

## St. Mary's County Scholarships to CSM Students Top \$100,000

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Through a scholarship fund established by the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County in 2005, St. Mary's County recipients attending the College of Southern Maryland have had their higher education costs eased. From an initial gift of \$50,000 with half used to establish an endowment and the other half to establish the annual scholarship fund, the commissioners have continued to provide \$25,000 to the CSM Foundation every year since, with a portion funding the endowment to ensure future scholarships as well as a portion supporting the annual scholarships. To date, more than 100 awards totaling more than \$100,000 have been provided.

When CSM nursing student and scholarship recipient Kathy Nasman of Lexington Park prepared to thank the board of St. Mary's County Commissioners Dec. 1 at their monthly meeting, she didn't anticipate becoming emotional. But as she reached the point in her remarks when she spoke of fulfilling her lifelong dream to become a nurse, her voice cracked and her eyes welled with tears. Nasman's appreciation and words of gratitude for the scholarship award she received from St. Mary's County Government tugged at the commissioners' heartstrings, too.

"This is what it's all about," Commissioner President Francis Jack Russell told fellow commissioners, CSM administration and students gathered at CSM's Leonardtown Campus. At a reception held for recipients later that morning, Russell, who benefited from a \$500 delegate scholarship while attending the University of Maryland, said that when communities get involved in helping to fund education, it shows students that people are willing to invest in their futures. "Ninety-two percent of students who start at a community college, return to that community after completing their bachelor's degree," said Russell. By funding CSM students, he said, the community is investing in people who will stay in the county, become successful, and add to the tax base.

Nasman, a military spouse and a mother of four boys ages 15, 11, 7 and 4, is in her second semester as a nursing student, participating in clinical training at Southern Maryland Hospital Center. She has rotated through the emergency room and operating room and finds it exciting to apply classroom theory to real-life situations.

"As we approach the holiday season we want to give thanks to not only our families but also to the commissioners—you've been generous to us," CSM President Brad Gottfried said of the support CSM's St. Mary's students receive. "Thank you for making college affordable for our students. You are making a difference," he told the St. Mary's County Commissioners.

"When you are a friend and supporter of CSM you understand the importance of this college to the regional workforce and the economic vitality of the region," said CSM Foundation Chair Greg Cockerham, an alumnus and executive vice president of Community Bank of Tri-County. "Without this support, and that of the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County, it would have been impossible to provide the support that our students so desperately need."

"It really warms your heart when you read the stories of our students who are asking for help. For instance, the 23-year-old who has spent the last six years caring for her sister who has just started kindergarten so that their mother could work two jobs in order to support these two daughters. Without your scholarship, this 23-year-old student would never have been able to afford college," said Cockerham. "Or, the 19-year-old who lost his mom to breast cancer 10 years ago, and has lived alone with his dad ever since. He worked more than 40 hours a week