



James Beard Foundation Announces Ten Recipients of National Scholars Program

~ \$200,000 worth of scholarships awarded to individuals pursuing a range of food-related disciplines ~

NEW YORK, NY (October 4, 2018) – The James Beard Foundation (JBF) today announced the recipients of its [2018 National Scholars Program](#). Established in 2016, the National Scholars Program provides scholarships of \$20,000 each to ten food-focused individuals who plan to pursue an education in the culinary arts, food studies, agriculture, hospitality management, and related fields.

“The 2018 National Scholars represent the enthusiasm and forward-thinking nature that defines this country’s next generation of culinary leaders,” said Katherine Miller, vice president of Impact, James Beard Foundation. “These individuals inspire change and have taken advantage of opportunities to become experts in a range of disciplines—from food access and sovereignty to food journalism to livestock sustainability. We are thrilled to provide this year’s recipients with the support they need to succeed and ultimately usher in an era of good food that goes beyond just taste.”

To ensure regional diversity, one awardee is selected from each of the ten geographic regions defined by the James Beard Foundation Awards*.

The **2018 JBF National Scholars Program** recipients are:

- 1. Azziza Robinson** (Great Lakes; Markham, IL): Robinson will be working toward a Master’s Degree in Food Studies at Chatham University in Pittsburgh. She will focus on connecting rural and urban agricultural communities in order to address food access and food sovereignty in those areas.
- 2. Michał Matejczuk** (Mid-Atlantic; Washington, D.C.): Matejczuk is an MPS candidate in International Agriculture and Rural Development at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. In his studies, he is researching and developing new strategies that can maximize smallholder farmer food productions as a means to identify solutions for global food insecurity. Matejczuk’s involvement in the Peace Corps (Uganda ’16 - ’18) demonstrates his resilience and commitment to international development.
- 3. Ben Rengstorf** (Midwest; Minneapolis): Rengstorf will be pursuing a Master of Science Degree in Sustainable Food Systems at Green Mountain College in Poultney, VT. Rengstorf plans to use the degree, along with his background in culinary arts and public education, to develop a culinary and food systems program for the students of Minneapolis Public Schools.
- 4. Emily Larose** (Northeast; Cambridge, MA): LaRose is attending the Harvard School of Public Health with the goal of exploring solutions to eradicate hunger worldwide. LaRose is inspired by domestic and global food programs in her pursuit to deliver nutritious food to all.

For Immediate Release

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5. **Amy Blom** (Northwest; Bellingham, WA): Blom will focus on expanding her work with experiential cooking education for children at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO. She will be a member of the School Based Childhood Obesity Prevention Lab at CSU, and explore the links between environmental health and human health.
6. **Craig J. Rapp** (South; Winter Springs, FL): Rapp will build upon his current Ph.D research at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, FL, which focuses on finding ways to improve restaurant employee wellbeing. With this research, Rapp combines his passion for the restaurant industry with his desire to help people and work with others.
7. **Kendall Vanderslice** (Southeast; Durham, NC): Vanderslice will be studying theology of cuisine and eating at Duke University in Durham, NC, in order to build on her work in food and religious journalism. Her first book *We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship, and the Community of God* releases May 2019 with Eerdmans's press.
8. **Natalia Rodriguez Ramirez** (Southwest; El Paso, TX): Rodriguez Ramirez will attend the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park, NY, after she returns from studying Spanish cuisine in Seville. At the CIA, she will complete her Associate in Occupational Studies degree in baking and pastry, with the goal of eventually earning a Bachelor's Degree and returning to Mexico to reinforce her connection to her roots through gastronomy.
9. **Sarah Klopatek** (West; Woodland, CA): Klopatek is currently in the 3rd year of her Ph.D. program in Animal Biology at the University of California, Davis, specializing in Beef Cattle Sustainability. Currently her research focuses on the environmental, social, and economic impacts of varying grass-fed and grain-fed beef production systems. After obtaining her Ph.D., Sarah intends to utilize her scientific foundation and knowledge of beef cattle production to aid in ameliorating the agricultural education barriers across consumers, producers, and policy makers to help ensure food security and sustainability across the country.
10. **Jaylen Downer** (New York; New York City): Downer will build on his interest in food science at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY. His experience with Cornell's Extension Hydroponics Program has influenced his desire to explore new and innovative approaches to agriculture and food growth.

The National Scholars Program is a part of the larger [James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program](#), which is awarding over \$600,000 in financial aid in 2018. 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 pursued. As of 2018, the Foundation has awarded close to \$8 million in financial aid to over 2,000 recipients.

The James Beard Foundation issued an open call for applications for the National Scholars Program beginning on April 1, 2018. 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 Beard Foundation board of trustees.

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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 National Scholars Program and the James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program, please visit: jamesbeard.org/scholarships.

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

About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation's mission is to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. For more than 30 years the Foundation has accomplished this mission through programs that highlight food's central role in our lives. In addition to hosting guest-chef dinners throughout the year at the historic James Beard House in New York City, the Foundation administers the James Beard Awards; grants scholarships for culinary students; produces national events that include Taste America; and creates educational programs for the culinary community and food lovers. The Foundation addresses the growing challenges facing our food system through its Impact Programs, which include the Leadership Awards; Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change; Issue Summits; and Culinary Labs. Industry issues, such as gender imbalance and diversity in culinary leadership, are addressed through our Industry Programs. For more information, please visit jamesbeard.org and follow @beardfoundation on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/beardfoundation), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/beardfoundation), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/beardfoundation).