

Scholarship Program

2025 RECIPIENTS

This year, King County Nurses Association awarded 15 scholarships of \$4,500 each to deserving nursing students from King County, an increase of \$500 from previous years. Recipients include students seeking initial licensure as RNs or in graduate entry programs, as well as registered nurses returning to earn Bachelor of Science in Nursing or advanced degrees. Students receiving scholarships demonstrate an understanding of equity and social justice through creative ideas to improve health disparities in our community. They embody the values of collaboration, compassion, innovation, and community wellness. Since 1993, KCNA has awarded \$861,500 in scholarship funds to support 345 nursing students.

Valerie Weiss Award

Awarded to RNs working toward advanced degrees in nursing or related field. The award is made as a legacy to Valerie Weiss, ARNP, MN, MA whose professional commitment was an inspiration to her colleagues and patients alike.

MASTER'S



NATALIE AGUILAR has been a dedicated member of the Public Health AmeriCorps program for nearly two and a half years. With a master's degree in public health, she brings an evidence-based approach and a deep commitment to underserved

communities, an interest sparked by early exposure to health care disparities. Now pursuing a graduate degree in nursing at Seattle University, she aims to combine public health, direct care, education and advocacy. She is especially drawn to community clinics in Washington, where she hopes to build strong relationships and promote holistic, accessible care. Coming from a community with a history of mistrust in health systems, she prioritizes clear, respectful communication that builds trust and honors cultural values.

"I will advocate for preventative care by working closely with communities to ensure education is tailored to their needs."

DNP



ROSELINE BUYEKA is a second-year Doctor of Nursing Practice student at the University of Washington, specializing in population health and systems leadership. Growing up in Kenya, Buyeka witnessed the devastating impact of limited access to health

care, especially for families like her own, a reality that shaped her lifelong commitment to health equity. She works full-time at International Community Health Services, supporting immigrant and refugee communities. In addition, Buyeka volunteers by mentoring youth and serves on the board of Mother Africa. Her work addresses social determinants of health and amplifies marginalized voices. Despite balancing full-time work and school, Buyeka remains actively engaged in service and advocacy. Her long-term goal is to become a nurse faculty member, building a diverse, inclusive nursing workforce that empowers communities.

"Promoting equity and social justice within health care is paramount..."



MINJU HONG is a Doctor of Nursing Practice student at the University of Washington, currently with a 3.93 GPA and scheduled to graduate in 2027. Her passion for nursing began when her mother was diagnosed with

thyroid cancer. Raised in a small Texas town, she saw her parents struggle to access care because of language barriers and limited resources. She learned at an early age that illness affects entire families, as she acted as her mother's interpreter during a cancer diagnosis. Now, she is committed to providing accessible health care to low-income communities like her own. Known for integrating evidence-based research, clinical expertise and patient values into her care, she is already being recognized as a promising future nurse practitioner. Her goal: to ensure no family is left without the care, communication or compassion they deserve.

"I hope to work in a primary care clinic or community health center for the vulnerable and assist individuals of all ages..."



KIERAN KENNEDY is a dedicated psychiatric nurse with more than 15 years of experience in inpatient, outpatient and forensic behavioral health care across the U.S. and abroad. As charge nurse in Harborview Medical Center's psychiatric ICU for more than a

decade, he is known for his calm, compassionate presence and skill in managing psychiatric crises. Originally from New Zealand, Kennedy has experience navigating a fragmented mental health system, which inspired a lifelong commitment to equity and innovation. Kennedy is pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at the University of Washington and was recently selected as a nurse fellow in the school's Leadership Education in Adolescent Health program. He is developing a first-of-its-kind psychiatric acuity tool to guide safe, high-quality staffing decisions. Kennedy continues to champion systems-level improvements and better outcomes for adolescents, grounded in a core belief: Every patient deserves timely, specialized and dignified psychiatric care.

"...Nursing is more than providing care—it's about advocating for patients, improving health care accessibility and shaping the profession's future."



SHELLY LE is a passionate advocate for equitable patient care and a Doctor of Nursing Practice student at the University of Washington. A first-generation Vietnamese American, she was inspired to become a pediatric nurse practitioner by her experiences growing

up in an immigrant neighborhood in Salt Lake City. She is deeply committed to addressing health disparities and increasing diversity in nursing. Le currently works

as a charge nurse at the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic and advocates for underserved children through her role at Seattle Children's Hospital. Her dedication extends beyond the clinic through involvement in King County initiatives to expand community health services. Known for her compassion, resourcefulness and leadership, Le thrives in care-centered roles where she can directly impact vulnerable populations.

"I am passionate about providing high-quality pediatric care to underserved communities..."

Basic & Graduate Awards

Scholarship awarded to students enrolled in associate or baccalaureate degree programs preparing for careers as registered nurses as well as those pursuing graduate degrees in nursing.

ABSN



NAYELI CABRERA SANCHEZ is a hardworking, thoughtful and enthusiastic aspiring nurse currently enrolled in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at the University of Washington. She works as a population health coordinator

at International Community Health Services, where she improves screening rates, addresses care gaps and supports underserved patients across Asian, Latinx and African communities. A first-generation Latina and daughter of Mexican immigrants, her passion for nursing was sparked while translating for her father during his type 2 diabetes diagnosis, a moment that exposed how health care often overlooks cultural context. Through her public health education, she gained a deep understanding of holistic, patient-centered care and the importance of breaking down medical language into accessible, culturally sensitive communication. With equity and social justice as her guiding values, she is committed to empowering patients and dismantling barriers to care.

"Representation matters... I want to show that it is possible to overcome barriers and diversify the nursing workforce."

ADN/BSN



NASRO SHIRDON AHMED

embodies social justice, community engagement and leadership as she grows into a compassionate, impactful nurse. Her inspiration began with the anticipation of becoming a big sister, a joy that turned to grief when

her infant brother died after battling cardiovascular and respiratory complications. Witnessing her family's struggles shaped her passion for equitable health care. As an African-Black Muslim woman in nursing, she is deeply committed to improving communication between providers and patients, especially those facing language barriers. Through clinical experiences and coursework in the BSN program at Seattle University, she has strengthened her advocacy and cultural competency. Ahmed strives to become a leader who ensures patients are seen, heard and respected, regardless of background.

"I am passionate about closing the gap in communication between health care providers and patients..."



ANA BASBETH is a compassionate, driven, first-generation student pursuing an Associate Degree in Nursing at Bellevue College. Growing up in Indonesia, she witnessed health care injustice and the dismissal of mental health, sparking a fierce dedication to

advocacy. From a young age, art was her sanctuary, a way to process emotion and connect. She sees nursing as an extension of that artistry: just as a painter understands color and depth, a nurse must grasp the full complexity of the human experience. Basbeth is committed to integrating mental health advocacy into every aspect of care, treating emotional well-being with the same urgency as physical health. Beyond the bedside, she aims to push for policies expanding access to mental health resources, especially for underserved communities.

"As a future nurse, my goal is to address not just illness, but the social conditions that cause it."



NAEL KUTOLOKA BATETE, a Congolese nursing student working towards her Associate Degree in Nursing at Bellevue College, brings a unique perspective to the profession. Born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country marked by resilience and hardship, she grew up in a health care-oriented family

and witnessed gaps in medical services. These experiences, along with personal challenges, shaped her understanding of empathy, cultural competence and advocacy. She believes nursing needs professionals who reflect and understand diverse communities. Passionate about equity and inclusion, Batete is eager to bring her story and commitment to compassionate care into every space she enters. By embracing her identity and supporting peers, she hopes to contribute to a more inclusive, understanding health care system. Her passion shines through her eagerness to learn and dedication to uplifting others.

"I am eager to bring my voice, experiences and commitment to equity into the profession."



NAHUSENAY ASSEFA BERIHUN

brings a deep cultural heritage and resilient spirit to his journey in health care. An immigrant from Ethiopia, he understands the importance of inclusion and cultural competence in the field.

His ability to connect with patients from diverse backgrounds, especially in immigrant and underserved communities, reflects his commitment to reducing health disparities. Currently pursuing an Associate Degree in Nursing at Lake Washington Tech, Berihun is passionate about expanding health care access, particularly for marginalized populations. His early experiences in communities where preventable diseases led to unnecessary deaths drive his advocacy for vulnerable groups. He aims to bridge gaps between health systems and the communities they serve by addressing barriers such as mistrust, fear and financial hardship. Focused on public health and preventive care, he brings ethics, empathy and dedication to both his work and his broader mission of health equity.

"I am passionate about improving health care accessibility and outcomes for marginalized populations."



LAKENYA CHARLAYNE

BRIMMER's passion for nursing is deeply personal. Born severely drug- and alcohol-dependent and given just weeks to live, she was abandoned at birth, but saved by compassionate health care workers. Now pursuing

her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Washington, she is committed to becoming the kind of nurse who changes lives. Known for her leadership in the BSN 2026 cohort, she serves as curriculum leader and has organized the annual Back 2 School Supply Giveaway for nearly a decade, supporting underserved children.

Brimmer brings a powerful mix of clinical training, cultural humility and advocacy to her work, especially in addressing racial disparities in maternal health care. She is driven to confront harmful stereotypes about Black mothers and ensure every patient is heard and cared for holistically. Her journey from patient to provider reflects her dedication to healing, equity and lifelong service.

"I plan to eliminate biases that exist, particularly for underserved populations."



SHARAD DEVKOTA is a compassionate and resilient nursing student originally from Nepal, who moved to the United States in 2014. Inspired by the loss of his grandmother to cancer and a life-threatening experience involving

his mother, he chose to pursue nursing. Devkota has maintained a 3.7 GPA while pursuing his ADN at Lake Washington Technical Institute, demonstrating strong academics and work ethic. As a male nursing student—an underrepresented group, especially in Nepal, where men were once barred from the field—he is committed to increasing diversity in health care. He values cultural competence and strives to ensure all patients feel seen and supported. Raised by his grandparents, Devkota developed a deep respect for the elderly and is dedicated to advocating for their well-being and advancing policies that improve their care.

"Through nursing, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable health care system."



APRIL SANDOVAL-GARCIA, a first-generation Mexican American and aspiring nurse, is currently enrolled in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at Pacific Lutheran University. Driven by a passion sparked while caring for her ill grandmother

in high school, she brings six years of experience as a medical assistant and has completed all prerequisites for the program. Sandoval-Garcia is deeply committed to increasing Latino representation in health care and advocating for underserved communities. She hopes to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist or women's health nurse practitioner, with a special interest in polycystic ovary syndrome—a condition she believes deserves more research and understanding. Beyond nursing, she plans to launch a foundation

to support first-generation and underrepresented students through mentorship and scholarships.

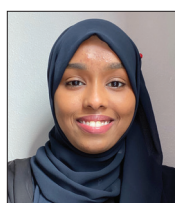
"...One day, I will establish a foundation that provides mentorship for first-generation nurses."



YOUNG EUN LEE, also known to peers as Rachel, is a dedicated health care professional pursuing her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Seattle University with a perfect 4.0 GPA. Recently, she has worked as a CNA on the surgical unit at Seattle

Children's Hospital, where she consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic, leadership, and commitment to improving patient care. Lee's passion for health care began as a waitress, where she witnessed the profound impact of human connections, inspiring her desire to alleviate suffering and offer holistic care. Having faced a tough childhood, Lee is dedicated to helping vulnerable populations, particularly children facing domestic violence. She is researching the mental health challenges these children encounter and is committed to creating safe environments for them. Additionally, she is passionate about addressing disparities in health care access for international individuals, aiming to make health care more accessible and equitable for all.

"As a nurse, I see myself as both a health care provider and an advocate for social justice."



JUWEIRIA MAYOW is pursuing her Associate Degree in Nursing at Highline College while working as a dedicated dialysis technician with more than five years of experience at Northwest Kidney Centers. Fluent in English and Somali, she helps bridge

communication gaps and fosters trust with diverse patients. Her passion for nursing was shaped by her upbringing in war-torn Somalia, where she saw nurses provide both medical care and emotional support. A promise to her late father continues to motivate her path. Known for her warm, welcoming presence, Mayow connects easily with patients and creates spaces where they feel seen and valued. She aspires to work in labor and delivery, with a focus on reducing maternal mortality rates among BIPOC women and advocating for policies that address systemic health care disparities.

"As a nurse, I plan to advocate for policies that promote equitable access to health care."