



# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

## 2013

### \$2,000 President's Scholarship Award Recipients

#### Chandler Ekins

James A. Ekins (ZBW)

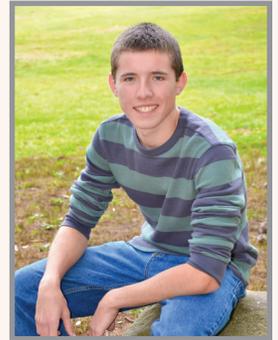
My goal in life is to have a successful and fulfilling career as an engineer. To reach my goal I have to go through at least six years of college to attain a master's degree in either electrical or mechanical engineering. I also hope to find internship opportunities to develop real-world experience to help me transition from school into a full career. Both of my parents are in a union and the benefits they received as a result of their membership have directly improved our lives. I have learned about unions in my studies and from my relatives and I understand how crucial they are to a healthy economy and the safety of workers.

One of my favorite books is "The Jungle" by Upton Sinclair. The novel is a work of realistic fiction following the life of a poor Lithuanian immigrant family as they travel to the United States and attempt to find work in the infamous Chicago meat-packing industry of the early 1900's. Rather than ending up in the paradise they expected, they find themselves in a hellish world where worker exploitation and virtually nonexistent safety standards force the low and middle class residents of the city into perpetual poverty. Due to the language barrier between the English-speaking native population and the constant flow of incoming immigrant workers, no unions could truly be established amongst the working class and the meat-packing super-companies squeezed every bit of profit possible out of their workers. In these conditions, the Lithuanian family eventually becomes unable to

support itself as its members grow ill and ultimately perish. The book has taught me a tremendous amount about why unions are important because it portrays so vividly what a place without them is like.

My great-great-grandfather found himself in a similar situation to the family in "The Jungle" until he joined a coal miners' union in Pennsylvania. Before the union's involvement, he was forced to head into the coal mines with a group of three men and they would get paid together at the end of the day based on how much coal they had mined. But before they could leave, they would have to pay for whatever mining equipment broke during the day and for all of the explosives they had to use while mining. My grandfather was another member of my family who benefitted from his union when he worked as a security guard at the Tobyhanna Army Depot. As the oldest and most experienced guard, he held the position of shop steward for the guards, meaning that he was responsible for communication between the guards in his area and the rest of the union. As both a guard and an important union representative he was respected by his fellow employees and held his position for 21 years.

Unions have always been a part of my family because they are important to a safe, beneficial, and successful career. I hope to someday have the security they provide in my own job as an engineer.



#### Elia Zanella

Lisa M. Bonczyk (RST)

*"Forget it! I'm stayin' right where I am, it's gonna take you and the police department and the fire department and the National Guard to get me outta here."* (Norma Rae)

Growing up, my mother refused to buy grapes due to the mistreatment of grape workers. We have never eaten at a highly regarded local restaurant due to their anti-organization activities. We have changed hotels on vacation because we wouldn't cross a picket line. Whenever I questioned my mother's decisions, she would say, "Have you seen the movie Norma Rae? We all must support unions and American workers' rights." Norma Rae is a name that I learned at a very young age.

My maternal grandfather worked for General Motors and was a UAW member for 35+ years. My mother experienced firsthand her family struggle, as her father's union fought for and ratified numerous UAW contracts. My mother often speaks of the 1970 UAW strike that lasted 67 days. This strike taught my mother the resolve and sacrifice that was needed to ensure safe working conditions. My mother was a proud UAW member for two years and has been a NATCA member her entire FAA career (23+ years). This lifelong exposure to organized labor has influenced my mother's choices and values and she in turn has passed on the values to her children.

Growing up with what I like to call the "Norma Rae influence" meant my family chose newspapers to read that were printed by union labor. It wasn't

good enough that our family cars were made by a U.S. company; they had to be assembled in the U.S. with more than 80% of the parts coming from U.S. companies. It also meant I would watch my mother serve as a NATCA representative; she worked diligently for a safe and fair work environment for her facility, including clean air in the tower cab, equitable and fair work policies and procedures that made flying into Rochester International Airport safer. I watched as her union fought for her job when she was diagnosed with a "presumed" kidney stone and the FAA wanted to medically disqualify her, even when her physician disagreed. Currently, I am watching the sequestration talks between NATCA and the FAA and am thankful that my mother has a union fighting for her and all of the flying public.

It is because of the life/union lessons my mother has taught me: fair and safe working conditions, justice and democracy for the work environment, that I feel I would be a good recipient of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association Scholarship. I have been accepted by the University of Minnesota and plan to major in biomedical engineering with a course of study in biomechanics and medical device design. I believe that a company gets the union they deserve. Whichever side of the table I sit at in my future endeavors I believe the "Norma Rae influence" will serve me well in being part of a collaboration for a safe, fair, and equitable work place. The legacy of my grandfather and mother's union blood will continue through my veins.



## **\$1,000 Scholarship Award Recipients**

**Danielle Acampora**

*George Acampora, ZNY*

**Stephanie Ellis**

*Roger D. Ellis, ZLC*

**Gregory Gonzalez**

*Armando Gonzalez, D21*

**Melissa Gonzalez**

*Daniel Gonzalez, SCT*

**Alexandra Hefley**

*Steven Hefley, NCT*

**Taron Holt**

*Byron Holt, MOB*

**Jessica Keith**

*James Keith, D10*

**Amanda Kennedy**

*Teah Lord, F11*

**Lyndsey Kingsley**

*Michael Kingsley, ZHU*

**Cristen Luke**

*Sally Luke, SAT*

**Katrina Machado**

*John Machado, BOS*

**David B. Mack**

*Paul Mack, BUF*

**Liana Madsen**

*Benjamin P. Madsen, RST*

**Nicole Ariadne Murdy**

*Daniel Murdy, ZLA*

**Jacqueline Nguyen**

*Ann Minha Nguyen, Region X, NW*

**Meredith Kate Pickert**

*Daniel Pickert, ZKC*

**Danielle Pivonka**

*Joseph Pivonka, ZAU*

**Cory Schumacher**

*Mark Schumacher, ZDC*

**Tucker Charles Skoric**

*Michael Todd Skoric, ZDV*

**Alexandra Stanco**

*Peter M. Stanco, N90*