More Adults Returning to Class in 2020: Adult Scholarship Applications at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County Increase by Nearly 40 Percent

The sharp increase in applications and scholarship recipients reflect shifting economic realities and opportunities in the face of COVID-19.

PHOTO I.D. – Amber Patrick, 29, and her family. Patrick is one of the 173 scholarship recipients who is able to continue or expand their education to advance their careers, returning to school at the State College of Florida to pursue a major in Pre-Med. Photo credit to Amy McKinlay Photography.

SARASOTA, FL – Amidst shifting economic realities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, adults in the area are pursuing scholarships for further education this year at higher numbers than years passed. Notably more than half of this year’s nearly 200 award winners plan on studying nursing, reflecting a national trend in the demand for healthcare professionals.

Applications by adults ages 24 and older for scholarships to attend university, community college, technical school or certification programs eclipsed recent years, increased by 40 percent over 2019 at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, which awarded more than \$350,000 in scholarships to pursue academic and professional goals.

“Applicant after applicant explained hardships related to the pandemic— from job furloughs to job loss to navigating remote learning with their children while still trying to work,” said Lindsey Masterson, Scholarships and Grants Manager at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. “Despite these huge challenges, every person had the same mindset: to seize an opportunity to bring good outcomes out of difficult circumstances.”

Amber Patrick, 29, is one of the 173 scholarship recipients who is able to continue or expand their education to advance their careers. Patrick received funds from the Edward K. Roberts Scholarship Fund, which was created in 2009 to support programs and opportunities for single mothers. As a single mother

of two boys impacted earlier this year by a furlough due to COVID-19, Patrick has returned to school at the State College of Florida pursuing a major in Pre-Med in the hopes of one day becoming a physician.

“This scholarship will allow for me to continue my education through the spring semester as originally planned, where had I not received this, I can’t say for certain I would have been able to afford to attend at all,” says Patrick. “Your contribution means so much to me and my family, and I intend to one day follow in donor footsteps and give back to the community that has given so much to me.”

“It is motivating and inspiring to see so many in our community strive to further their education in the midst of a global pandemic,” says Masterson. “I am touched by each person’s sincere gratitude for the chance to advance their careers, improve the lives of their families, and have a positive impact on the world. It is a gift to manage a program that makes such a tangible impact in the lives of our fellow community members.”

The Community Foundation’s Adult Scholarship Program offers students 24 years or older the opportunity to be considered for more than 40 different types of scholarships through a single application. Recipients were selected by a 58-member volunteer committee based on need, merit, or a combination of both factors.

The next scholarship cycle for students 24 years of age or older will open in March 2021.

For 40 years, the Community Foundation has been investing in the next generation of community leaders in our four-county region through traditional and adult scholarships, awarding approximately \$2 million to more than 500 students each year. To learn more about available scholarship opportunities, visit <https://www.cfsarasota.org/students>.

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About the Community Foundation of Sarasota County: The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of \$421 million in more than 1,500 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$48.9 million dollars last year in the areas of education, the arts, health and human services, civic engagement, animal welfare and the environment. Since its founding, the Community Foundation has been able to grant more than \$323 million to area nonprofit organizations to our community thanks to the generosity of charitable individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit www.CFSarasota.org or call (941) 955-3000.