

# Carson Scholars Fund



## 2026 Impact Report



“The reading room has completely changed the reading culture here. It's not just a beautiful space, it's a place where our kids want to be. That shift in attitude has directly impacted our scores. Having a dedicated, stress-free spot to just focus and build reading stamina has been a total game-changer for us, proving that when kids enjoy reading, the academic growth naturally follows.”

-Lookout Valley Elementary School Educator



## A Message From Dr. & Mrs. Carson



### 30 Years of Excellence, Service & Investing in Our Youth

As we celebrate the Carson Scholars Fund's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of awarding scholarships in 2026, we are filled with profound gratitude and optimism. What began three decades ago as a vision to recognize and reward students who excel academically while demonstrating a commitment to serving others has grown into a nationwide movement that has impacted over 12,000 young lives. Today, that mission remains as important as ever.

When we founded the Carson Scholars Fund, we believed that America's future depended on cultivating both academic achievement and humanitarian leadership in its young people. At a time when educational outcomes continue to be a national concern, we remain steadfast in our conviction that recognizing excellence, encouraging literacy and inspiring service can help develop confident and capable individuals, vibrant communities and a more prosperous nation.

This year, we were honored to celebrate the largest class of Carson Scholars in our history, welcoming 706 new scholars and recognizing 994 returning scholars. These remarkable students embody the qualities that have defined our program – intellectual curiosity, perseverance, integrity and compassion. Through their dedication to learning and service, these scholars are demonstrating that academic success and community leadership go hand in hand.

Over the course of the year, we witnessed countless examples of our mission in action at scholarship recognition events, reading room openings and community initiatives across the country. We continue to be inspired by the scholars, educators, families, volunteers, donors and partners who make this work possible. Together, you have helped create an enduring legacy of opportunity, one that empowers young people to reach their fullest

potential while making meaningful contributions to the world around them.

As we reflect on three decades of impact, we are reminded that every scholarship awarded symbolizes more than academic recognition. It represents belief in a young person's future, encouragement to pursue excellence and confidence that leadership rooted in service can transform communities for generations to come.

Thank you for your unwavering support of the Carson Scholars Fund. As we look ahead to the next chapter, we remain committed to advancing academic success, fostering civic leadership and investing in the extraordinary potential of America's youth.

With Gratitude,

Dr. Benjamin & Mrs. Candy Carson



# Table of Contents

- 6 Carson Scholars Fund's Origins
- 9 30 Years of Impact
- 10 Areas of Impact
- 12 Carson Scholars Program
- 14 Alumni Success
- 18 Culture of Achievement
- 20 2026 Regional Banquets
- 22 Ben Carson Reading Project
- 26 Donors Expanding Our Impact
- 28 Lasting Legacies
- 30 Our People
- 32 Financial Statements
- 34 How to Get Involved



12,900+ Scholarships



1996



2026



Pay it Forward



315 Rooms



Coast to Coast



Expanding Our Reach



1996

25 scholarships are awarded to the inaugural class of Carson Scholars in Maryland



1998

The Abell Foundation pledged a 10-year commitment to sponsoring Carson Scholarships in Baltimore City Public Schools



1999

First scholarship endowment was established



2000

The Ben Carson Reading Project launched with the opening of the first reading room at Hall's Cross Roads Elementary School in Aberdeen, MD



2004

Darius Rucker brings star-studded power to a CSF fundraiser at the Lyric Opera House



2007

A pool tournament and fundraiser is held with special appearances by Michael Keaton, Jerome Bettis, Michael McCrary and Tom Matte



2009

Johns Hopkins Hospital hosts the world premiere of the movie *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* with Cuba Gooding Jr. joining in the festivities



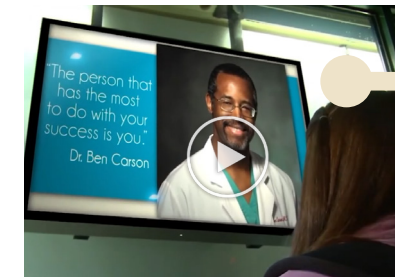
2010

W.K. Kellogg Foundation provides funding for a 10-year longitudinal research study



2013

The CSF wins a Grammy for its public service announcement



2014

The 100<sup>th</sup> Ben Carson Reading Room opens at Northridge Elementary School in Fair Oaks, CA



2016

The CSF celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a celebration at the Hippodrome Theater in Baltimore and recognized a record-breaking cohort of 1,467 Carson Scholars





# 30 YEARS OF IMPACT

2017

Eleni and Wolfgang Gagon leave a legacy gift to support awarding Carson Scholarships and creating reading rooms in schools



2019

The 200<sup>th</sup> reading room opened at Twin Oaks Elementary School in San Marcos, CA



2021

The 10,000<sup>th</sup> Carson Scholarship was awarded to a 4<sup>th</sup> grader in West Palm Beach, FL



2024

The Patterson HBCU Scholarship launched to provide Carson Scholars attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities with a renewable \$5,000 award.



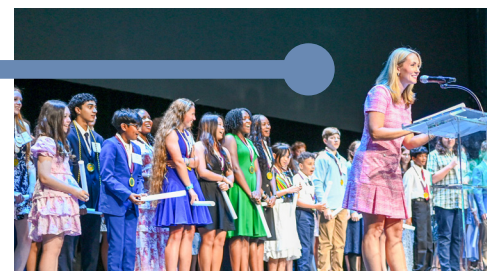
2025

The 300<sup>th</sup> reading room opened at John H. Bayne Elementary School in Capitol Heights, MD as the reading room program celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary



2026

In celebration of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1,700 students were celebrated as Carson Scholars, the largest group to date, surpassing the record set for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary



12,905

Scholarships awarded since 1996



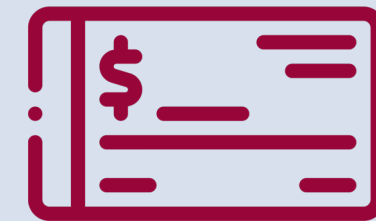
5,280

Carson Scholars have been recognized more than once



4,284

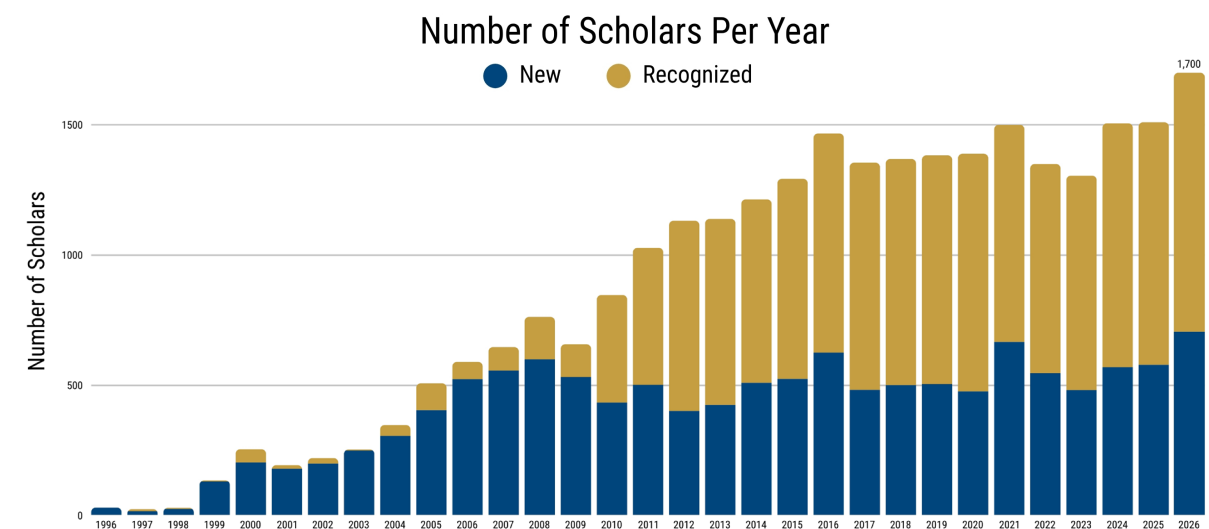
Schools have had Carson Scholars



\$11,500,00+

In scholarship funds distributed to colleges/universities

83% of eligible scholars have used at least part of their scholarship funds





# Communities Nationwide



Carson Scholarship funds followed scholars to colleges and universities nationwide.



The reading room program expands into a new state with the opening of a Think Big Reading Room at Explore Academy Las Cruces in Las Cruces, NM



The 60<sup>th</sup> Eleni and Wolfgang Gagon Think Big Reading Room celebrated its opening at Matilda Ave. School PS 483 in Bronx, NY



The CSF surpasses \$4.5 million dollars invested in the Ben Carson Reading Project with the opening of the Smokey Mountain Elementary School reading room in Whittier, NC



Two Ben Carson Reading Rooms opened in Big Spring, TX at Moss Elementary School (left) and Big Spring Intermediate (right)



The CSF surpasses \$4.5 million dollars invested in the Ben Carson Reading Project with the opening of the Smokey Mountain Elementary School reading room in Whittier, NC

**2,942 PEOPLE**  
celebrated with scholars  
at six banquets across  
the country

**\$695,682.92**

in funding distributed to colleges & universities nationwide this year

- 🏠 \$1.6+ million awarded in scholarships to students across Allegheny County historically
- 🏠 193 Pittsburgh area scholars engaged in the program in 2026
- 🏠 83 schools in the Pittsburgh area had Carson Scholars in 2026

# MARYLAND

- 🏠 The 315<sup>th</sup> Ben Carson Reading Room opened at James Ryder Randall Elementary School in Clinton, MD
- 🏠 24% increase in Carson Scholars in MD from 2025 to 2026
- 🏠 21% of reading rooms are located in MD



# FLORIDA

- 🏠 858,588 minutes spent reading reported in FL reading rooms during the 2025-2026 school year
- 🏠 1,125 Carson Scholarships have been awarded to students across the state
- 🏠 329 FL schools have had Carson Scholars since 2008
- 🏠 FL is home to 14% of the CSF's reading rooms



# CALIFORNIA

- CSF distributes summer reading books at Cabrillo and Edison Elementary Schools through its partnership with the San Diego Book Project
- 596,369 minutes spent reading reported in CA reading rooms during the 2025-2026 school year
- 32.8% increase in Carson Scholars in CA from 2025 to 2026
- 21% of the CSF's reading rooms are located in CA







# Carson Scholars Program

The Carson Scholars Fund discovers promise in students as early as 4<sup>th</sup> grade and rewards their already evident excellence through a \$1,000 scholarship award, affirming their hard work, increasing their confidence and encouraging them to continue to set and achieve big goals.

Carson Scholar nominees must have a GPA of 3.75 or higher and demonstrate a commitment to serving their community. The 2026 cohort of Carson Scholars proved that these minimum requirements are just a starting point – not the end goal – and that their accomplishments reach so much deeper.

## More Than a Scholarship



# 706

New Carson Scholars  
A **22% increase** from last year



### ACHIEVE

# 88%

of 2026 Carson Scholars  
earned a **4.0 GPA or higher**

Up from  
**82%**  
in 2025

### SERVE

# 200,000 +

community service hours reported

**118.74 hours**  
per scholar on average

### RECOGNIZE

# 994

previous Carson Scholars  
received recognition status



**61%**  
of 2025 scholars  
returned this year  
up from 53% of the  
2024 cohort

### INVEST

# \$15,900

in scholar bonuses awarded to 19 scholars



Deepening the impact for even  
more exceptional students

## The Journey Beyond The Scholarship

### Looking Back



**Oluwafunto Animasaun**  
9-time scholar  
2026 High School Graduate  
Loyola Marymount University

Scholarship Funded by  
The Eleni & Wolfgang Gagon Trust

**Reflection from a 9-time scholar:** “I first became a Carson Scholar in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade...looking back now, it’s amazing to see how much this program has shaped my growth both academically and personally. Being a Carson Scholar has shaped the way I see myself, my education and my future. It reminded me that academic success is not about being perfect, but about being consistent, curious and willing to keep learning even when things get difficult. Every scholar here is different. We all have different goals, backgrounds and strengths, yet we are connected by the same commitment to learning and making a positive impact. Being a part of the Carson Scholars program taught me that excellence is not a destination, it’s a habit. It’s built through discipline, perseverance and using your abilities to help others, not just yourself. **As I reflect on the last nine years, I’m incredibly grateful, not only for the recognition, but for the reminder that education has the power to open doors, create opportunities and change lives.”**



### Looking Ahead



**Alexander Gurzick**  
2026 Carson Scholar  
Grade 5

Scholarship Funded by  
Costco Wholesale Club

2026 Carson Scholar Alexander Gurzick is a 5<sup>th</sup> grader and future computer engineer. He loves building Legos, immersing himself in new worlds through reading and challenging his curious mind through mathematics. He aids PTA expansion efforts, makes sure students follow cafeteria rules and serves as a PreK-1 teacher’s helper. As a member of his school’s morning announcements team and sound crew, Alexander begins the day setting a positive mindset for his peers. On the Student Voices Council, he makes sure all students are heard and respected.

Alexander dedicates time outside of school to supporting his twin brother who has Angelman Syndrome. He also participates in trials, studies and communication tests at leading research institutions to learn more in pursuit of a cure. **Alexander hopes that everyone he meets will remember him for his small acts of kindness, “like a smile that shows people they are not alone, even when they think they are.”**



# Once a Carson Scholar, Always a Carson Scholar



The first class of Carson Scholars, named in 1996, was made up of 25 students from Maryland, Delaware and Washington, DC. Since then, the Carson Scholars Fund has awarded nearly 13,000 scholarships to young people who combine proven academic excellence and a commitment to their communities.

Today, over 10,170 Carson Scholar alumni are working, leading and giving back in communities around the globe.

## College Readiness

Most students in the United States reach their senior year under-prepared for college. Carson Scholars are a consistent exception.

According to the 2024 Nation's Report Card (NAEP), only 35% of twelfth graders are college-ready in reading and 33% are college-ready in math.

Carson Scholars stand apart from this trend. **Nearly every scholar in the class of 2026 is enrolling in college, with 54% pursuing STEM or health fields and 17% identifying as first-generation college students.** Our scholars don't just get into college—they are ready for it.



Jaxon Thurman & Ethan Bullock  
8 & 9-time Carson Scholar Alumni  
2026 Chattanooga Banquet Co-Emcees

## Career Readiness

Since its inception, CSF has distributed more than \$11.5 million in scholarship funds to colleges on behalf of nearly 8,500 students.

A degree is the difference—and the difference is measurable. According to 2024 Bureau of Labor Statistics data, bachelor's degree holders earn about 66% more than workers whose highest credential is a high school diploma. Over a career, that gap can exceed \$1 million in lifetime earnings.

CSF scholars are pursuing that opportunity. Of the class of 2026 scholars who reported their plans, 87% intend to pursue graduate or professional studies, including master's programs, medical school, doctoral research and law.



Joseph Wyrwas  
4-time Carson Scholar alumnus  
ALC & Hall of Fame Member

## Mentorship Program Participation

The Carson Scholars Fund's Mentorship Program connects scholars with experienced professionals who offer guidance, share their expertise and help students navigate their academic and career journeys. In the most recent cycle, **33 college scholars were paired with professionals** in their fields of interest, representing 28 colleges.

Building on this success, the program expanded this fall to support scholars as they explore colleges and navigate the application process. **Thirty Carson Scholar alumni volunteered their time to mentor 56 scholars**, helping the future generation take their next steps with confidence. In a full-circle moment, some alumni who had completed the program as mentees just months earlier returned as mentors, demonstrating the lasting impact of mentorship and the power of giving back.

## College Attendance Rates

In 2026, 532 Carson Scholars graduated from high school, with 425 already requesting that their awards be sent to a college or university. These new CSF alumni are attending 220 institutions across 41 states, from Stanford and Harvard to Howard, Hampton, and major public universities.

Since its inception, CSF has distributed more than \$11.5 million in scholarship funds to colleges on behalf of nearly 8,500 students.



Noah Milad, 4-time Carson Scholar  
University of Pennsylvania  
Summa Cum Laude Graduate

## Degree Information

Carson Scholars are pursuing the fields the country needs most. Of the 362 scholars who reported their field of study, 54% are pursuing STEM or health fields, with health and medicine alone accounting for 26%.

Our scholars are preparing to become physicians, researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs and more. They join more than 8,500 Carson Scholars who have embarked on similar journeys.



Grace Fogel  
3-time Carson Scholar alumna  
2026 West Coast Banquet Emcee

**“Remembering that I had a scholarship helped me remember that I have a big purpose in life and a big responsibility. It helped me excel in school.”**

— Amaris Joseph,  
University of Maryland, College Park



# Alumni Success Stories

One of the truest ways to measure the success of our program's impact is by seeing who our scholars become. Meet Aaliyah and Natalee, two Carson Scholar alumnus who wowed us over the last year, while being at two very different points in their personal journeys.



In celebration of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we reconnected with one Carson Scholar from each year since 1996 to share their stories and successes. **30 Years, 30 Scholars** offers a glimpse into the students who drive our mission and prove our founding belief: recognize a child's promise early, provide opportunity and support, and they will build something remarkable.

Scan the QR code to explore their stories and updates on our website!

## Aaliyah Underwood

**5-time Carson Scholar**  
**2026 Patterson HBCU Scholar**

The Patterson HBCU Scholarship, created in 2024 in collaboration with renowned author James Patterson, helps Carson Scholars continue their educations at historically Black colleges and universities. Each award is \$5,000, renewable up to \$20,000 over four years. This year, CSF named five new Patterson Scholars and renewed eighteen returning scholarships, bringing the program's total awarded to date to \$255,000.

One of this year's new Patterson HBCU Scholars is Aaliyah Underwood. A 2026 graduate of North Point High School in Waldorf, Maryland, Aaliyah is heading to Spelman College this fall, and humanitarian service is the foundation of her passions. She has distributed hygiene products to more than 100 families,

led youth activities during Juneteenth celebrations and helped raise more than \$8,000 for programs supporting young women. Her work has drawn recognition from Representative Steny Hoyer, Senator Chris Van Hollen and Delegate Edith Patterson. Aaliyah identifies herself as an artist at heart and emphasizes the importance of recognizing creativity as a responsibility and a voice for those who often go unheard.

“Receiving this award provides me with the opportunity and resources to further develop my abilities and my voice. With this scholarship opportunity, I can grow my career aspirations and build upon my network and cultural identity. This award represents not only financial support, but serves as a meaningful investment in my future contributions as I continue to become who I'm meant to be.”



## Natalee Huber

**2018 Carson Scholar**  
**2026 Hall of Fame Inductee**

CSF created its Hall of Fame in 2016, during the Fund's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to honor Carson Scholar alumni whose lives and careers reflect the mission: excellence in their work, in the classroom and in service to their communities.

One of the Hall of Fame's 2026 inductees is Natalee Huber, a 2018 Carson Scholar and clear picture of a commitment to excellence. Her drive to serve started early. At six-years-old, Natalee founded Natalee's Song, a nonprofit supporting children and families facing leukemia, in honor of her best friend, Rachel. Nearly two decades later, Natalee's Song still runs toy drives, walkathons and hospital events in Rachel's memory.

Today, after earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in forensic and legal psychology, she is now a student at the George Washington University Law School, where she expects her J.D. in 2028. An internship with NCIS pointed her toward her career goal, to serve as in-house counsel guiding the agents who protect the country. Natalee shares that to her, success is "not only about what I achieve, but about who I become." This spring, CSF welcomed her into its Hall of Fame, which now totals 56 extraordinary alumni.

“Natalee's Song also directly engages with the hospitals and their patients, hosting fantastic fun days while patients receive treatments. The name Natalee's Song originated from my love of singing and a quote from Maya Angelou: 'A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer; it sings because it has a song.' I do not have an answer to cancer, but I do have a song, and I intend to keep singing so that everyone knows how to ensure that these children know they are not forgotten.”







# Culture of Achievement

By celebrating and rewarding academic achievement, we foster a culture where excellence inspires excellence.

We have honored more than 12,900 students nationally, but our reach extends far beyond the students who receive our awards. Those scholars are embedded in 4,283 schools across the country, where their achievements are seen by classmates, younger students, educators and entire communities.

Carson Scholars make academic achievement visible through wearing their medals, proudly adding recognition pins year after year and the trophy displayed in their school.

When a Carson Scholar is honored for their hard work and compassionate initiative, they become role models, showing other students that excellence is attainable and highly valued, and inspiring them to pursue it themselves.



*"I was very proud to be recognized as a Carson Scholar last year. My entire school was so excited because I was the first to be awarded a Carson Scholar in more than 20 years from my school."*

- Reagan Pritchett  
Easton Middle School, Easton MD

## Our Community's Perspective

- 80% of parents and educators said they believe being named a Carson Scholar has influenced others such as peers, friends or siblings
- They inspire those around them by sharing their achievement with family and friends
- 76% of scholars said that being named a Carson Scholar has made them feel more connected to their school or community
- It inspires them to give back to the community that supports them
- 73% of scholars said the Carson Scholarship encouraged them to set an example as an academic role model for other students
- They feel like they represent the school and they feel a responsibility to be leaders



## A Growing Network of Opportunity

130  
schools had their  
first winner in 2026



1,054  
different schools had  
a scholar in 2026



## Excellence Across Our Schools

**Oakland Catholic High School** in Pittsburgh, PA, leads with **166 Carson Scholar Awards** (new and recognized) since 2006.

Following closely, **Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts**, also in Pennsylvania, has earned **160 awards** since 2006.

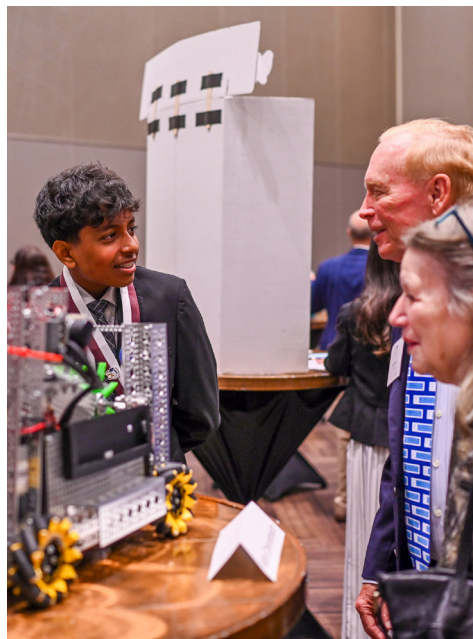
Rounding out the top three, **Westminster High School** in Westminster, MD, has received **145 awards** since 1997.

Schools that **surpassed 100 Carson Scholar Awards** this year (new & recognized)

- Manchester Valley High School – Manchester, MD
- West Middle School – Westminster, MD
- Winters Mill High School – Westminster, MD







## A Nationwide Celebration of 30 Years of Carson Scholars

This year's six regional awards banquets honored the 2026 cohort of Carson Scholars across the country while celebrating the 30-year history of the scholarship program. Embracing a theme of **innovation and inspiration**, each banquet recognized the achievements of current and alumni scholars while bringing them together with adult honorees whose stories encouraged scholars to envision what's possible for their own futures.



**Mr. David Rone**  
Spirit of Achievement Award Recipient



**Mr. Biju Kulathakal**  
Trailblazer Award Recipient



**Shania Grant**  
2026 Hall of Fame Inductee

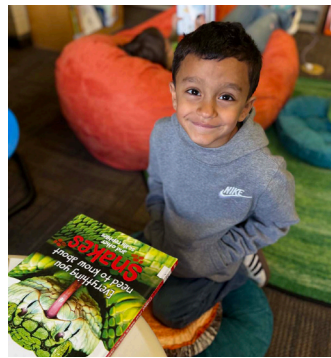


## Scholar Showcase: Service on Display

Further advancing the spirit of innovation, **44 students showcased unique projects** they've created – startup businesses, educational programs, research studies, technological advancements, school clubs, advocacy groups, nonprofit organizations and more. These Carson Scholars' inspired works are a powerful reminder that the future is in good hands.







# 315

Reading rooms created, transforming schools into vibrant literacy hubs across **25 states & Washington DC**



The **Ben Carson Reading Project** is the Carson Scholars Fund's second initiative. Since its launch in 2000, the program has collaborated with sponsors and schools to create vibrant, welcoming and thoughtfully designed spaces where children can freely explore and select their own books, immersing themselves in the joy of reading. These bright, inspiring and imaginative environments encourage curiosity, creativity and wonder, allowing young minds to soar while nurturing a deep, lifelong love of books, learning and discovery.



## 2025/2026 School Year Reading Room Openings

### A Friend of Big Spring Students

Big Spring Intermediate  
Moss Elementary School

### BallenIsles Charities Foundation

Franklin Academy

### Caring Community Members

Jo Byrns Elementary School

### Cheri & Gordon Martin

Franconia Elementary School  
Smokey Mountain Elementary School

### Pohanka Automotive Group

North Forestville Elementary School

### Ryan & Carleigh Miller

The Loyola School

### The Eleni & Wolfgang Gagon Trust

Explore Academy at Las Cruces  
James Ryder Randall Elementary School  
Matilda Ave. School PS 483  
Redan Elementary School  
Rex Mill Middle School

## 157,000+

engaging books purchased, empowering students to discover the joy of reading.

## 2,750,000+

minutes read last school year in reading rooms, inspiring a love of reading beyond the standard curriculum.

## \$4,500,000+

invested in advancing literacy, expanding access to books and supporting student success.

“The space has become a highly sought-after resource, with many students regularly asking for opportunities to visit and read. Its welcoming atmosphere encourages students to engage with books, explore new interests and develop lifelong reading habits.”

- Hamlin Middle School Educator



# A New Chapter for Bedford Elementary

In February 2014, 14 years after the launch of the Ben Carson Reading Project, a small school of only about 300 students in Pikesville, Maryland opened a cozy, welcoming reading room. As the years passed, the school evolved and embraced many challenges and opportunities, including an increase in enrollment. Despite the changes, one constant remained: the enduring dedication of educators and administrators to foster a love of reading. So, when the district decided to construct a new building to accommodate the growth, now nearly twice its original size, it was never a question of whether the new and improved Bedford Elementary School would have a Ben Carson Reading Room, but when.

On Wednesday, June 3, 2026, Bedford Elementary School's reimagined reading room sponsored by The Louis & Phyllis Friedman Foundation in partnership with Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. was unveiled. The event brought the community together to celebrate the school's persistent determination in creating a thoughtfully designed space where students could learn, explore and grow.

The unveiling of Bedford Elementary's new Ben Carson Reading Room marked more than the opening of a beautiful new space; it also celebrated a tradition that has continued for more than a decade. As students explored the room, shared stories and discovered new books, the vision behind the project came to life once again. With the support of the school, its community partners and the Pikesville community, the reading room will continue to inspire generations of students to discover the joy of reading.



**“This special space will provide students with opportunities to strengthen their literacy skills, discover the power of books and develop a lifelong love of reading.”**

**- Kristen Loscomb, Bedford Elementary School Principal**



# Matching Generosity, Expanding Impact

**The Rollins-Luetkemeyer Foundation's matching grant inspired new investment in Maryland students and helped drive a 96% increase in scholarships awarded statewide.**

For 30 years the Carson Scholars Fund has awarded college scholarships to students who demonstrate academic excellence and a commitment to service. While the program reaches students nationwide, its roots remain firmly planted in Maryland, where the CSF was founded and where 4,747 scholarships have been awarded to date.

As we celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we set an ambitious goal: award more scholarships in a single year than ever before. Thanks to a generous matching grant from the Rollins-Luetkemeyer Foundation, we were able to expand scholarship funding in our home state and create opportunities for even more deserving Maryland students to be recognized as Carson Scholars.



The matching grant inspired new partners to invest in the future of Maryland's students and prior supporters to rediscover the work we're doing. We are deeply grateful to the Rollins-Luetkemeyer Foundation and to every donor who contributed to this effort. Their generosity helped make a record year possible and ensured that more young leaders could be recognized for their achievements, service and potential.

Thanks to support from the Rollins-Luetkemeyer Foundation and matching donors, the number of scholarships awarded in Maryland increased by 96% from 2025 to 2026, nearly doubling our impact in our home state.



**36.8% of all Carson Scholarships awarded since 1996 have been in MD**



**1,051 schools across Maryland have had Carson Scholars to date**



**In 2026, Carson Scholars were named in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions**

## Donors Who Made This Opportunity Possible:

Akerman LLP  
Mr. Sunny Bajaj  
Louis and Nancy Grasmick Charitable Fund  
Greater Washington Community Foundation  
Le Friant Family Charitable Trust

The Mont RE Revocable Trust  
Mr. Andrew Pitcairn  
Ms. Beatrice Pitcairn  
Mr. Gene Smith  
Wexford Capital LP/Mr. Charles Davidson



## Investing in Maryland's Next Generation of Leaders

**The Grasmick Presidential Endowment builds on that commitment, creating a lasting opportunity to recognize Maryland students who lead through service and compassion.**



The Dr. Nancy Grasmick Presidential Carson Scholar Endowment was established in honor of Dr. Nancy Grasmick – former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, longtime president of the Carson Scholars Fund and current presidential scholar at Towson University. Dr. Grasmick is a fierce and compassionate champion of education who leads by example, consistently modeling integrity, service and a deep commitment to students. Throughout her career, she has advanced innovative initiatives in education and leadership to improve opportunities for students and communities.

Each year, this award will be given to a Maryland student who demonstrates qualities representative of Dr. Grasmick - leadership, compassion and commitment to education and service.

Peter Jin, the inaugural recipient, dedicates his time and talents to expand opportunities for others. Through the Maryland Youth Advisory Council, he advances youth health policy and advocates for fellow students. A pianist, violinist and organist, he chairs the annual Classics for a Cause concert, which raises funds for music lessons and instruments for under-resourced students. He also founded Bridge to STEM Academy, which provides free online STEM research courses to middle and high school students across five states and three continents, and has developed AI-powered apps for stroke diagnosis and vascular disease reference. Peter has conducted research at Clemson University and institutions across Maryland, and currently studies the use of viruses to destroy bacteria at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. He aspires to become a computational medicine researcher bridging the gap between data and disease diagnosis, and a mentor inspiring students to pursue their own STEM ambitions.





# In Memory of Wes Guckert

For over two decades, Wes Guckert wholeheartedly supported the Carson Scholars Fund, making every meeting, event and discussion a priority in his life – a dedication that was critical in shaping the organization and ensuring its success. He devoted 22 years of service to our board of directors, was an exemplary leader and provided valuable advice and friendship to all who knew him. He was deeply admired for his expertise, kindness and integrity.



Wes, a proud U.S. Air Force veteran, distinguished business professional and owner of The Traffic Group, was a rare force of nature whose service, leadership and commitment profoundly improved the world around him. He believed deeply in paying it forward and lived that principle every day. Wes loved inspiring children to chase their dreams and encouraged them to be nothing less than spectacular. While many hearts were broken when Wes passed in 2025, his kindness leaves a lasting impact in our community.

Wes' generous spirit lives on through The Heart of Humanity Award, a special bonus program created to honor his legacy. In 2026, five Carson Scholars were honored for their demonstrated compassion and commitment to paying-it-forward.

## The Heart of Humanity Award Recipients



**Paul Adcock**  
2-time Carson Scholar  
Wreaths Across America  
and Holiday Help



**Vivian Raj**  
2-time Carson Scholar  
Students Partner with Veterans  
club & Maryland Pancreatic Cancer  
Action Network



**Emma Blankenship**  
4-time Carson Scholar  
Be Kind Initiative and  
Angel Tree



**Ayza Siddiqi**  
3-time Carson Scholar  
Montgomery County Commission for  
Women, Montgomery County Department  
of Transportation & MoCo EmpowHer



**Lily Jillson**  
5-time Carson Scholar  
Fundraising for the Ronald  
McDonald House

# Passing of the Torch

## Ryan Miller



Ryan has been a champion of the CSF for more than a decade, supporting the organization through donations, partnerships, fundraising and volunteering. He proudly co-hosts the CSF's annual Maryland golf tournament each fall and, this year, sponsored a Ben Carson Reading Room in honor of his parents. Six years ago, he joined the Board of Directors and is now stepping into a new role as co-vice president. Ryan brings his experience as senior vice president at CBRE, involvement with several personal and professional communities, and his enthusiasm and energetic spirit to the Board. A proud husband and father of young children, he is passionate about creating opportunities for future generations through his service and philanthropy.

*I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence the Board has placed in me through this appointment. The Carson Scholars Fund has been an organization I have admired and supported for many years and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside such dedicated leaders as we continue investing in the next generation of scholars, leaders, and community advocates. I look forward to helping expand our impact and ensuring even more students have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.*

## Tony Rose



Tony has been an active part of the CSF community since 2013 as a supporter of the scholarship program, having established six scholarship endowments to support students in his home state of Ohio. Always ready to lend a listening ear or give sage advice, Tony puts time and effort into building connections with those in the CSF community. His beloved wife, Sandy, along with his children and grandchildren, are at the heart of Tony's life and always come first. When given the opportunity to join the Board of Directors in 2022, Tony happily volunteered his time and expertise, and now he shares the same enthusiasm for his new role as co-vice president. A recently retired executive, Tony brings heart, compassion and intellect to help drive the CSF forward.

*I have so much respect for the Carsons and this organization, I can't help to be compelled to help it grow and make a difference to the scholars and our country as a whole.*





## Co-Founders

**Dr. Benjamin Carson Sr.**  
**Candy Carson**

## Officers

**Lee Warner - Chairman of the Board**  
Chairman and CEO,  
The Warner Companies, Inc.

**Dr. Nancy Grasmick - President**  
MD State Superintendent of Schools, Retired  
Presidential Scholar – Towson University

**Anthony Rose - Co-Vice President**  
Chief Financial Officer,  
Hydrovac Holdings, Inc.

**Ryan Miller - Co-Vice President**  
Senior Vice President, CBRE,  
Advisory Services

**Graylin E. Smith, CPA - Treasurer**  
Managing Partner, SB & Company, LLC

**Benjamin Carson Jr. - Secretary**  
Co-Founder and Partner,  
FVLCRUM Funds

## Board of Directors

**David W. Bower**  
Chairman & CEO,  
Data Computer Corp. of America

**Murray Carson**  
Web Programmer, CAPM

**Gregg Cooper**  
Managing Director,  
Institutional Equity Sales, STIFEL

**Cody Crowell**  
Co-Founder & Managing Partner,  
Easton Street Capital

**Francis L. Donahue**  
President, Pittsburgh Chapter of CSF

**Zach Dudan**  
Growth Officer, Homefront Brands

**Edward Hayes**  
Financial Advisor, Morgan Stanley's  
Wealth Management Division

**Dave Kasparly Jr.**  
Founder, President/CEO,  
MidPoint Technology Group

**Yves M. Mombeleur**  
Chief Operations Officer,  
Clearinghouse CDFI

**Andrew Pitcairn**  
Family Office Ambassador, Pitcairn

**John Vingsen**  
Senior Vice President/COO,  
MidPoint Technology Group

# Carson Scholars Staff

## A Team Built to Make a Difference



**60+**

combined years of  
full-time staff expertise



**1 in 3**

staff members  
hold an advanced degree



**16**

combined years of  
part-time staff expertise

**40,000+ students supported and empowered by CSF staff in 2026!**

**Katie Coleman**  
Executive Director

**Mary Anne Benton**  
Texas Reading Room Coordinator

**Tammy Blazenyak**  
Reading Rooms Director

**Rachel Brown**  
Alumni Director

**Bridget Devoy-Everett**  
Graphic Designer &  
Scholarship Coordinator

**Jessie Monteleone**  
Southeast Expansion Coordinator

**Lacey Richards**  
Scholarship Director

**Jo Weisgal**  
Director of Events  
& Engagement

**Elizabeth Wesdock**  
Scholarship Coordinator

**Evan Harasty**  
Operations & Finance Assistant

**Amelia Major**  
Reading Room Program Coordinator

 **ASSOCIATE**  
*Leadership* **COUNCIL**

**Luke Anderson**  
**Grace Fogle**  
**Gitika Gorthi**

**Carol Shea Linton**  
**Emily Wood**  
**Joe Wyrwas**





Financial Summary

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Statement of Financial Position

|                                         |                      |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Assets</b>                           |                      |
| Cash and cash equivalents               | \$ 3,748,434         |
| Investments - operating                 | 1,734,399            |
| Investments - scholarship commitments   | 6,888,857            |
| Investments - reading rooms             | 4,226,913            |
| Pledges receivable, net                 | 718,552              |
| Inventory                               | 37,493               |
| Right-of-use asset, net                 | 343,567              |
| Prepaid Expenses                        | 13,582               |
| Life insurance, cash surrender value    | 778,582              |
| Deposits                                | 5,571                |
| <b>Total Assets</b>                     | <b>\$ 18,496,112</b> |
| <b>Liabilities</b>                      |                      |
| Accounts payable and accrued expenses   | 54,435               |
| Scholarship commitments                 | 3,771,217            |
| Deferred Revenue                        | 59,550               |
| Operating lease liability               | 379,890              |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>                | <b>\$ 4,265,092</b>  |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                       |                      |
| Without donor restrictions              | 4,820,145            |
| Operating                               | 57,000               |
| Board-Designated Endowment              | 9,353,875            |
| With donor restrictions                 |                      |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                 | <b>\$ 14,231,020</b> |
| <b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b> | <b>\$ 18,496,112</b> |

91  
cents  
of every  
\$  
raised  
goes toward benefiting  
young students.\*  
\*Special events are presented  
net of expenses.

Financial Summary

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

State of Activities and Functional Expenses

|                                                                               | Without Donor Restrictions | With Donor Restrictions | Total                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Support and Revenue</b>                                                    |                            |                         |                      |
| Contributions                                                                 | \$ 981,090                 | \$ -                    | \$ 981,090           |
| Scholarship Programs                                                          | -                          | 709,101                 | 709,101              |
| Reading Project                                                               | -                          | 149,616                 | 149,616              |
| Awards Event Net of Expenses of \$33,879 for 2026                             | 83,716                     | -                       | 83,716               |
| Events, Net of Expenses of \$62,002 and \$78,386, Respectively                | 103,998                    | -                       | 103,998              |
| Investment Income, Net                                                        | 834,284                    | 623,300                 | 1,457,584            |
| Other Revenue, Net of Cost of Goods Sold of \$8,121 and \$2,626, Respectively | 132,909                    | -                       | 132,909              |
| Change in Cash Surrender Value Life Insurance                                 | 114,650                    | -                       | 114,650              |
| Net Assets Released From Restrictions                                         | 614,667                    | (614,667)               | -                    |
| <b>Total Support and Revenue</b>                                              | <b>\$ 2,865,314</b>        | <b>\$ 867,350</b>       | <b>\$ 3,732,664</b>  |
| <b>Functional Expenses</b>                                                    |                            |                         |                      |
| Program Services                                                              | 2,651,607                  | -                       | 2,651,607            |
| Supporting Services:                                                          |                            |                         |                      |
| Management and General                                                        | 148,453                    | -                       | 148,453              |
| Fundraising                                                                   | 105,365                    | -                       | 105,365              |
| <b>Total Supporting Services</b>                                              | <b>253,818</b>             | <b>-</b>                | <b>239,372</b>       |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                                                         | <b>\$ 2,905,425</b>        | <b>-</b>                | <b>\$ 2,559,581</b>  |
| Change in Net Assets                                                          | (40,111)                   | 867,350                 | 827,239              |
| Net Assets – Beginning of Year                                                | 4,917,256                  | 8,486,525               | 13,403,781           |
| Net Assets – End of Year                                                      | <b>\$ 4,877,145</b>        | <b>\$ 9,353,875</b>     | <b>\$ 14,321,020</b> |







# Ways to Give to the Carson Scholars Fund

Gratitude is when you feel thankful for the good things in life.

At the Carson Scholars Fund, we have so many reasons to feel gratitude. Our gratitude multiplies with every expression of generosity provided for our programs. Investing in youth education is the ultimate gift that continues to give for generations to come.

# Thank You Volunteers

The CSF is fortunate to have a community of dedicated individuals who volunteer their time and talents year after year to help our programs run smoothly. Behind every application score, scholar recognition packet and welcoming face at a banquet is a volunteer with a heart for our mission. With a record number of students nominated, applications submitted and scholars awarded this year, our volunteers stepped up to the challenge. We couldn't do it without them.



Give Online  
One time or Recurring!



Give by Mail  
215 Washington Avenue, Suite 250  
Towson, MD 21204



Give by Phone  
410-828-1005  
Office Hours: 8AM - 4PM ET



Workplace or  
Corporate  
Matches



Give Stock



Speak with a  
Financial Advisor



Sponsor a Regional Scholarship  
Banquet



Volunteer

## Curious About Planned Giving?

Did you know you could plan on giving stock, real estate or other items to our nonprofit through a will or trust?

Please contact Executive Director Katie Coleman  
at 410-828-1005 or [kcoleman@carsonscholars.org](mailto:kcoleman@carsonscholars.org)





# Carson Scholars Fund

215 Washington Ave.  
Suite 250  
Towson, MD 21204

(410) 828-1005  
[www.carsonscholars.org](http://www.carsonscholars.org)

