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**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARDS THREE ENTREPRENEURIAL
SCHOLARSHIPS TO ASPIRING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

HANOVER, ILLINOIS - Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) has announced the presentation of the organization's John D. Cooke, III Memorial Entrepreneurial Scholarship for 2025 to three area high school students.

Brooke Dittmar from Galena High School was awarded a \$2,000 first place. Brooke's goal is to open a business called "Bizzy Bloom Collective" with the tagline of "A Hive of Creativity," which will offer arts and crafts classes, as well as food and tea workshops paired with honey varieties. Brooke aspires to work hand-in-hand with her brother, Chase Dittmar, owner of Dry Creek Beekeeping in rural Elizabeth, who coincidentally won NWILED's entrepreneurial scholarship in 2023. Brooke will be enrolling in a Business Administration degree program this fall at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa.

Runner up awards of \$1,500 each were given to Evan Trone of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and Ryan Pieper of Lena-Winslow High School.

"Through the Cooke scholarship, NWILED hopes to enrich the lives of deserving students in our service area that are on entrepreneurial career paths with our scholarship awards," said

David Schmit, NWILED Regional Director. “The competition was very exciting this year and the decision was very challenging for the scholarship review team.”

NWILED typically offers three scholarships to graduating high school seniors residing in Carroll or Jo Daviess counties who are entrepreneurial and want to start a business or pursue a career in business. New this year was the addition of Lena-Winslow High after their Ryan Pieper petitioned for his school to be made eligible, which was granted. Recipients must be full-time students in good academic standing in the qualifying school year. Scholarships can be used for start-up costs related to launching a business and or advancing a career in business through education and training.

NWILED began offering entrepreneurial scholarships in 2018. In 2021, the scholarship was renamed in honor and remembrance of the late John Cooke III who was a founding member of NWILED. Through the Cooke scholarship, NWILED’s goals are to enrich the lives of deserving students in our service area that are entrepreneurial and want to start a business or pursue a career in business.

For more information about Entrepreneurial Scholarships for 2026, go to www.nwiled.org “Resources” tab. Applications are available online. Or contact David Schmit at dshmit@nwiled.org or 815-297-7361.

ABOUT NWILED:

Northwest Illinois Economic Development was formed in 2008 by the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors whose main goals were to spearhead economic development structures, funding and progress in Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Whiteside counties in Northwest Illinois. The Board’s main focus was to form a regional development entity concentrating on growing the economy and public/private partnerships.



NWILED 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.