



*Yesterday is but a dream, tomorrow is only a vision; but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of HOPE.*

Project Joy and Hope proudly continues its mission to provide college scholarships to senior students throughout our state who value education, believe in service to others, and have worked hard to overcome obstacles as they complete their high school careers. Since 2001, PJH has provided scholarships totaling over one million dollars to area high school seniors.



**Eligibility: 2026 applicants graduating from a Texas high school located within 100 miles of Pasadena, Texas, may apply.** To be eligible for a 2026 HOPE SCHOLARSHIP, student must have experienced the death of a biological parent or a sibling. We cannot consider other extended family members, such as grandparents or stepparents. Each eligible applicant must complete the enclosed packet.

Three independent reviewers will consider community service essays, writings reflecting personal obstacles and experiences, as well as paragraphs about applicants' aspirations and hopes for the future. Only complete packets submitted by the **March 25, 2026 deadline** will be reviewed.

\*An awards reception to honor the HOPE SCHOLAR Class of 2026 will be held on Tuesday evening, May 12, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at Memorial Baptist Church, 6901 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, Texas. **Students MUST attend the ceremony to be eligible to receive monetary awards. No exceptions.**



## HOPE SCHOLARSHIP

In loving memory of Valerie Grace Wheeler

*Yesterday is but a dream, tomorrow is only a vision; but today,  
well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every  
tomorrow a vision of HOPE.*

**Valerie Grace Wheeler** learned that she had cancer when she was barely a teenager, having celebrated her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday a few short months before receiving the harsh news of her diagnosis of metastatic Ewing's sarcoma.

Words seem inadequate to describe this exceptional young woman. Friends and family called her Val, while many called her "Amazing Grace." Astounding everyone with her determination, courage, positive attitude, and spiritual strength, Valerie touched hundreds of people throughout her experience with cancer. She died June 25, 1999, at age 15, before she could begin her sophomore year of high school.

Valerie was an honors student at Sam Rayburn High School, a talented artist, an outstanding athlete, and most of all, a person who had true compassion for others. Because of her faith in God, she believed in the hope that each new day could bring.

The Hope Scholarship seeks to recognize outstanding young people like Valerie who value education, believe in service to others, and have worked hard to overcome obstacles in the course of their studies.

**Only Texas residents living within 100 miles of Pasadena may apply. Applicants (seniors) must have experienced the death of a sibling or parent.** (We are unable to consider the death of grandparents and other extended family members, such as stepparents.) This educational scholarship must be applied to expenses related to college, technical, or trade school. **Application deadline is Wednesday, March 25, 2026. All applications must be postmarked by March 25, 2026 to be considered. Absolutely NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Please return completed scholarship applications by mail to:

**Scholarship Committee  
Project Joy and Hope  
3207 Tulip Street  
Pasadena, TX 77504**

### **IMPORTANT AND PLEASE NOTE:**

Please mail all required documents (Essays, financing plans, releases, etc.) in a flat envelope so that no papers are folded or bent. Please DO NOT use staples, paper clip only. All questions should be emailed to [jan@joyandhope.org](mailto:jan@joyandhope.org).

**If selected, each scholarship recipient is required to attend an award ceremony** Tuesday evening, May 12, 2026, in Pasadena, Texas. **Any student who does not participate in this program for any reason forfeits monetart award. No exceptions.** All scholarship recipients will be notified on or about April 28, 2026.

# HOPE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the following steps:

1. 

Last Name	First	Middle
Address		
City	State	Zip
Home Phone	Cell Phone	Email
High School	High School Phone Number	Counselor's Name
Name of Parent or Sibling who Died	Date of Death	Relationship to Applicant
2. **Attach a copy of your high school transcript.**
3. **Describe your participation in volunteer community service.**  
Be specific. Explain exactly what you have done to serve others. (This essay should be at least 250 words, typed, double-spaced 12 point font AND no more than two typed pages.) Refer to Essays Guide. This is a very important element of the application.
4. **Explain the specific obstacles you have overcome in obtaining your high school education.**  
[i.e. family challenges, grief and loss related to death of family member, illness, health challenges, relationship issues, financial difficulties, etc.]  
Note: Refer to Essays Guide. Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font (suggested length: 250-500 words).
5. **Describe your hopes and aspirations for the future.**  
(Refer to Essays Guide. This essay should be at least 250 words, typed, double-spaced, 12 point font - maximum of 500 words).
6. **Explain your plan for financing your education.** Include any scholarships or financial aid you expect to receive, pending, or have already received.
7. **Attach two letters of recommendation.** One letter of recommendation must be from a teacher or school official, and the other letter should be from a person outside of the school system. (*Business person, religious official, community leader, etc. Letters may not be written by your family members or relatives.*)  
  
*Note: This is very important.* These letters should include a description of the student's potential for success, as well as personal qualities that set student apart from classmates.
8. **Attach a recent photograph of yourself. (PLEASE make sure the photo is clear and not distorted.** Please ensure that all photos submitted are 4X6 or larger. If you do not have a photo that meets the required size, please include the largest that you have.)

If you have specific questions regarding this application, please contact Dr. Jan Wheeler at [Jan@joyandhope.org](mailto:Jan@joyandhope.org). To be considered, your completed scholarship application must be postmarked no later than March 25, 2026. **LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

# CHECKLIST

## RETURN THIS CHECK LIST WITH YOUR APPLICATION.

- ☐ high school transcript
- ☐ community service essay
- ☐ obstacles essay
- ☐ hopes/aspirations/goals essay
- ☐ education finance plans statement
- ☐ recommendation letter #1 \_\_\_\_\_ (name of teacher or school official)

Please provide a contact email address and telephone number for your teacher or school official.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ recommendation letter #2 \_\_\_\_\_ (name of other reference)

Please provide a contact email address and telephone number for your second reference.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ recent photo

- ☐ release form

Printed Name of Applicant: First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Education Finance statement

I have applied for the following scholarships to assist me in financing my post-high school education:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

I have received the following scholarships to date:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

What other ways do you plan to finance your education?

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## 2026 HOPE SCHOLAR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a **2026 HOPE SCHOLAR APPLICANT**, understand that my picture and/or affiliations of myself and/or written or photographic material may be recorded electronically, in newspapers, and/or photographically by **Project Joy and Hope** for use during any participation in the scholarship program and its corresponding events.

I hereby grant permission to **Project Joy and Hope** to use these photographs, videotapes, written materials, or audio recordings of myself for its own use for distribution.

I further understand that these photographs, tapes, writings and recordings will be owned by **Project Joy and Hope** and may be used only for articles and programs regarding its mission and purpose.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Scholar**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent or guardian of 2026 HOPE SCHOLAR APPLICANT,  
\_\_\_\_\_(name of applicant), understand that my child's picture and/or affiliations of my child and/or written or photographic material may be recorded electronically, in newspapers, and/or photographically by **Project Joy and Hope** for use during any participation in the scholarship program and its corresponding events.

I hereby grant permission to **Project Joy and Hope** to use these photographs, videotapes, written materials, or audio recordings of myself for its own use for distribution.

I further understand that these photographs, tapes, writings and recordings will be owned by **Project Joy and Hope** and may be used only for articles and programs regarding its mission and purpose.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Parent or Guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**



## Essays Guide

These are important suggestions to consider when writing your essays.

### Community service essay

**Community Service:** This is a very important segment of the application. \* PJH seeks to recognize and reward students who have made significant contributions to the community in spite of their own personal tragedy.

Applicant should express:

- A clear understanding of the value of community service and impact that community service has had on his/her personal life.
- The amount of hours, varied activities, and skills acquired through service to community

*\*If lack of community service is due to significant economic challenges placed on the family due to the death of family member, employment may be considered in lieu of community service. If this is the case, explain where you have worked, the amount of hours, activities, and skills acquired through employment.*

### Obstacles essay

***Economic, social, emotional, psychological - any and all of these are relevant categories.***

How have you responded to all challenges in your life? You must include an explanation of the impact of the death of your immediate family member on your life.

### Goals essay

Include a very clear description of your college plans. Be specific. Provide an indication of major (or areas of emphasis) even though you may still be considering more than one field. Be sure to indicate your **future career path**. \*\* Why have you set these goals?

*\*\* No value judgments will be made regarding the value of a particular career compared to another. For instance, becoming a doctor is no more credible than becoming a business owner, plumber, or educator.*