

## **SPOTLIGHT ON THE WOMEN'S CLUB** **The Brenda Belgard Memorial Scholarship**

Raquel DeMillio

*“What are you doing?” “I’m planting a haycorn, Pooh, so that it can grow up into an oak-tree, and have lots of haycorns just outside the front door instead of having to walk miles and miles, do you see, Pooh?” “Supposing it doesn’t, said Pooh. “It will, because Christopher Robin says it will, so that’s why I’m planting it.”*

- The House at Pooh Corner

A grandmother sits in the audience during a Monroe Township High School awards ceremony. She views outside organizations and private donors gift graduating Seniors with scholarships and wonders if the Stonebridge Women’s Club would also like to participate. Because of June Vardaro’s happenstance and our Club’s efforts, our first scholarship was given for the 2016-2017 school year. Given this opportunity, our intention is to be encouraging and supportive to young people on that road of time that we have long passed, treasuring the opportunity to nurture “a haycorn” so “that it can grow into an oak-tree.” We cherish our ability to advance education, with an eye toward helping each individual further their life’s purpose.

Each subsequent year, through the generosity of our members, we have asked two students to explore their honest thoughts and deep feelings about a topic we crafted to reflect the times. For the last four years, we have requested that of the two recipients, one be a student in the general education program, one in the special education program, and with a nod to our members, at least one be female. Topics have included personal perspectives on the effect of social media, academic and social challenges during the pandemic, appreciation of life post-pandemic, and advice to incoming students. This year’s prompt is equally introspective.

Our Brenda Belgard was a highly respected, wonderful past President of the Women’s Club. After her passing, it was determined that the scholarship program would be retitled in her honor. For the 2019-2020 school year, in her name, her family contributed to the scholarship fund and we were able to grant three awards.

January finds the high school’s portal open with all essay prompts for prospective graduates to complete. We anxiously await the way the current Seniors address our question, which must be submitted to the Guidance Department by President’s Day. We have requested that the Monroe Township High School team of Guidance Counselors read the essays and select the deserving students. In the past, as with the first scholarship winner (pictured here,) at a meeting, scholarship recipients were proudly presented and had their essays read aloud. We have appreciated the way these high school Seniors have vulnerably responded to our essay question. It is a true Senior to Senior moment. Some of the past winning essays can be found on the [Stonebridgewomensclub.com](http://Stonebridgewomensclub.com) website under Communications, Membership Updates and Community Emails, 8/17/20, 7/27/20 and 7/13/20. Happy reading!



Upcoming:

Winter Accessory Drive for Rise – December 15 – February 28

Bingo – Thursday, January 5

Trivia Night – Friday, January 20

Annual Women’s Club Brunch – Sunday, February 5 at Forsgate Country Club