



2026

**LONG ISLAND
SCHOLAR-ARTIST
AWARDS
CEREMONY**

LIARTS
WORLD CLASS SECOND TO NONE
LongIslandArtsAlliance.org

Top: Madison Kayton (Half Hollow Hills HS West)
Bottom: Sara Erxleben (New Hyde Park Memorial HS)

Top: Ava Maia (H. Frank Carey HS)
Bottom: Kiley Barch (Huntington HS)

APRIL 21ST, 2026 | 6:00PM
TILLES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

WELCOME

2026 LONG ISLAND SCHOLAR-ARTIST AWARDS

Good Evening and Welcome!

Tonight we celebrate the 2026 Class of Scholar-Artists, students whose focus, creativity, and commitment to music, visual arts, dance, theater, and media arts enrich our communities across Long Island. To our honorees, the skills you have built, including resilience, curiosity, and creative thinking, will carry you far beyond the stage or studio. To the teachers, mentors, families, and advisors who supported these journeys, thank you.

We are deeply grateful to the **Arts Reach Fund at The New York Community Trust Long Island, New York Community Bank Foundation**, our media partner **Newsday**, and our hosts at **Tilles Center for the Performing Arts** for helping bring this celebration to life. On behalf of LIAA, our Board of Directors, and the Scholar-Artist Educators Committee, congratulations to each of tonight's awardees. It is an honor to celebrate you.

Sincerely,



Executive Director
Long Island Arts Alliance



LONG ISLAND SCHOLAR-ARTIST AWARDS EDUCATORS COMMITTEE:

Dr. John Gallagher, Chair - Longwood CSD
Anissa Arnold - Herricks Schools
Shirlene Blake - NYS Dance Ed. Assoc.
Dr. Judith Chen - Scholar-Artist Liaison
Loretta Corbisiero-Drakos - E. Suff. BOCES
Dr. Diana Cook - Middle Country Schools
Lisa Drance - North Babylon Schools
Louisa Eiermann - Bayport-Blue Point, Ret.
Ava Favara - LI High School for the Arts, Ret.
Dr. Andrew Frey-Gould - Oceanside Schools
Jim Incorvaia - Usdan Summer Camp, Ret.
Dr. Susan Radin - South Huntington Schools
Joanne Spencer - Nassau BOCES
Susan Weber - Uniondale Schools, Ret.

STAY CONNECTED WITH LIAA:

Instagram: [@longislandartsalliance](https://www.instagram.com/longislandartsalliance)

Facebook: [/ArtsLongIsland](https://www.facebook.com/ArtsLongIsland)

Learn more about the Alliance at:

www.longislandartsalliance.org



ABOUT LIAA

Long Island Arts Alliance (LIAA) is a regional nonprofit that connects, strengthens, and champions the arts and arts education across Nassau and Suffolk Counties. We support arts, cultural, and arts education organizations, as well as artists and creative businesses, through advocacy, research, and collaboration.

Formed in 2003, LIAA was created to unite the Island's arts community, address shared challenges, and communicate the sector's economic and community impact. Today, we represent a network of more than 100 member organizations spanning many disciplines, budget sizes, and communities across the region.

LIAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Marian Conway, Chair
NY Community Bank Foundation

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Arts Reach Fund at The New York Community Trust LI

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Town of North Hempstead

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John Racanelli
Farrell Fritz, P.C.

Napoleon Revels-Bey
Nassau Performing Arts

EVENT PROGRAM

WELCOME

Lauren Wagner - Executive Director,
Long Island Arts Alliance

PARTNER REMARKS

Steve Morris - Project Manager, Newsday Events
Newsday

SCHOLAR-ARTIST ALUMNI

Vincent Gerardi - Scholar-Artist Award Recipient, 2021
2026 NYSCA Grant Recipient

THEATER PERFORMANCE

Lucy Maniatis - *"Requiem"* from Dear Evan Hansen
Music & Lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, Accompanied by Berkeley Rogers

REMARKS

Hon. Roger Tilles - New York State Board of Regents
Founder, Long Island Arts Alliance

DANCE PERFORMANCE

Lina Murale - *"I'll Be Seeing You"*
Choreographed by Jenna Meslin, Music by Frank Sinatra

REMARKS

Dr. John Gallagher - Chair, Scholar-Artist Educators Committee
Director of Music & Fine Arts, Longwood Central School District

SCHOLAR-ARTIST AWARDS OF MERIT

Video and Awards Presentation

REMARKS

Dale Lewis - Arts Reach Fund at The New York Community Trust LI
Board Chair, Long Island Arts Alliance

MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Serena Wu - *Impromptu in E-flat Major, Op. 90, No. 2*
Franz Schubert

SCHOLAR-ARTIST AWARDS

2026 Scholar-Artist Video and Awards Presentation

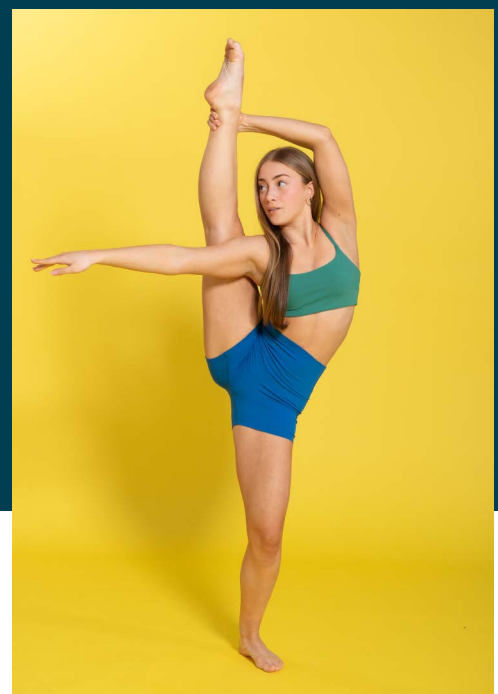
RECEPTION - Tilles Center Atrium



Scholar Artist Lucy Maniatis
(Walt Whitman HS)



Scholar Artist Serena Wu
(Roslyn HS)



Scholar Artist Lina Murale
(LIHSA / Bellmore-Merrick HS)

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS AND SPONSORS



at The New York Community Trust | Long Island



ArtsReachFund

AT LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Arts Reach Fund congratulates tonight's winners and pays tribute to the superb arts educators who inspire them.

**Tonight we celebrate their accomplishments.
Tomorrow they become Scholar-Artist Alumni.
We look forward to celebrating each one's journey of excellence.**



Arts Reach Fund launched in 2015 to celebrate and support excellence in arts education and professional presentation. The Fund provides grants to schools and arts institutions to inspire innovation in the content and delivery of performing arts programming. Recent grantees include *Sing for Hope*, *Education Through Music*, *Long Island Arts Alliance*, *Dancing Classrooms*, and *New York's Special Music High School* among others. In 2021, the Fund awarded a multi-year innovation grant to The Knights, producing a music video, *Keeping On*, and an album, *The Knights Before Christmas*, with this world-renowned orchestra.

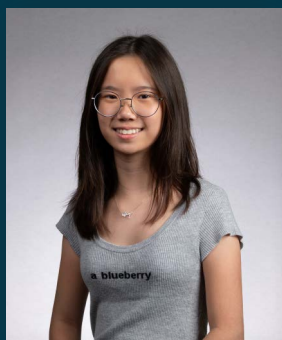
for more information, visit: www.artsreachfund.org



Scholar·Artist Awards

LONG ISLAND ARTS ALLIANCE

CELEBRATING THE 2026 LONG ISLAND SCHOLAR-ARTISTS



2026 SCHOLAR-ARTISTS

KILEY BARCH

Huntington High School - Media Arts



"Art in my life has enabled me to take my thoughts and express them in a way that is palatable to others. It acts as a stress-reliever and connects me to others through the relatability of its themes. In difficult times, photography has allowed me to capture memories that I am excited to look back on in a few years time. Seeing others through the lens, reminds me of all the beauty that surrounds me."

"I want to thank Mrs. Piffard for her support. I appreciate her willingness to help while also encouraging her students to stay true to their vision. I am grateful to have had a mentor who saw my art as an extension of myself, rather than just a grade in the book."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Distinguished Senior - Huntington High School; Top 25 Runners on LI- Newsday*

YEEWAN (MELODY) CHEN

Syosset High School - Visual Arts



"My art is my way of translating chaos and personal experiences into meaning. I find that it is both my way of reflecting inwards to understand myself, and reaching outwards to connect with others."

"To Mr. Tommolino, Mr. Malafis, Mr. Ferreira, and Mr. Morritt, Thank you for nurturing my creativity, challenging my ideas, and giving me the confidence to

pursue art seriously. Your support shaped my confidence and my voice, and I'm deeply grateful for everything you've poured into me."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *YoungArts Winner in Design (Top 5% Nationwide, 2026)*

ISABELLA ERTEL

Paul D. Schreiber High School - Theater



"To me, art is the most authentic way of expressing myself and connecting with others. Whether I'm forming close friendships with castmates or working hard to put on the best performance I can, I feel like my truest self. There is nothing I enjoy more than enveloping myself in a character and letting my creativity take over, entertaining diverse audiences and hopefully bringing them all together through smiles or laughter."

"Thank you to all my art teachers for helping me to grow my creativity and find a passion that I love as much as the community it provides. I would like to especially thank Mrs. Christine Nelson for nominating me for this award."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Presidential Service Award (100+ Volunteer Hours) - Curtains Up Theatre Program*

SARA ERXLEBEN

New Hyde Park Memorial High School - Visual Arts



"Art is the emotion I keep in a locked box I've always tried to suppress. It's the thought in the back of my head that haunts me. It's my worst fear and my greatest fallacy, but it's also my reason for loving life. Truly, art is the fuel that feeds my soul, it's everything I consume and joins me in all I do and experience. Art, to me, means letting myself feel, letting myself exist."

"Thank you for always guiding me and pushing me towards art school, even though every time I would always shake my head and keep working towards medical school. Alas you were right, thank you for the unwavering support."

TESSA FRASCOGNA

Garden City High School - Dance



"Dance is a way for me to channel emotional expression and creative exploration. Good day or bad, when the world feels heavy, dance is something I look forward to where I can express my emotions. It is my escape from reality and has always been something that I have poured my whole heart and soul into. In every lifetime I would choose to be a dancer because dance has made me, me."

"Thank you Mr. Mayo for being such an incredible mentor throughout my high school journey. I am grateful for your unwavering support, encouragement and guidance. I will always cherish the memories created and valuable lessons you taught me at Garden City High School, which will stay with me forever."

ANGELICA GARCIA

East Rockaway High School - Media Arts



"Art has allowed me to express myself and find my own style. It's a creative outlet that is expressive and can be manipulated; there is no right way to create it. It allows me to take a break from everything, allowing me to calm down, pay attention to details, and learn how to be patient. It has taught me that it's ok to make mistakes and it's often the mistakes that have the best results."

"Thank you Mrs. Galante and Mrs. Cabasso for always pushing me, encouraging me, and helping me discover new ways to make my photography better. I wouldn't have had the opportunities or recognition I've received without you."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards - 2 Honorable Mentions, 5 Silver Keys, 3 Gold Keys (Regional); Silver Medal (National, top ~2%); Exhibition - "Nightmare on Main Street," Huntington Arts Council*

ETHEN HONG

Syosset High School - Theater



"Art in the strictest sense is a form of creation or expression that conveys a message or emotion. More accurately, art is a language of love that is universally understood. It is a culture to share, a recipe to pass around, and a story to be told over and over again. Art is humanity's greatest contribution to the story of evolution. It is the entire universe, told from each of our wonderfully unique lives."

"My mentor for the past three years has been invaluable for my career and growth as a performer and director. As a creator of art, I owe much of my skill and experience to their teachings and hope that I can continue to carry on a part of that legacy."

MADISON KAYTON

Half Hollow Hills High School West - Dance



"My art is a way for me to express myself beyond words. Through both dance and visual art, I am able to tell stories. The beauty of art fills me with joy, meaning, and devotion. Whether on stage, rehearsing in the studio, or painting in class, art has become a vital part of who I am. It is truly the heartbeat of my identity and continues to inspire my future."

"I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Karen and Mrs. Lizzy, who have pushed me to grow as a dancer and helped shape my confidence and discipline. Mrs. Montiglio helped me see that my creativity could come to life on stage, and Mr. Tropani has supported all of my artistic endeavors. I am incredibly thankful for their encouragement and belief in my potential."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *1st Place - Dance Choreography, HSW Reflections PTA (advanced to NYS; Award of Merit); Principal Role (Cinderella) - Lynch Ballet Academy Spring Production*

2026 SCHOLAR-ARTISTS

EDWIN KO

Herricks High School - Music



"Art reflects my past experiences. During high school, especially in 10th grade, my family faced serious hardships when my grandmother was diagnosed with lung cancer and my grandfather became ill at the same time. With my family overseas, we all made sacrifices, and I turned to music as an outlet. During this time, I poured my heart into my music, and it became more powerful and

meaningful to me and those who heard it. Music is how I express my personal journey."

"I would like to thank Adam Cordero, my private teacher for his guidance and teaching, and Scott Stickley and Anissa Arnold my teacher and music director from Herricks for supporting and being there for me throughout the 10 years I spent in the Herricks music program."

LUCY MANIATIS

Walt Whitman High School - Theater



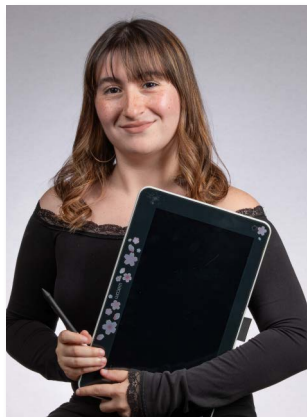
"My art is the one thing in my life that makes me feel whole. It is what I can truly make my own and embrace my creativity. I love exploring the different things that make up my entire art like singing, acting, and dancing. Each have their own individual meaning to me and when they all come together in musical theater, the feeling of exhilaration is unmatched. I love my art and always will."

"I'm so grateful to have been taught and directed by Dr. Susan Radin. She has helped me develop my skills as a performer and prepared me for taking the stage at college. And thank you to Mr. Matthew Hoffman and Mr. Greg Modelewski for being amazing music directors."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Bravo Award - Theater, South Huntington School District*

AVA MAIA

H. Frank Carey High School - Media Arts



"Art isn't about being the greatest—I used to think that. Over time, I've learned to accept my skills and use my art to express my feelings and speak on what matters. Whether exploring controversial topics or personal struggles, art is subjective—it's up to you what it means. For me, it's about expressing my voice, my feelings, and my perspective."

"The Art Department at Carey has lifted me up when I felt my work wasn't enough. For years, they've encouraged my creativity and allowed me to flourish as the artist I was always meant to be. I express my deepest gratitude to everybody who taught me to love my work."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards - Silver Medal (2024); Honorable Mention Portfolio (2026); Exhibitor - GoApe Gallery (2025); ASA Honor Award Recipient & All-County Exhibitor (2026)*

HANG MI

Manhasset High School - Visual Arts



"To me, art is a way of bringing my experiences to life. It allows me to relive my past, reshaping it through color and detail with my own touch. Through art, I can celebrate the people I love while reflecting on loss and obstacles I've faced. Painting is not just a medium, but a language where I can express who I am."

"Dear Mrs. Oldaker, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout my high school art journey. Your guidance pushed me to expand my creative boundaries in ways I never imagined. I'm now able to approach art with confidence, and I'm truly grateful for your dedication."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards - 2 Gold Keys (Painting & Illustration), 2 Honorable Mentions (Illustration & Personal Essay); National Gold Medal - Illustration (2025); Best of Show - Heckscher Museum Long Island's Best (2025)*

LINA MURALE

LIHSA / Bellmore-Merrick Central HS- Dance



"My art is my way of expressing myself and showing my emotion. It is my passion and something I will always hold close to my heart. Dancing has taught me more about life than anything else and continues to teach me lessons I couldn't learn without it."

"Thank you to all of my teachers who have pushed me to be my best and always believed in

me. I'm so grateful for the opportunities I've gained from them and the mentorship I've received. I will carry what I've learned through them my entire life."

ELANOR RUBIN

South Side High School - Theater

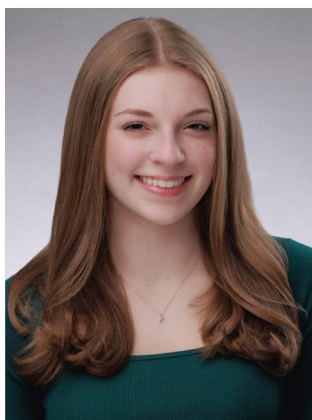


"To me, making art means telling stories and providing an escape for all involved. Every show that I have ever seen or been a part of has touched me and helped me grow in some way, providing me comfort while also creating a new world, and I hope to continue to make that possible for other people."

"I want to extend my thanks to all of the educators who have inspired me over the years to continue making art. Specifically, Pamela Seiderman, Kathleen Mark, Doreen Fryling, and Kristen Caesar."

KATE SABELLICO

Walt Whitman High School - Dance



"Dance is a meaningful outlet for me. It helps me escape the stress I feel outside of dance. It also allows me to express myself in ways that I can't otherwise. I want to continue to dance throughout the rest of my life as a performer and then share my love of dance with others through teaching."

"I would like to express my utmost gratitude to all my arts educators through the years. I

practically grew up on the dance floor, and the education I got from my arts educators played just as big of a role raising me as my school teachers and family members."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *National Honor Society for Dance Arts, English & Social Studies; Trailblazer: Excellence & Artistry Bravo Award - Dance, South Huntington; National Titlist - Edge Talent; Regional Titlist - Edge Talent, DanceXplosion & Turn It Up Dance Competitions*

XINXIN (TINA) TU

Garden City High School - Visual Arts



"Art is the way I think, process, and understand myself. I felt the weight of perfection all the time. However, with experimentations, I realized that it was unrealistic. Some of the most fascinating works I have created, in fact, came from unexpected mistakes. Strokes and colors gradually became my way of expression. Art is something I know I will carry with me long after I finish the next piece."

"Thank you to my mom for introducing me to art. Thank you to my teachers for nurturing my creativity. Thank you to all of my art educators for supporting and guiding me along the way."

Class of 2027 Scholar-Artist Awards

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN

DEADLINE JUNE 1, 2026

○○○○



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2026 SCHOLAR-ARTISTS

GAVIN WAHLEN

Centereach High School - Music



"Art means being connected with the people around you. Art is there to express who you truly are when words aren't enough. Art is a way to bond with others and to share common interests. Without art, my life would feel extremely dull. Being able to perform and show my gift of music to the world is one of the greatest things that could have happened to me."

"I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my choir teacher, Mr. Hough. He showed me how to stand out as an individual and how to confidently direct a small group of high school students. Without him, I would not be anywhere close to where I am now."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *The James Truscello Award in Band - Friends of Music Scholarship (2026)*

SERENA WU

Roslyn High School - Music



"Art is a way to express emotions that are difficult to articulate, which is especially meaningful to me as a more reserved and introverted person. I have bonded with many people over artistic outputs, which I'm incredibly grateful for. I couldn't imagine music not being in my life, and I feel truly blessed to have musical talent."

"Thank you for always helping me and other students reach our full potential. Your commitment to music and being a music educator is truly inspiring. I wouldn't be here without your help!"

EMMA WILCK

Half Hollow Hills HS East - Media Arts



"Photography is more than a hobby, it is a way of seeing and understanding the world. It lets me express my emotions and perspectives while combining creativity with technical precision. Through my work, I capture meaningful moments, tell stories, and preserve memories. Photography reflects my hope to pursue a future where art and science intersect."

"I am grateful to my arts educators for encouraging my passion and helping me grow. They have pushed me to try new ideas, develop my creative voice, and pursue opportunities beyond the classroom. Because of their support, I've entered contests, attended a photography workshop abroad, and gained confidence sharing my work. I truly appreciate their time, mentorship, and belief in me."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Winner - Roberta Strent Memorial Photography Award (Huntington Camera Club)*

STEPHEN YE

Miller Place High School - Music



"Music, to me, is both discipline and belonging, it's the quiet hours of practice and the shared understanding between musicians. It's shaped how I approach everything, with patience, purpose, and a drive to constantly improve. It's given me a way to express what I can't always put into words and a community where I feel truly connected."

"From 6th grade orchestra onward, Mrs. Christine Desiderio's enthusiasm and patience shaped me into both a musician and a person. I'm also grateful for Ms. Christina Khimm Rosand's guidance in bringing my music to life, and for Mrs. Dana Hong, whose early lessons built the foundation for everything that followed."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Valedictorian - Miller Place High School (Class of 2026); 2nd Prize - International Mozart Competition, Vienna (2025); NYS Scholarship for Academic Excellence; Brookhaven Science Associates Scholarship Recipient*



MOLLOY UNIVERSITY

AND

PRESIDENT JAMES P. LENTINI, D.M.A.

CONGRATULATE SCHOLAR-ARTISTS CLASS OF 2026

LONG ISLAND ARTS ALLIANCE

Molloy University, an independent Catholic university based in Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York, was founded in 1955. The University serves a student population of approximately 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Molloy students can earn degrees in a variety of outstanding academic programs, including nursing, business, education, social work, music therapy and many more.

Founded by the Dominican Sisters of Amityville.

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www.molloy.edu

1000 Hempstead Ave.,
Rockville Centre, NY 11570



**MOLLOY
UNIVERSITY**

CELEBRATING THE 2026 SCHOLAR-ARTIST MERIT AWARD WINNERS



2026 SCHOLAR-ARTIST MERIT AWARDS

RAVEN CANZONERI

Hicksville High School - Visual Arts



"Art has taught me to embrace the imperfections of life. I initially started painting with the goal to recreate images exactly, but have fortunately learned the validation of painting something with actual creativity involved. Art allows me to express what my words cannot and has taught me adaptability in the face of adversity, both in my work and in my life. I am so beyond grateful to find such escape in such a beautiful medium."

"I would like to thank Mr. Craig Mateyunas, whom I have had for three years for three different courses. Thank you for shaping me into the unique artist and person I am, and for fostering my appreciation for the arts and for the imperfections of life."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards - Honorable Mention (Portfolio, Memoir of a Teenage Girl); Aaron Copland School of Music - Full Tuition Scholarship*

ALANA CORNACCHIULO

Bellport High School - Visual Arts



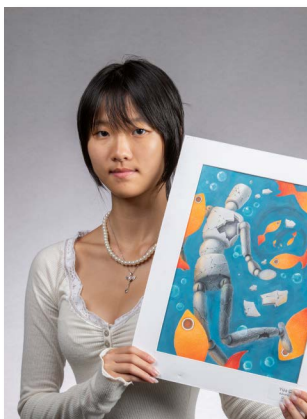
"To me, art is everything that is beautiful in the world, so to call art my own is something incredibly special. And that act of creating something new reminds me that beauty isn't something we have to wait for, but something we can hone ourselves. So, when I create art, I'm not just putting lines and colors on a canvas. I make meaning. I make connection. I make endless possibilities."

"I hate to say it but I'm unmotivated, which they already may or may not know. Which is why I couldn't be more grateful for my teachers pushing me to the best of my abilities. I wouldn't be where I am without them, so thank you."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Best in Show - SCALA All-County Exhibition Art Award; Third Place - SCCC High School Art Show; Senior Award for Excellence - Parrish Art Museum Exhibition (2026); Scholastic Art & Writing Awards - 2 Gold Keys, 2 Silver Keys, Honorable Mention; National Silver Medals (x2)*

YIJIA CHEN

John L. Miller Great Neck North HS - Visual Arts



"Art is my language. Before being able to speak English after moving to the states, I would bond with my peers through art. If I couldn't express appreciation to those that I love through words, art was my gateway. Even today, I communicate through art. I hand make gifts for birthdays, I create activism art to spread awareness, and I foster welcoming spaces through artistic clubs. Art lets me speak without words."

"I would like to thank Mr. Giacalone, my AP Art teacher. As the school year begins to end, I've learned a lot from Mr. G, who always treated my ideas with genuine curiosity and helpfulness. He challenged me without judgement, allowing me to grow rather than be molded. Thank you!"

Recent Awards/Achievements: *ASA All-County Art Exhibit (2026); Artist of Promise Scholarship - Hartford Art School (\$25,000/year, 2025)*

JUSTIN DEROSALIA

Newfield High School - Music



"To me, piano is a way to spread happiness to an audience. Not only does playing make me happy, but when I can see the smiles of the people who I am performing for, I know that my gift has helped bring them joy. Music has such a unique power and wielding it in all its glory can emotionally transcend an individual. Additionally, music has granted me a newfound appreciation for even the smallest details."

"I'm greatly appreciative towards my two high school band teachers, Dr. Goldstein and Mr. Austin, for developing my musicianship and making all of my music-related awards and opportunities possible. I would be nowhere near as successful without their guidance and wisdom, and for that I'm grateful!"

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Friends of Music - James Truscello Award in Band (\$700 Scholarship)*

KAYA DOBRZANSKI

Half Hollow Hills High School West - Media Arts



"Art, to me, is a way of transforming pain into meaning and revealing who I am. Through photography, I capture emotion in fleeting moments, finding light within darkness and beauty within chaos. It gives me a voice beyond words and helps me see the world—and myself—with depth, curiosity, and optimism.."

"I would like to thank Mrs. Ievolo for her support and guidance,

which helped me grow as both an artist and a person. She gave me many opportunities and shared so much knowledge, and she is a big reason I am the artist I am today."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Drexel University High School Photography Contest (2025); Honorable Mention - Roberta Strent Memorial Award, Huntington Camera Club; PTA Reflections State-Level Merit Award (2025); Honorable Mention - Five Towns College Media Arts (2025)*

MASON FOSTER

Glen Cove High School - Media Arts



"Since I am an athlete, photography has helped me express myself in ways I didn't know how to before. It has opened doors for me and honestly helped me become a better person."

"I would like to thank Mrs. Johnides for helping me express myself through my photography. She had been a great teacher and mentor for me since my first day in class holding a camera."

PAVITHRA ESWAR

The Wheatley School - Visual Arts



"Across all art forms, I'm drawn to the wonder of many parts forming a whole. No two pieces are identical, yet each has the power to connect with an audience through shared emotion. The possibilities for creation are limitless, but it's the impact that stays. To me, that is the heart of art: to still and to stir life, from my hand to yours."

"Mrs. Girgenti, you've pushed me to grow, to time manage, to persevere when things felt impossible, and to love art. Your support has meant the world, and I'll carry what you've taught me long after I leave your classroom. Thank you, for pursuing the potential you saw in my 8th-grade-self."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Lead Role (Rose Alvarez, Bye Bye Birdie, High School Spring Musical)*

JULIA GORDON

Commack High School - Theater



"My art reflects who I am and is shaped by my own experiences. Performing lets me express emotions I can't always put into words, and connect with others in a real way. Each role has helped me grow in confidence and find my voice, both on and off stage."

"To Mrs. Frankonis, Vinny Donnadiao, Lori Lusted, and Mike Cardascia, thank you so much for helping me grow into the artist I am today. Your guidance, support, and belief in me have meant more than I can express. I'm so grateful for everything you've taught me."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Roger Rees Awards - Nominated to Audition (Karen, Mean Girls, Commack High School)*

2026 SCHOLAR-ARTIST MERIT AWARDS

AVA HELBOCK

Sayville High School - Music



"I grew up playing music, first the piano when I was six and then began on the oboe in 4th grade. It was something that was always there no matter which direction life threw me, and in many ways it brought me comfort. I'm so grateful to have grown up with the opportunity to express myself through melodies and harmonies and the ability to make something beautiful from notes on a page."

"I'd like to thank my band director Kerri VanBoxel as she has been a pillar of incredible, unwavering support and just a patient, loving person throughout my college admission process. She is the type of teacher I wish everyone could have in their lives."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Sayville Music Booster for the Arts - Oboe Performance (2024); Visual Arts (2025)*

GRACE LU

Plainview - Old Bethpage JFK HS - Media Arts

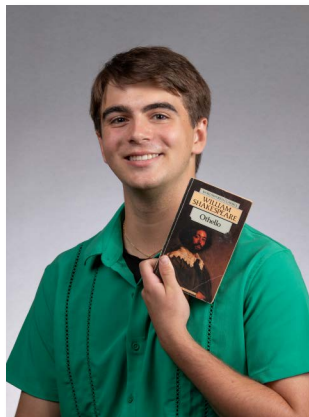


"My art is an outlet for how I perceive the world. It allows me to show others what I see: the appeal in tiny details, or nuances that make life more beautiful. I can capture what I see or imagine in ways that aren't possible to show through any other method. Through art and creation, I am able to fully express what can't be described in words."

"I would like to thank my art teachers for always supporting my passion for creating art and following what I find interesting. They never failed to uplift and work with my ideas, allowing me to work at my own pace and enjoy the process."

WILLIAM HERBERT

Farmingdale High School - Theater



"Throughout my life, art has been my passion, from drawing with my mom to dedicating myself to theatre and music. Many of my best memories come from creating art and the people it's brought me closer to. I hope to continue making art that makes a difference in my life and in the lives of others."

"I would like to thank Ms. Mischke for taking a chance on me in freshman year with Pippin

and for the growth she's fostered ever since. I'm so grateful for the past four years in her productions and all I've learned as a performer. I'd also like to thank Mr. Beck for sharing his experience and the valuable lessons he's taught me on and off the stage. I will carry what you've both given me with me into college and beyond."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Roger Rees Awards - Finalist (2024 & 2025), Nominee (2026); National Merit Scholarship Program - Commended Student; First Place - eVoco Young Artist Award (2024)*

GRACE LU

Syosset High School - Media Arts



"I use my art to capture moments and people around me that are important to my life. My art is important to me because I deeply value being able to freeze moments in time into permanent memories that I can share with others. I enjoy film photography specifically because it allows for creativity through experimentation, while also carrying with it the comforting familiarity of every repeated step."

"Thank you for encouraging me and believing in both my art and me every single day. Your support has been invaluable and is greatly appreciated."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Scholastic Art Region-at-Large East - Gold Key (Ceramics & Glass); Silver Key (Ceramics & Glass); Silver Key (Experimental Photography)*

KAKO MURAYAMA

Paul D. Schreiber High School - Dance



"Three years ago, I arrived on Long Island from Japan without speaking English. Despite that, I formed meaningful connections through Hula, the traditional Hawaiian dance I've practiced since age three. I realized that dance became my bridge—a powerful, universal language expressed through the body that connects people without words."

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dance and PE teacher, Mrs. Szczesny. She challenged me as both a performer and a leader, trusting me as dance captain and encouraging me to take on more responsibility. She created a space where I could be honest with myself and step beyond my comfort zone, and I feel truly lucky to have learned from her."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Dance Captain - Theatre Company; Performer - Hula, School Talent Show; All-County Choir - Division 5 Mixed (2025) & Treble (2026)*

ANYA SCHADE

Oyster Bay High School - Dance



"Ballet has given me far more than technique. In every class, rehearsal, performance, and setback, I've grown not only as a dancer but as an individual. In my academics, social interactions and future goals, the mindset ballet has ingrained in me continues to be a guiding force. Even when I'm not in the studio, these lessons linger with me: resilience despite hardship, application of persistent effort, attention to community, and the

value of quiet confidence."

"I would like to thank my teachers Ms. Karen Lynch and Ms. Elizabeth Aymong for guiding me not only in ballet, but in life. From their teachings I've learned the art of ballet as well as discipline, confidence, and to carry myself with grace."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *AP Scholar with Distinction; AP Capstone Diploma; Renaissance Award (High School)*

TIMOTHY SANDBICHLER

Chaminade High School - Music



"My art means everything to me. Music is an escape from the world and never fails to allow me to express myself in ways words cannot. Music has opened me up to a family of support throughout the country and a world where I have been able to make meaningful connections and a real impact on the lives of others in order to pay forward all that I have been blessed with."

"I would like to thank my family of arts educators for inspiring, motivating and shaping me as a musician and a person. They have motivated me to improve every day and have fostered my love for music in a way where I have been able to make a true impact."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Stamps Scholar - University of South Carolina*

CAROLYN SPARACIO

Oceanside High School - Theater



"Theatre is a way for me to express myself while working with my friends. I'm enabled to do art that my actor friends can use to create their own art, which is the most beautiful part of it for me. I am eternally grateful I was able to find my thing that allows me to create joy in performers and the audience through building sets, lighting the stage, stage managing, etc., but also for myself."

"I'd like to thank Ms. Taplin, Mrs. Gallo, and Mr. Vetter for getting me to where I am today. I wouldn't have found my passion for theatre without them and they have stood by me through all the highs and lows and push me to be better with their kindness."

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2026 SCHOLAR-ARTIST MERIT AWARDS

ABIGAIL VUONG

Locust Valley High School - Music



"My art, specifically music, is an extension of myself and has given me many great opportunities. It is a way to express my emotions. Music has also helped me meet many new people, have unique experiences, and make new friends. Music is something that defined my high school experience."

"Thank you for being so encouraging and supportive

throughout the years. Because of you, I was able to develop tremendously not only as a musician, but as a person as well. My musical experiences in high school were some of the best moments of my life. Thank you."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *National Merit Finalist; Ranked #3 - High School; Selected Performer - Oyster Bay Music Festival Flute Masterclass (Thomaz Tavares)*

HANNAH WEISS

Oceanside High School - Dance



"My art is my whole world. Dance and Theatre are my ways of self expression, they lift me up when I'm down and help me cope with anything life throws at me. My art isn't just a part of who I am, it is what makes me whole. I don't see a world in which i'm not performing and I believe that my art is the greatest gift I've been given."

"Ms. Taplin and Mrs. Gallo, are the backbones of everything I

do. Without them I would not have the confidence to pursue any of these opportunities and I'm eternally grateful for everything they've done for me. They go above and beyond and deserve all the praise in the universe!"

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Co-Choreographer - School Production with Special Education Students; Recognition - School Special Education Department & Local Herald*

LILY WASOSKI

Huntington High School / LIHSA - Theater



"Art is a form of expression when words can't encapsulate our feelings. Through art, we can share emotions and experiences in a way we otherwise can't. My art, specifically music, helps me express who I am and what I'm feeling when I can't find the right words, but it also helps bring people together. That's why I make sure to share my art with the world!"

"I want to thank my teachers for all of their support; I wouldn't be where I am today without their guidance. Specifically, I want to thank Martha Tibbetts, my voice teacher, who has taken me under her wing and shown me what it means to be an artist."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Outstanding Senior - Long Island High School for the Arts; Soloist - NYSSMA All-State Mixed Choir (2025)*

CATHERINE ZIEGLER

Cold Spring Harbor High School - Music



"Playing the violin, first and foremost, runs deep in my family. My mother, my cousins, and my grandparents all play instruments, and I began playing at 2 years old. The violin has always been a part of my life, and it feels like an extension of myself. To me, playing the violin means turning passion and determination into beauty that transcends language, culture, and time."

"I'm incredibly grateful for my private teacher, Ani Gregorian Resnick, who has been a constant source of inspiration and positivity in my life since I was 5. I am also grateful for my school orchestra teacher, Ms. Segale. They have both helped me grow into the artist I am today."

Recent Awards/Achievements: *Tri-M Music Honor Society - Elected President; NYSSMA All-State Conference - Selected Participant (2025)*

Congratulations, Kako

2026 LIAA Merit Award Recipient

**We are incredibly proud of your
dedication and grace.**

Your journey has only just begun.

**Keep dancing your story
with light and love.**

**With all our love,
Mom and Dad**



Congratulations, Lucy!



We are so proud of you for receiving this award and for your achievements in both the arts and academics. Watching you grow over the years has been a true joy. We know you will continue to thrive, as acting, singing, and dancing are such an authentic part of who you are.

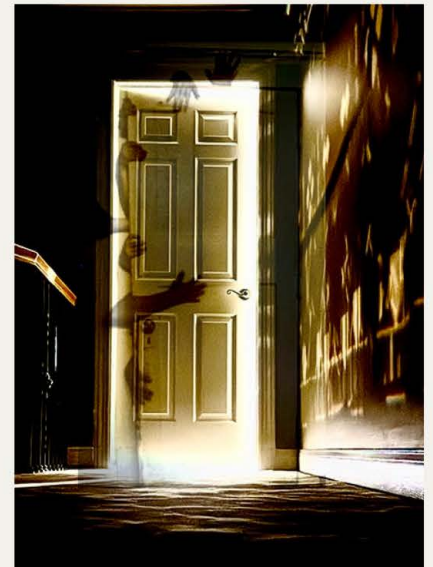
*We love you,
Mom, Dad, Peter and Lana*



Emma Wilck

We are so proud of you and all that you've accomplished. We love seeing the world through your lens and can't wait to see what the future holds for you!

All our love,
Mom, Dad, Paige and Adam

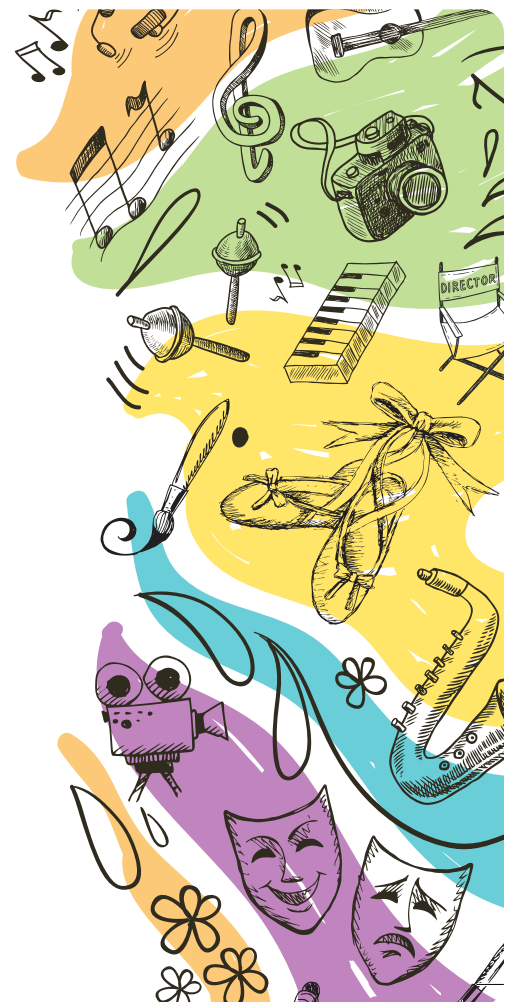


“Be the reason someone smiles. Be the reason someone feels loved and believes in the goodness in people.”

— Roy T. Bennett

Congratulations on being recognized as a Scholar Artist. Your hard work and dedication is a testament to your incredible talent and passion. Newsday is proud to help you tell your story.

Newsday





Congratulations, Tessa!

We are so incredibly proud of you and all your accomplishments. You have been dedicated, hardworking, and passionate about your goals from a very young age. The countless hours you have committed to dance training and watching you shine on stage has been our greatest pleasure. Never stop reaching for the stars! We know you will achieve anything you set your heart to.

WE LOVE YOU,
MOM, DAD, AND BIANCA

Congratulations to all the 2026 LI Scholar Artists!



STEPHEN YE



Stephen, watching you grow into a scholar, artist, and leader has been our greatest joy. Every milestone you reach—whether leading an orchestra, founding clubs, or building a business—fills our hearts with wonder and pride. Your passion and dedication are truly gifts to us, and we feel blessed to watch you shine. We are so proud of you and wish you a bright future!

Love, Mom & Dad





Congratulations, Bella!

We couldn't be more proud of you and all that you've accomplished, especially being named a 2026 Scholar-Artist Award recipient, a wonderful recognition of your talent and dedication.

With sincere thanks to your incredible theatre director, Mrs. Christine Nelson of Paul D. Schreiber High School, for her support and guidance. We're grateful to Long Island Arts Alliance for recognizing and supporting young artists.

Congratulations to all recipients!

Congratulations Abby! We are so proud of you.

Love,
Dad, Mom and Matthew





Ben Folds



Men
at Work



Josh Groban

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