

THE CLASS OF 2023 IS SUITED FOR SUCCESS!



The Next Level Scholars Class of 2023 came together at Schoolcraft College to celebrate at Suited for Success. Christa Funk, Executive Director of DRDFS, stated, "This event is an opportunity for students to announce their post-secondary plans to their family and friends. They are sharing their commitment of where they will attend school in the fall."

The evening began with a panel of Next Level Scholars alumni who shared their post-secondary journeys. Students listened to their stories and then asked questions regarding their post-secondary experiences.

After the panel, students joined their family and friends for refreshments and pictures before their announcement ceremony.

The program began with three student speakers who shared their thoughts and reflections on their time in school and with DRDFS. Advisers were then recognized and thanked for their efforts and support.

When the time finally came for their announcements, each senior took the spotlight and revealed their plans with signs, college shirts, noise makers and even a back flip!

It was a momentous evening celebrating hard work and commitment. We are so proud of the Class of 2023 and cannot wait to see what they do next!



Scan the QR Code to
watch the highlights
of Suited for Success

"The Class of 2023 has received nothing but support from Dollars for Scholars over the past three years, including assistance with the SAT, FAFSA workshops, information about college, hosting a college application day, and much more."

**STUDENT SPEAKER AMANDA A.,
STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2023**

"Nobody can tell you that you should be waiting for your time... now, more than ever is our chance! No group has ever been more prepared to change the world. To the Class of 2023, we are ready, we are prepared, and we are confident."

**STUDENT SPEAKER LILYANA R.,
MELVINDALE HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2023**

"So get ready to zip up your gown and put on the cap that resembles your crown. Let us walk across the stage and begin a new chapter by turning the page on this high school story of the Class of 2023."

**STUDENT SPEAKER FATOU D.,
HENRY FORD II HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2023**

NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS - CLASS OF 2023 - BY THE NUMBERS

100% OF STUDENTS HAVE
BEEN ACCEPTED TO POST-
SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS



85% OF
STUDENTS
WILL BE THE
FIRST IN THEIR
FAMILY TO
GRADUATE
FROM A POST-
SECONDARY
INSTITUTION



STUDENTS WILL ATTEND
OVER **30** DIFFERENT POST-
SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS



\$630,000 WAS AWARDED
TO 99 STUDENTS IN 2023

\$800,000
\$600,000
\$400,000
\$200,000



TEN DRDFS STUDENTS AWARDED A TRAILBLAZER SCHOLARSHIP



Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars (DRDFS), in partnership with Scholarship America, awarded Trailblazer Scholarships to ten deserving DRDFS college students. The scholarship is a \$4,000 per year award renewable for four years or until a Bachelor's Degree is completed, whichever comes first.

In order to be eligible, students had to be enrolled in an accredited two or four-year college or university within the United States, have completed their first year of academic instruction, self-identify as Black, Latino, Indigenous, and/or of a historically marginalized community and demonstrate financial need.

"We are really excited for this opportunity to partner with Scholarship America to lessen the financial barriers of college for our students and support them in persisting through post-secondary education," said Christa Funk, Executive Director of DRDFS. "Students, especially first-generation college students, often need more than just financial support throughout their college journey. This pilot program allows for amplified scholarships while also layering on additional holistic support to ensure students reach their educational goals."

This award is part of Scholarship America's goal to grant a majority of their scholarships to high-need, historically marginalized students so they can realize the benefits of a high-quality college degree or credential. It also serves as an example of new ways to bring private-sector scholarship dollars and community-based student services together, in order to help students with financial needs succeed in college.

"Combining Scholarship America's national reach with the intimate local knowledge of partners like DRDFS is a game-changer," says Scholarship America CEO Mike Nylund. "Not only are we providing 360-degree support to students, we're also learning how we can evolve the scholarship industry and help our funders and partners deliver the biggest and most equitable impact possible."

ELIJAH DANIEL, DRDFS ALUMNI: ENERGY AND OPPORTUNITY



College wasn't on Elijah Daniel's personal radar screen in 2018. As a high school sophomore, he wasn't thinking too far ahead about the next step of his educational path — at least not until a school guidance counselor came and spoke to his class about DRDFS.

He certainly did not expect not only his collegiate future, but the entire trajectory of his life, to change, but that is exactly what happened. DRDFS helped Elijah grow as an individual and as a student, helping him develop and refine the tools that would enable him to make the most of his natural charisma to become a skilled communicator and a college-ready student.

It's a sign of just how much DRDFS has made an impact on Elijah that he has trouble deciding on his favorite part of the program. Two things he circles back to, however, are the sophisticated SAT preparation assistance and etiquette and communications training: both elements of the DRDFS program that he sees as vital and practical skills for an aspiring college student.

"Knowing how to speak to and engage with not just your peers, but with professionals and people in college and beyond is so important. There are programs to help you with that in college, but DRDFS gave me an invaluable head start."

Clarity is a consistent theme for Elijah, who was able to tell almost immediately on a DRDFS campus visit of Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing that it was where he wanted to go to college.

"MSU was our first college tour. I remember just feeling so happy. My friends would joke with me about it and my response was always the same: I'm going here. I made a vow to myself that the next time I came back to MSU it would be for an orientation as a new student. And then I went to work."

Sure enough, Elijah applied for early admission and was accepted to MSU. He not only applied early, he enrolled early, with a scholarship that allowed him to start taking summer classes—and he remains ahead of schedule, slated to graduate from MSU a semester early.



When he had a chance to apply to be a DRDFS intern, Elijah was similarly decisive in seizing the opportunity. The internship gave Elijah the chance to expand and refine his communication skills, to work in a professional environment and to connect with people of different backgrounds and perspectives. It gave him new tools and new opportunities to challenge himself and broaden his personal and professional toolkit in ways that continue to open doors for him.

Now, he wants to do the same for others. Elijah says he is committed to educating other kids like him about opportunity. He encourages students to believe in themselves and to align themselves with a program—and people—that believes in them. Elijah knows firsthand how a little belief and support can have a life-altering impact.

"This program and the people around it have had such a profound influence on me. DRDFS hasn't just changed my outlook—it's changed my life."

DRDFS SUPPORTERS GATHER TO CELEBRATE



On March 8th, the 10th Annual Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars (DRDFS) Celebration Luncheon was held at the University of Detroit Mercy. Hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the Next Level Scholars Class of 2023 and to support DRDFS' efforts to empower and support students to achieve post-secondary success.

"Don't let anyone tell you that you cannot accomplish what you set out to do. Don't let anyone else convince you that you are not good enough, you're not skilled enough, you're not schooled enough. The point is that as hard as it is, don't let other people tell you - whether it is directly or indirectly - that you are not capable."

"Dollars for Scholars has had such a positive impact on all of the students here today as we prepare for our post-secondary journeys. Dollars for Scholars has inspired us to figure out our dreams and has prepared us to reach them by exposing us to the many opportunities and options available to us after high school."

**ALLISON S., STUDENT SPEAKER,
MELVINDALE HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2023**



Special thanks to all who attended and sponsored the Celebration Luncheon, especially our Doctorate Sponsors, Barton Malow, Huntington Bank, P.R. Ziegler, Inc. Life Insurance, Wells Fargo and the Wm. P. Young Company.



The afternoon's program was hosted by Paul W. Smith and featured many speakers who shared of DRDFS' impact and success. The highlights included Allison S., Class of 2023 Student Speaker, and the event's keynote speaker, Sandy Pierce, Senior Executive Vice President and Chairman of Huntington Bank.

As a fellow first-generation college student, Sandy shared her story and recommended keys for success to the Class of 2023.



**Scan the QR Code to
watch the Celebration
Luncheon highlights
and program videos**

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**I AM THANKFUL FOR DOLLARS FOR
SCHOLARS BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED
IN ME AND SAW MY POTENTIAL.**

- SHAMIYAH, DRDFS CLASS OF 2023

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for Scholars** by scanning
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**DOWNTOWN
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TAILGATE**

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

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