Williamsburg COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Community Connection

Connecting people who care with causes that matter since 1999.

Fall 2025

Williamsburg Descendants Scholarship supports educational dreams of local students.

The new Williamsburg Descendants Scholarship created to address the disparities caused by the generational effects of racism has named its first recipients. At an August 2 celebration, the first class of Descendants Scholars— **Tasja Bartlett, Corniya Taylor, Brandon Freeman, and Nasir Simms** —were recognized by City of Williamsburg leaders and members of the Williamsburg Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) who championed the Scholarship's creation.

The Williamsburg Descendants Scholarship program provides financial assistance for degree or certificate programs to residents of greater Williamsburg with Black ancestors who lived in the Williamsburg area prior to 1964—the year that the Civil Rights Act was enacted.

The Scholarship was unanimously approved by City Council in October 2024 and is seeded by an initial gift of $250,000 from the City of Williamsburg. The fund allows for four new students each year to receive the Scholarship.

As administrator of the Descendants Scholarship, the Williamsburg Community Foundation will continue to facilitate the annual application and selection process.

The fund is open to additional contributions from individuals and organizations who wish to support this long-term effort towards equity in education.

To learn more or to contribute to the Williamsburg Descendants Scholarship Fund, email us at office@williamsburgcommunityfoundation.org.

> It took many tough conversations and a lot of hard work to get here, but the investment by the City of Williamsburg and today's milestone is significant. It moves us all closer to being one Williamsburg.
>
> *Lawrence Gholson III, TRC member and NAACP York-James City-Williamsburg Branch president.*



The first recipients of the Williamsburg Descendants Scholarship: Nasir Simms, Tasja Bartlett, & Corniya Taylor. (Not pictured: Brandon Freeman)

Perisie Scholarship: Investing in a Local Doctor Who Will Give Back

When the Perisie Scholarship was created, the idea was simple but powerful: help a promising local student become a physician who would one day return to care for our neighbors.

Earlier this summer, our first recipient **Dr. Sara Worrill Embry** stopped by the office before heading to her residency in psychiatry at the University of South Carolina. She shared stories of her time at Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine—serving as Chair of the Bioethics and Humanities in Medicine club, leading "Beyond the Medicine" events on topics like physician burnout, maternal mortality, and veterans' health, and being named *Student Doctor of the Year*. And, along the way, meeting her husband, who is also a Williamsburg local and a psychiatric resident.

"I am incredibly grateful to the Williamsburg Community Foundation and the Perisie Family for their generous support during my medical school journey," Sara shared. "This support has not only helped me pursue my dream but has also inspired me to give back to my community in the same spirit of generosity."





(left) Sara Worrill Embry, D.O., stopped by WCF to update Nancy Sullivan, President & CEO, on the next steps on her journey. *(right)* Sara's graduation from Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine.

A Legacy that Runs On

People partner with the Community Foundation for all sorts of reasons. For John O'Hare, it was deeply personal. After his wife Karene passed away from ovarian cancer in 2008, John started a fund in her memory, raising the first dollars through a race called the Hare and Tortoise 5k.

A few years later, Nick Luccketti, a race participant who ran in memory of his wife Bitsy Whitten, was invited by John to take over the race. It was a natural fit, and Nick has carried the mission forward, keeping Karene and Bitsy's memories alive.

Thanks to last year's race donors and smart fund management by the Community Foundation, the **Karene O'Hare / Bitsy Whitten Ovarian Cancer Memorial Fund** was able to award more than $5,500 each to Lackey Clinic and Olde Towne Medical and Dental Center to support vital women's health services.

What started as a personal tribute has turned into something that benefits countless women in our community.





In March, Nick Luccketti presented more than $11,000 from the Karene O'Hare / Bitsy Whitten Ovarian Cancer Memorial Fund to Lackey Clinic *(left)* and Olde Towne Medical and Dental Center *(right)*.

Larry Trumbore, CEO and Dr. Jill Cottel, Medical Director

Aaron Thompson, ED & CEO

Helping Children "Stand Up" for Kindness

The Williamsburg Community Foundation's Children & Young Adults grants help give children and teens the tools, experiences, and opportunities they need to thrive.

One recent grant went to *Stand Up for Yourself and Others*, an anti-bullying initiative teaching children to value differences and build empathy.

Stand Up began in a climate of rising antisemitism, when members of Temple Beth El asked: How do we raise children who value differences in others? They brought their idea to HART (Historic Area Religions Together), a local multifaith group promoting interaction across all backgrounds.

Though started by faith groups, *Stand Up* is nondenominational, apolitical, and designed to reach across backgrounds and beliefs.

The program began with books. Partnering with the Williamsburg Regional Library, they created a *Stand Up* collection—160 titles available at both library branches.

Guest readers, including JCC Supervisor Ruth Larson, NAACP leader Charles Gates, and Miss Williamsburg Teen Volunteer Mia James, lead story hours at the library, local summer camps, and the Abram Frink Community Center.

Sometimes the lessons reach beyond the children. One mother borrowed *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* and realized she had never learned about the Holocaust. "She thanked us for making these books available," said Corinne Garland, who volunteers with *Stand Up*. "At that moment, I knew what we are doing matters."



Miss Williamsburg Teen Volunteer Mia James reads a story from the *Stand* Up collection.

A Williamsburg Community Foundation community grant in 2024 funded a paid intern from William & Mary—rising senior Nu Mai— to coordinate *Stand Up*, ensuring that the program continues to give families the tools to help kindness grow.

Your Philanthropy, for Your Community

When you donate to the Williamsburg Community Foundation, your gift gets reinvested—locally—impacting the people, places, and programs close to home or closest to your heart.

We Accept

- Outright Gifts
- Appreciated Stock
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Our Vision:
A vibrant community with a commitment to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

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Save the Date

Lunch & Learn

Sept. 25, Oct. 24*, Nov. 19, or Dec. 9

** at Windsor Meade*

Join us at the WCF office for one of our *Lunch & Learns* this fall and explore how giving to and through the Williamsburg Community Foundation can make a meaningful impact across our community. Lunch is provided at no cost.

RSVP to (757) 259-1660 or email office@williamsburgcommuityfoundation.org

