



NWILED John D. Cooke, III Memorial Entrepreneurial Scholarship

2025 Application

Press on to Excellence!

NW Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) annually offers three scholarships to graduating high school seniors from Carroll or Jo Daviess counties who are entrepreneurial and want to start a business or pursue a career in business. There is one \$2,000 first place award and two \$1,500 runner-up awards. Recipients shall be full-time students in good academic standing in the qualifying school year. Applications should be sent to David Schmit, Regional Director: DSchmit@nwiled.org or 1 Commercial Dr, Ste. 2. Hanover, IL 61041 by Monday, March 31, 2025. Scholarships can be used for start-up costs related to launching a business and or advancing a career in business through education and training.

Formed in 2008 by the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors, NWILED today promotes economic development by fostering business growth and assisting expanding and relocating businesses in determining their needs for growth with cooperation of government and business partners. NWILED encourages entrepreneurs by assisting with access to resources to begin and grow their businesses and employ all available resources to create a welcoming business environment, aligning the skills of the available workforce with the needs of businesses, and building political and economic capital.

Student Name: _____
High School: _____
Home Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ County: _____ Zip Code: _____
Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Apply with typed responses. Exhibits are welcome, please attach supporting photos and illustrations. A selection committee comprised of NWILED Board members and a representative from the Cooke Family will score applications and award the scholarships in May 2025.

1. Describe an entrepreneurial idea you hope this scholarship will help you pursue?
2. What classes or training do you plan to take after graduation in pursuit of your entrepreneurial goals, and will you be using the scholarship to fund this education?
3. Describe any work experience, extracurricular activities, or volunteer work you have been involved with that has influenced your entrepreneurial goals.
4. Do you plan to remain in, or how will you stay connected to, your Northwest Illinois community?
5. Tell what being a successful business owner or having a successful career in business means to you.
6. What is your favorite local small business? And briefly explain why you think they are successful.
7. Read the John D. Cooke III biography (attached), and then tell what about him inspires you most?

John D. Cooke III Biography



John D. Cooke III was born in 1928 in suburban Chicago, and over the years rose to the top of his profession as a Senior Vice President and Corporate Ombudsman for the McDonalds Corporation. He and his wife Margarete, also a senior level executive at McDonalds, spent their professional careers promoting excellence within the corporation and delivering value to McDonald's ever-growing list of employees and customers.

After they retired, they settled in the Galena area and focused the same effort and passion they demonstrated in their professional careers to a variety of community activities and projects, including but not limited to the following:

- He was a Director on the Board of the River Museum in Dubuque, Iowa, and helped develop the new Galena & Jo Daviess County Historical Museum.
- He was a key supporter of the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and actively participated in the 2020 plan for Business Expansion in Galena.
- Starting in 2011 he led the effort, along with six other partners, in conceiving and building the Prairie Ridge Senior Living and Memory Care facility in Galena.
- And perhaps most importantly to him, he was a Founding Board Member of Northwest Illinois Economic Development.

Throughout his life his message to his children, family and others was that the path to success was action, independence, and a willingness to stand on their own two feet and face life squarely head on every day. In his view, a critical key to that success was a good education. So, he was committed to that premise, pressing others to get that solid education, and supporting a variety of educational institutions, including his board membership of Northwest Illinois Economic Development.

His family is honored that the annual NWILED entrepreneurial scholarship was renamed in his memory to the 'NWILED John D. Cooke, III Memorial Entrepreneurial Scholarship', and his message to its recipients would be undoubtedly be, "Congratulations and press on to excellence"!