

News Release

SAINT THERESE ANNOUNCES THREE YOUTH VOLUNTEER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Students from East Ridge High School and Holy Spirit Academy awarded \$2,000 scholarships

Saint Louis Park, Minn. (May 19, 2026) – Saint Therese today announced the three recipients of its Youth Volunteer Scholarships, which are awarded annually to recognize youth volunteers who enrich the lives of older adults. Winners this year are Holy Spirit Academy senior Olivia Fleigle and East Ridge High School seniors Bella Harris and Liljana Djurich. They were recognized at receptions at Saint Therese senior communities this month.

All three students received \$2,000 educational scholarships. They earned the award by submitting essays that described how volunteering and working with seniors impacted them and the seniors they served. This year, Saint Therese received 14 essays from eight high schools in Minnesota.

Olivia Fleigle, a senior at Holy Spirit Academy in Monticello, reflected in her essay on the deep friendships and life lessons she gained while volunteering in the beauty salon at Saint Therese of Oxbow Lake in Brooklyn Park. Over the past three years, Olivia spent Fridays assisting residents with appointments, escorting them to and from the salon, and offering companionship through heartfelt conversations and small acts of kindness.

She said what began as helping with laundry and salon tasks quickly became meaningful relationships with residents whose stories, humor and warmth left a lasting impact on her life. Olivia said her time at Saint Therese taught her the importance of slowing down, appreciating life's simple moments and spreading kindness wherever she goes. She will be attending North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton this fall to get her associate's degree and lactation consultant certification.

Bella Harris, a senior at East Ridge High School in Woodbury, shared in her essay how volunteering in dining services at Saint Therese of Woodbury became one of the most meaningful experiences of her high school years. What started as serving meals and greeting residents evolved into genuine connections built through conversation, encouragement and daily interactions that brightened both her life and the lives of the residents she served.

Bella said listening to residents' stories and learning about their careers and experiences strengthened her empathy, patience and communication skills. One especially meaningful connection with a former nurse encouraged Bella's own interest in pursuing nursing and reinforced the importance of compassion and human connection in healthcare. Bella plans to attend Loyola University in Chicago and major in nursing.

Liljana Djurich, a senior at East Ridge High School in Woodbury, wrote in her essay about how volunteering in dining services at Saint Therese of Woodbury transformed her understanding of service and healthcare. Through simple but meaningful interactions, such as remembering residents' favorite drinks, listening to their stories and checking in about their week, Liljana built lasting relationships that made volunteering something she genuinely looked forward to each week.

One resident, a retired U.S. history teacher, played an especially important role during Liljana's challenging junior year by encouraging her academically and inspiring her passion for learning. Liljana said her experiences at Saint Therese taught her that healthcare is about more than science and problem-solving; it also requires compassion, connection and making every person feel heard and valued. Liljana will be attending the University of Wisconsin – Madison to pursue a degree in genetics and genomics.

"This scholarship program celebrates the meaningful connections our youth volunteers build with residents through simple acts of kindness and service," said Michele Sahar, Director of Volunteer Services for Saint Therese. These students bring joy, compassion and energy to our communities, while gaining valuable life experiences and relationships that will stay with them for years to come."

To be eligible, applicants must be in grades 11–12 during the 2025–2026 school year and have completed at least 20 volunteer hours in a Saint Therese community (Minnesota, Michigan or Ohio), by the date of submission.

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About Saint Therese: Minnesota-based Saint Therese was founded in 1964 and prides itself on its rich tradition of providing exceptional care for seniors. It has locations and services in Brooklyn Park, Woodbury, Corcoran, Shoreview (all Minnesota), IHM Senior Living Community in Monroe, Mich., St. Mary of the Woods in Avon, Ohio, and Saint Therese of Westlake in Westlake, Ohio. Most communities provide the full continuum of care from independent living, assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing and transitional care. Saint Therese at St. Odilia in Shoreview specializes in hospice and palliative care. Ascend Rehabilitation provides rehabilitation therapy, health and wellness services. Saint Therese is a nonprofit, 501©(3) senior care organization.

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