

The James Beard Foundation Names Ten Recipients of its Second Annual National Scholars Program

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New York, NY – The **James Beard Foundation (JBF)** announced today the ten recipients of its 2017 **JBF National Scholars Program**. The program, now in its second year, awards scholarships of up to \$20,000 to those who demonstrate the potential for leadership roles in culinary arts, food studies, agriculture, hospitality management, and related fields.

“Our National Scholars Program is committed to granting financial support to curious, creative, and culinary-oriented minds across the country,” said Kris Moon, vice president of the James Beard Foundation. “The areas of study in the culinary arts now include disciplines ranging from science and history to economics and anthropology, providing us with a richer and more in-depth understanding of food. This relatively new program, granting up to \$20,000 in scholarships each, ensures that these diverse interests are awarded and encouraged.”

Each year ten annual scholarships in the amount of up to \$20,000 each are granted. To ensure regional diversity, one awardee is selected from each of the ten geographic regions defined by the James Beard Foundation Awards*.

The **2017 JBF National Scholars Program** recipients are:

1. **Helen Dennis** (Southeast; Columbia, SC): Dennis is working towards her master’s degree with a focus on American food systems at the University of South Carolina. Her volunteer work with groups such as End Child Hunger SC and the Southern Foodways Alliance reflect her dedication to understanding America’s food culture and addressing the issue of food insecurity.
2. **Alice Figueroa** (South; New Orleans): Figueroa studied at Tulane University in New Orleans, and attained her master’s of public health degree from New York University. Figueroa is a registered dietitian and is amplifying her knowledge with her study to become a chef at the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts.
3. **Alyssa J. Hartman** (Great Lakes; Van Wert, OH): Hartman is pursuing a master’s of food and agriculture law and policy at Vermont Law School to develop a better understanding of the history and current state of agriculture in our country, with the goal of building more equitable and accessible communities using food as the fodder.
4. **Giselle Lord** (Northwest; Hood River, OR): Lord is an entrepreneurial success story—as an independent video producer and proprietor of her own online cookware business. She is pursuing graduate studies in gastronomy at Boston University, which she will continue remotely in Oregon.

5. **Tyler Mason** (Southwest; Fort Collins, CO): Mason's passion for sustainable food production prompted him to leave a secure job in horticulture to pursue a master's of agriculture degree at Colorado State University. He has initiated the "Plant a Row for the Hungry Campaign." Tyler is leading a participatory plant breeding program that includes the perspectives of growers, chefs and consumers.
6. **Eric Noonan** (West; Las Vegas): Noonan has overcome many hardships in his journey to achieve his goal of attaining a Ph.D., and one day becoming a professor of hospitality management. As a United States Marine, he suffered severe, life-compromising injuries. As a widowed father, he managed to raise his children by himself. He is now a graduate student and part-time instructor at the University of Nevada Las Vegas's William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. He is dedicated to both his family and his chosen career.
7. **Olivia Pena** (Mid-Atlantic; Verona, NJ): Pena is advancing her personal food advocacy work by pursuing a master's degree in food systems at the University of Vermont, and plans to work on the upcoming Farm Bill in Senator Patrick Leahy's office. She will travel to Kenya to implement service-learning projects, working on agricultural development, community entrepreneurship, and public health.
8. **Luis Reyes** (New York City; NYC): Luis Reyes was valedictorian of his 2017 graduating class in New York's High School of Food and Finance. He is continually striving to perfect his craft as a chef. Reyes has worked at American Cut with chef Marc Forgione, and Café Boulud with JBF Award winner Daniel Boulud. This fall he enrolls at the Culinary Institute of America.
9. **Alisha Utter** (Northeast; Grand Isle, VT): Utter earned her undergraduate degree in environmental systems and marine science, worked extensively in restaurants, and is now a Ph.D. student/researcher at the University of Vermont. She is "committed to triangulating resources and innovations between farmers, chefs, and researchers to collectively work towards a more resilient agrifood system."
10. **Tracee Watkins** (Mid-West; Manhattan, KS): Watkins is a third-year Ph.D. candidate in hospitality and dietetics administration at Kansas State University, with emphases on food safety, defense, and childhood nutrition programs. She aspires to teach a new generation of food professionals.

The JBF National Scholars Program is a part of the larger **James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program**, which is awarding close to \$680,000 in financial aid in 2017. Established in 1991, the scholarship program assists aspiring and established culinary professionals who plan to further their education at a licensed or accredited culinary school or hospitality institution, college, or university. In the past 26 years, the program has not only grown in visibility and financial scope, but in the breadth of subjects its recipients have embraced. As of 2017, the Foundation will have awarded over \$7 million in financial aid to almost 2,000 recipients.

The James Beard Foundation issued an open call for applications for the National Scholars Program beginning on April 1, 2017. The application form captured information about each candidate, including educational history, employment history, volunteer work and public service, professional goals, financial status, and special circumstances. Two letters of recommendation from employers or instructors were required, as well as a short essay on a topic determined by the education committee of the JBF board of trustees.

The James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program is administered by the Scholarship Management Services division of Scholarship America, a nonprofit organization that has helped award scholarships to over one million students. Applications for scholarships are received and evaluated by Scholarship America. The applications of the finalists are then submitted to the James Beard Foundation's Scholarship Selection Committee for final review.

To learn more about the JBF National Scholars Program and the James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program, please visit: <https://www.jamesbeard.org/scholarships>.

* Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, New York City, Northeast, Northwest, South, Southeast, Southwest, and West

About the James Beard Foundation (JBF)

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, the late James Beard was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts, instilling in them the value of wholesome, healthful, and delicious food. Today JBF continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for students of culinary arts and food policy, publications, chef advocacy training, and thought-leader convening. The Foundation also maintains the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs. For more information, please visit jamesbeard.org. Get food news, recipes, and more at the James Beard Foundation's [blog, or subscribe to the free digital newsletter Beard Bites](#). Follow @beardfoundation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), and [Snapchat](#). [Watch the James Beard House Kitchen Cam, James Beard Awards, and more on the Foundation's Livestream](#) channel. Find more JBF-related video on the Foundation's [YouTube](#) channels.