

Lilly winners gleeful, tearful, speechless

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Leah Basford of Centerville reacts while opening a gift from Andrea Stuckey of the Wayne County Foundation after Basford was told she is receiving a Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.

Lilly Facts

This year, 142 scholarships were awarded statewide by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. in conjunction with community foundations and Independent Colleges of Indiana Inc.

Since 1998, 37 students have been awarded Lilly Endowment Community Scholarships through the Wayne County Foundation. This year's recipients will be recognized June 25 at the Wayne County Foundation's Annual Report to the Community dinner.

Aside from the words "Thank you," winning this year's Lilly Endowment Community Scholarships left two Wayne County high school seniors speechless.

Leah Basford of Centerville High School and Kaitlin Kramer of Richmond High School were surprised Wednesday with the scholarships at their schools. They were chosen from among 44 Wayne County applicants. Each receives a four-year, full-tuition scholarship and \$900 annual stipend for required books and equipment.

Pulled away from an English class essay, Leah thought she was going into the Centerville guidance office to talk about a graduation event. Her father, Tim, was told the same thing.

Curiosity about the people gathered to greet them quickly turned to pleasure when Andrea Stuckey, program officer for the Wayne County Foundation, shared the good news with Leah.

Tim Basford had more immediately to say about the honor than his daughter.

"Wow! I'm glad to hear this," he said. "She worked hard for this. I think (Leah's) speechless. That's not normal."

Leah's mother, Sally Osborne, couldn't be present so the Basfords talked to her by speaker phone.

"Guess what? I won the Lilly scholarship?" Leah told her mom.

"I'm so proud of you. That is huge," Osborne said. "I'm in shock right now."

"I am too," Leah responded.

In addition to the scholarship, Stuckey presented Leah with a Butler University sweatshirt.

Looking at it, Leah said, "Now I have to think about it."

Leah initially planned to go to Butler, but financial concerns had her changing her plans to IUPUI. The scholarship gives the opportunity to change her plans again.

“I applied for the Lilly scholarship because college has always been a huge part of my future,” Leah said. “I want to go into business marketing. That’s a huge stepping stone into the business world.”

In college, Leah also wants to continue being a cheerleader. During high school, she maintained a 4.0 grade-point average while participating in Model Legislature and National Honor Society. She has served in several leadership positions along with volunteering at her church and Greens Fork Animal Hospital.