



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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**\$1.2M in Scholarships Awarded  
\$610K in Interest-Free Loans Offered  
Donor Generosity Helps Make College a Reality for Area Students**

SPRINGFIELD – This week marks the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the [Community Foundation of Massachusetts' \(CFWM\)](#) granting of hundreds of scholarships and interest-free loans to area students for the 2018-2019 academic year. In late June, scholarship award letters were mailed to approximately 655 students with awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per student. This week, CFWM staff will finalize interest-free loans of \$3,000 each for approximately 200 students, totaling \$610K.

Students may apply for and be awarded up to \$4,000 per year for 2-year colleges, and up to \$8,000 per year for 4-year colleges through the scholarship program. They may also take advantage of interest-free loans offered by CFWM. The scholarships and loans serve many types of students: first-year students, undergraduate and graduate students, and those pursuing certifications and the skilled trades. Approximately 34% of this year's students are "first-generation" college students, meaning that neither parent has obtained an associate's degree or higher.

Through the generous and ongoing support of individual donors and entities, CFWM has developed a robust scholarship award program, which is well-known in the Pioneer Valley, and is one of the largest of its kind among the more than 750 community foundations nationwide. CFWM manages 130 scholarship funds from which the loans and scholarships are drawn. "We know that the need for financial aid runs deep, and we are proud of our ability to help meet that need. My gratitude to scholarship donors and Scholarship Review Volunteers can never be expressed enough" says Karin George, Chair of the CFWM Education Committee. "Every year I am so deeply inspired by the dedication of our volunteers and staff as we strive to assist students in our region."

Every year, CFWM relies on the generous time and energy of a diverse group of more than 100 Scholarship Review Volunteers to consider thousands of applications during a two-month review process. "Being a 'first-generation' student myself, volunteering for the Foundation's scholarship review team was personally rewarding—and it was also eye-opening to learn about the pressing need for financial assistance for students in our region," said Jessica DeJesus, a first-time volunteer. Ms. DeJesus and three of her colleagues from Tighe & Bond in Westfield, MA, were one of the many groups from the same employer or organization who donated their time to read through student applications and recommend awards.

Applications for next year's awards will open on January 1, 2019 and will close March 31, 2019.

**About the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts**

Founded in 1991, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts administers a charitable endowment consisting of over 600 separately identified funds (\$173 million) serving the three counties bordering the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts (Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties). For more information about the reach and impact of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, visit <http://communityfoundation.org>.