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PRESS RELEASE

IBB Family Members Awarded 2026 Union Plus Scholarships

Winners Honored for Achievement and Union Values

Washington, D.C. – Union Plus recently awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to 181 students representing 42 unions, including two winners representing the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB). This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 42 states and one U.S. territory. The IBB winners are:

- **Halie Michelle Biever of Tobinsport, Indiana.** Biever, whose spouse, Patrick Biever, is a member of IBB Local 374, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Laken Knipp of Grayson, Kentucky.** Knipp, whose father, James Knipp, is a member of IBB Local 667, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

"We are honored to recognize this year's Union Plus Scholarship award winners," Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. "As we celebrate Union Plus's 40th anniversary this year, we are proud to note that the Union Plus Scholarship Program has provided over \$6.2 million in scholarships to support the educational goals of union families."

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Meet the 2026 IBB Honorees

Halie Michelle Biever

Purdue University Global:

*Bachelor of Science, human services (2025); Associate of Applied Science, human services (2024)
Tell City [Indiana] Junior-Senior High School (TCHS)*

Halie is a Master of Science in Psychology candidate through Purdue Global, the online entity of the Purdue University system. She selected the addictions concentration for her MSP and expects to graduate in 2028. Halie aspires to become a licensed addiction counselor serving individuals and families affected by substance abuse disorders and trauma. She has more than 20 years of experience in healthcare, including five years working in mental health and recovery services. Patrick Biever, Halie's husband, has been an IBB Local 374 member since 2001. Additionally, her father, Robert Anderson, is an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 16 member. "Unions are the backbone of my family's strength, security, and solidarity," Halie said. "I'm proud to be part of that legacy."

Psychological and emotional wellbeing following addiction, recovery, and trauma is foundational to Halie's ethos and deeply rooted in her personal journey. She is seven years sober and regularly shares her story with Tell City Junior-Senior High School students as a volunteer speaker and peer advocate for the school's Natural Leaders Club. "Speaking to young people matters to me because early connection and honest conversations can change the trajectory of a life," Halie said. "I focus on peer support, mental health awareness, decision making, and hope. As someone who did not receive this kind of support early in life, being present for students now feels both healing and purposeful. My academic, professional, and service-based experiences have prepared me well for graduate-level study and for making meaningful contributions to the field of addiction treatment. Every setback and every hardship helped me develop grit, patience, and clarity. I would either win or learn. That is my family motto."

Activities: Perry County [Indiana] Substance Abuse Committee; Spencer [Indiana] County Substance Abuse Council; Phi Theta Kappa honor society; Psi Chi psychology honor society; Alpha Alpha Alpha (Tri-Alpha) first-generation college student honor society; Alpha Sigma Lambda non-traditional and adult learners honor society

Honors: Purdue Global summa cum laude graduate (A.A.S., B.S.); Purdue Global chancellor's list; Correctional Professionals Assistance Fund of Indiana Commissioner's Scholar; National Society of Collegiate Scholars

Employment and volunteerism: Indiana Department of Correction Branchville Correctional Facility certified peer recovery specialist (CPRS), addiction counselor; LifeSpring Health Systems CPRS; Deaconess Hospital patient care technician; Eastern Star of Tell City; Perry County 4-H alumni volunteer

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Laken Knipp

East Carter High School (ECHS), Grayson, Kentucky (2026)

Laken will major in biology at Kentucky Christian University (KCU), where she will be a member of the Knights' softball team. She hopes to attend dental school and open a practice in Grayson, which she says is underserved like many rural communities in northeastern Kentucky. East Carter High School academic counselor Belicia Sexton said Laken's scholastic performance, leadership, and graciousness have made an indelible mark on the school community. "Laken is a driven and diligent student who consistently strives for excellence in all she undertakes," Sexton said. "Her achievements are a testament to her intellect, perseverance, and strong sense of discipline and teamwork. I have no doubt she will continue to succeed and make a positive impact wherever her path leads."

James Knipp, Laken's father, has been an IBB Local 667 member since 1998. Additionally, her mother, Rosetta Knipp, is a member of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 5. Laken fondly remembers union holiday parties from her childhood and has grown to appreciate the deeper ways in which both unions have supported her family. "Unions have the same end goal, even if they have different environments and workplaces to get there," Laken said. "Unions are here to ensure that workplace standards are met not sometimes but every time. I can only hope that one day I will be able to follow in my parents' footsteps and also be a union member."

Activities: ECHS Special Olympics Unified Club; ECHS Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA); ECHS Beta Club; ECHS Softball; Fellowship of Christian Athletes; West Virginia Dusters select softball team

Honors: Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Rural Health Scholar; KCU Academic Scholar; ECHS French student of the year; ECHS Softball player of the year; ECHS honor roll

Volunteerism: Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Prom Promise awareness program; Carter County Project Merry Christmas; Prichard Elementary School; Help Health Equipment Loan Program (serving local seniors in need)

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Learn More About the Union Plus Scholarship Program

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 35th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$6.2 million in educational funding to more than 4,400 union members, spouses, and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is exceptionally competitive: 6,335 applications were received this year from 68 unions and all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories, and five Canadian provinces.

Visit **unionplus.org/scholarship** for applications and benefit eligibility.

About Union Plus

Union Plus, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Over the last four decades, Union Plus has used the collective buying power of America's nearly 15 million union members to deliver top-quality benefits and services at competitive prices to working families. Programs include financial services, hardship help, and money-saving benefits, including exclusive everyday discounts on wireless service, travel, and more.

Additional education programs include the Union Plus College Program and the Union Plus Student Debt Navigator. The College Program offers exclusive tuition discounts, financial aid, and grants, providing union members and their families with the opportunity to earn affordable, online degrees and certificates. The Student Debt Navigator is a tool that can help student loan borrowers lower monthly payments and navigate loan forgiveness programs.

Visit **unionplus.org** to explore Union Plus's 30-plus benefits.

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