



## *Meet our 2026 Scholarship Winners*

Did you know that your Society has awarded \$56,500 in academic scholarships since 2014? With our 2026 awards, we will have helped 33 students further their college or graduate school studies. Over the years, our awards have increased from \$1,000 to -- this year -- \$3,500 each.

This year's applicants are among the most talented our Scholarship Committee members have seen. They had a tough time choosing two awardees.

Our Scholarship Awards are paid directly to the educational institution our awardees attend. In addition, the Society donates \$1,000 to the Mexican American Educational Guidance Association scholarship program each year. At the June 4 awards and SBC&HS Board installation dinner, 2024 Kaede Ward will join us with an update on his college years. Hope to see you there! [RSVP here.](#)

I hope you take as much pride as I do in this signature initiative by your Society. The Society funding for our Scholarship Program comes primarily from sales at our annual Holiday Boutique -- and from member donations over the years. Want to help us grow our awards? [Click here to donate to our Scholarship Fund.](#)

Thanks to our Executive Board members for agreeing to serve another term: Michele Stribling, Holly Smith Jones, Lori Wolf and Cindi Clemons. The 2026-27 Board will be sworn in on June 4.

*Jolene Dodson Bogard*

## *Our Scholars Found Familiar Inspirations*

Cole Leshner found inspiration in the San Diego Zoo aviary. Katherine Kousser found it in a pink shirt. But in truth, they say, each found their inspirations in their grandmothers.

Katherine and Cole were selected from a large and talented pool of applicants to receive \$3,500 scholarship awards from the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society. They will be honored at a June 4 dinner, 5 to 7 p.m. at Tony's Jacal Restaurant in Solana Beach. Cole will soon graduate from Canyon Crest Academy and plans to attend Stanford University; Katherine will graduate from San Dieguito High School Academy and plans to enroll at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Both students earned 4.0+ Grade Point Averages and completed multiple advanced placement courses in high school. Their volunteer and extra-curricular activities left our selection committee wondering when each found time to sleep.



Katherine (Kat) remained a Girl Scout with troop 3143 in the Solana Ranch division from first grade through her high school senior year, participating in volunteer projects and annual cookie sales. Her volunteer tutoring activities included Casa de Amistad. In 11th and 12th grades, she was co-president and a tutor for the National Honors Society. She was a Link Crew Leader at San Dieguito Academy, helping students make a smooth transition to high school and also, in 10th grade, a Junior Counselor at Outpost Summer Camps.

Kat also worked throughout high school as Director of Recruitment and as a chapter member of the International Children's Advisory network, whose 35 chapters partner with local hospitals to support and advocate for patients and provide childcare while parents learn about diagnoses. In both 2023 and 2024, she received the President's Volunteer Service Award, earning a letter and medal from the President of the United States.

*Continued on next page*

## *Scholars, cont.*

Before all of that, she was "a wild and bold eight year old," or so she shared in her application essay. Her "librarian grandmother" gave her a shirt imprinted with one of Helena's lines from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "And though she be but little, she is fierce." Kat took the words as a calling.

Between ages 8 and 16, when sometimes her "confidence rattled . . . I was lucky enough to have the help to build myself back up," she wrote. Her older brother encouraged her to be fierce -- "not to be scared of people bigger than me by showing no mercy during Nerf wars." And to build her intellectual ferocity: "I've learned to fight back with reason, evidence, and tempered emotion."

She also found courage through admiring the courage of her idols -- stand-up comedians Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. "Watching these women be fierce, funny, and vulnerable gave me the courage that I could do the same." She even took improv classes, "but discovered that stand-up may not be my calling."

"Now, as a 17-year-old-girl, I'm desperately trying to figure out what my future will look like. But . . . I'm no longer scared." "Ferocity-first," called out by her grandmother, is her inspiration.

Sitting in the aviary at age 10, Cole's grandmother pointed to a brilliant blue bird and told him it was a parrot. Her observation honed his observations as he continued to visit the aviary, he wrote in his application essay.

He noticed that the toucan makes sounds ranging from "purrs of happiness to deep-throated croaks that help locate other members of the flock." "Like a toucan, I use multiple languages when volunteering in my community. As a tutor, I realize some middle school students may be nervous to engage with me when English isn't their first language, so I take the time to get to know them -- by conversing in English or in Spanish." Cole tutored with Casa de Amistad from 2022 through 2025.

Quizzing zookeepers, he learned that the crested oropendolas build nests up to six-feet long that are suspended high in the air. "Sometimes other birds knock down the nests, but the oropendolas always rebuild them, one blade of grass at a time." As a Democracy Summer intern in 2024, Cole canvassed with Congressman Mike Levin and worked on his re-election campaign, which involved "knocking on hundreds of doors, with many people ignoring me or shutting the door . . . it felt like my own 'nest' kept getting knocked down, but the times when I met voters who were willing to talk kept me going."

Cole also was impressed by the bee-eater, a bird agile enough to catch a bee in mid air and smart enough to rub off the stinger before eating it. They also work in varying roles to support their flocks. Working as a volunteer ranger at San Dieguito Park every Sunday, Cole said he learned to "handle whatever duties the head ranger assigns me." He also plays Santa at the park's annual Holiday festival. "Playing Santa has taught me the importance of giving someone your undivided attention, though I don't know if I should continue promising kids Apple watches in front of their parents."

Cole's extracurricular activities also include his position as a Junior Commissioner on the Solana Beach Climate and Resiliency Commission; as a tutor for Pathways to Citizenship, assisting documented immigrants in navigating the complex routes to that goal; as a Teen Volunteer in Action; and as a Canyon Crest Academy podcaster.

His aviary observations -- captured in a photo of young Cole and his grandmother pointing out the parrot -- "solidified my desire to use my love of language and nature to engage in research, policy, and advocacy at the local and global level in order to protect the environment. I now have a birds-eye view of how to apply my strengths."



## *City Manager Reports on Solana Beach Programs and Projects*

City Manager Alyssa Muto provided updates on a wide range of the City's initiatives at our May 21st membership meeting.

To start, she introduced our new Fire Chief, Bret Davidson, who will lead the Fire Department here and in Del Mar. Bret brings nearly 40 years of fire service experience, most recently serving with the City of Vista, and has spent his career working with departments across Southern California. A San Diego County native, Bret holds advanced degrees in Fire Science, Public Safety Administration, and Human Resource Management, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education degree. In his brief remarks, Chief Davidson promised to work closely with residents on steps to improve residential fire resilience and retain homeowners insurance.



Following are highlights from Ms. Muto's presentation:

- **40th Anniversary:** The City is planning events throughout the year to celebrate the anniversary of its incorporation in July, 1986. The kick-off will be a concert on the beach at Fletcher Cove on July 2, from 6 to 8 p.m. A movie on the beach is scheduled for August 8, 6 to 10 p.m.
- **Fire safety:** Watch for additional education and programs on how to prepare for a potential wildfire emergency, including about how to register a pet who may go missing.
- **City finances:** Ms. Muto reported that the Measure S one-cent sales tax increase boosted the City's revenues by \$4.8 million, contributing to higher-than-budgeted City revenues. At the same time, City expenses have dropped under budget, providing a strong financial footing for our town.
- **Fletcher Cove:** Beach access ramp improvements have been completed and there is now, again, a shower at the base of the ramp.
- **Marine Safety Center:** Design and geo-technical specifications for the planned Lifeguard headquarters are being submitted to the Coastal Commission while the City continues working to secure funding for construction.
- **Our Heritage Museum:** Has a new roof, as does the adjacent storage shed.
- **Lomas Santa Fe Drive:** The eastern stretch of our main east-to-west roadway is slated for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, including median and sidewalk landscaping and trash bins. The City also is working with the Sheriff's Department and area schools to provide education about electric bike safety.
- **Sustainability:** In addition to providing EV charging stations at La Colonia Community Center, the City is sponsoring rebates for residents who replace gas water heaters with electric heat pumps. To combat beach litter, there now are more beach litter stations and a new beach toy sharing box.
- **Senior Transportation Program:** A *free* service designed to help older adults maintain their independence, run essential errands, attend appointments within Solana Beach -- and stay connected in their community -- will be piloted this summer through Jewish Family Service
  - **Eligibility:** Residents of the City of Solana Beach who are **65 years or older**.
  - **Pilot Schedule:** 1.5 days a week, on **Wednesdays, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM and Thursdays, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM**.
  - **Service Levels:** To accommodate varying mobility needs, **curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and door-thru-door** assistance.
  - **Drivers:** Rides are fulfilled by a dedicated mix of staff, vetted volunteers, and rideshare drivers.
  - Learn more or enroll: Call **858-923-1344**.

**Updates on City Initiatives, cont.**

- **Online permitting and licensing** now is available for business certificates, short-term rental permits, and solar power applications, among other services.
- **Larrick Reservoir Pocket Park:** Planning for a new park on Santa Fe Irrigation District property around the reservoir at East Cliff and Glenmont streets is on hold while the District reassesses its entire property portfolio.
- **City of Solana Beach App**, available in your app store, gives residents "the power to be the change." The app can be used to report potholes, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and other issues so City officials can quickly respond. It's a good companion to the *Weekly Update*, which is e-mailed to residents who register for the newsletter.
- A proposed redevelopment of the eastern sections at the Von's shopping center by American Assets has been stalled; it was reported that North Coast Repertory Theater has extended its lease for five years.
- The busy Parks and Recreation department will be adding a staff member soon.



Photo by Mark Mennie

**June 16, 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. at the Solana Beach Library**

**Show Me the Money**



The final, free session in the Friends of the Library's Civic Series focuses on some basic concepts of public finance, including deregulation, privatization, and the relationship between local, state and federal funding. Speakers include Celia Brewer, former public attorney. All are invited.



**Craft Workshops continue in June ...**

Join the Crafts Group to make treasures for our 2026 Holiday Boutique. All are welcomed!

**When: Thursday, June 28, 1 to 3 p.m.**

**Where: La Colonia Community Center, 715 Valley Ave., Solana Beach**

**June 4 Scholarship and Board Installation Dinner at Tony's!**

**\$30/plate, including tax, tip and iced tea or soda. Other beverages sold separately. [Click here to RSVP online.](#) OR complete this form, bring it and your payment with you to Tony's.**

**Hold my seat! Thursday, June 4 from 5 to 7 p.m.**

**Tony's Jacal Restaurant, 621 Valley Ave.**

**\$30 for two items from the "A Su Gusto" menu (includes rice, beans, iced tea or soda, and tax)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number in my party:** \_\_\_\_\_ **x \$30 =** \_\_\_\_\_

**Make your check payable to SBC&HS. Please write "Dinner" in the memo line.**

## Somos TIAS Honored as a California Non-Profit Organization of the Year



Lisa Montes, Amy Bryan, Sen. Catherine Blakespear

California State Senator Catherine S. Blakespear, D-Encinitas, selected Solana Beach-based Somos TIAS as the 2026 California Nonprofit of the Year for Senate District 38.

[Somos TIAS](#) is a volunteer organization of concerned community members who provide support, including legal advocacy, essential supplies and groceries, to families facing immigration enforcement. TIAS stands for Take Inspired Action Siempre (*Always*, in Spanish).

“Somos TIAS provides help and hope for immigrant families who need it the most,” Sen. Blakespear announced in a press release. “This rapidly growing grassroots organization is made up of neighbors helping neighbors in true community spirit across North San Diego County.”

The group was co-founded by Amy Bryan and Lisa Montes, who are often referred to as the “Aunties” (*Tías* in Spanish), and now has four chapters in San Diego County. Somos TIAS has brought together volunteers from all backgrounds to focus on keeping neighborhoods safe when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are active in them. They monitor the courts and support detainees and their families in many ways, including getting passports for children, finding immigration attorneys, writing letters to detainees and making diapers, medications and other supplies available when and where they are needed.

“Our mission is simple, to build stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities by providing those in need with what they need, when they need it,” Amy said. She and fellow founder Lisa Montes, our former Heritage Museum curator, were honored at an awards luncheon at the state Capitol in Sacramento on May 20. This is the 11th year of the California Nonprofit of the Year initiative, a statewide effort to highlight nonprofit organizations and the valuable work they do.

[Click here to view a televised interview with Lisa and Amy.](#)

“We are grateful for the work of Somos TIAS and want to extend our congratulations for this well-deserved recognition,” said Geoff Green, CEO of the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits). Nonprofits play important community roles by being problem-solvers, innovators, helpers and advocates, but they are also a major economic force. According to “Causes Count 3.0,” a new report by CalNonprofits, the nonprofit sector is now the third largest employment segment in the state, with approximately 1.5 million employees. Collectively, the state’s 110,000 nonprofit organizations generate more than \$430 billion in revenue each year.

The Nonprofit of the Year program is sponsored by [CalNonprofits](#) in partnership with the California state Senate and Assembly select committees on the nonprofit sector. Sen. Blakespear represents Senate District 38, which covers northern San Diego County and southern Orange County.

# Skip the Trash Bin - Turn in Spent Batteries at City Hall

Improperly-disposed batteries are increasingly the bane of our waste disposal partner, EDCO.

"More and more dangerous incidents are being reported involving explosions or fires caused by improperly disposed cell phones or Lithium Ion batteries," EDCO reports in its recent *Environmental Times* newsletter.

Batteries should NEVER be placed in trash, recycling or organics trash bins. Instead, both regular (acid) and rechargeable Lithium Ion batteries can be safely dropped at the battery recycling bin located inside Solana Beach City Hall. The bin is available during regular City Hall hours of operation, Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and every-other Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Residents may also drop off batteries and other household hazardous waste (HHW) at:

- EDCO's Vista facility, 1145 East Taylor Street at Laguna Lane
- EDCO's Poway facility in the South Poway Business Park at 12325 Crosthwaite Circle at Stowe Drive.

Or, you can schedule a HHW pickup by calling (858) 481-7233. The service is free to homebound or senior residents (age 65 and over); there is a \$10.00 co-payment for others.

Click [here](#) for more information on the proper disposal for other electronic & HHW items.

## Small Wonders -- See 'The Little Things that Run the World'

In lieu of a June meeting, the SeaWeeders invite you to a special screening of 'The Little Things that Run the World.' The garden club has partnered with Solana Beach Eco-Rotary to host a showing of the film.

**When: Saturday, August 1, 2 to 5 p.m.**  
**Where: Schulman Auditorium, Dove Library, 1775 Dove Lane, Carlsbad**  
**Cost: \$10 adults, \$5 children 14 and younger**

The documentary introduces a diverse group of scientists, nature lovers, gardeners, farmers, and bug enthusiasts who explore the importance of flying insects. This most numerous group of animals on the planet -- three-quarters of all species -- have been called the "glue of life" -- they hold ecosystems together.

Insects were the first animals to evolve flight nearly 440 million years ago, and the insect kingdom in some form survived all five of the known mass extinctions since then. But, there is evidence that the pace of decline among insects in parts of the world today is approaching the levels of previous catastrophes. The film explores what this means for the rest of life on Earth, and what can be done to reverse the trend.

If you would like to carpool to this event, please email [sbseaweeders@gmail.com](mailto:sbseaweeders@gmail.com).

**Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society**  
**a 501(c)(3) organization**

**2025-26 Executive Board**

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