



# IMPACT REPORT

**EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS**



## A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we reflect on 2023, we are grateful to all of you who have furthered our mission to empower and support students to achieve post-secondary success. As we wrap up the first full year of our strategic plan, we have made a lot of progress! This year, we have:

- Welcomed our 16th partner high school, East English Village Preparatory Academy at Finney within the Detroit Public Schools Community District and will begin working with the Class of 2026 in the coming weeks.
- Created a plan for a pilot program to increase the number of students we serve at existing high school partners.
- Received a grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to fund a curriculum review project to ensure we understand our program's strengths, areas for continued improvement and to gain additional feedback from all of our stakeholders.
- Piloted a \$150,000 post-secondary completion scholarship funded by Scholarship America.
- Launched the Alumni Committee to provide guidance as we build additional programming for students in post-secondary education.
- Continued to see our enrollment and persistence rates outpace national averages with the support of funding from the Jamie and Denise Jacob Family Foundation.
- Presented at two National Conferences to share our best practices.
- Significantly updated our donor database and built out a new stewardship matrix as well as communication plan to fuel our efforts towards our fundraising goals.

- Been selected as the inaugural recipients of the Michigan College Access Network's Harbor Award, which focuses on organizations that have made a significant impact in the communities they serve.

As we look to 2024, we are excited to build on the momentum we've gained over the past year. For the second year of our strategic plan, we are looking forward to implementing learnings from our curriculum review and launching our major gifts initiatives. We are also excited to continue making a strong impact within the region by increasing the total number of students we serve and continuing to pilot our post-secondary programming and persistence efforts with innovative scholarship solutions.

These accomplishments and ambitious plans for 2024 wouldn't be possible without you. We are so honored to have your support and commitment to the students of Southeast Michigan. Thank you for empowering our students' success.

Warm Regards,

*William C. Young*

**William C. Young**  
Board of Directors, President

*Christa M. Funk*

**Christa M. Funk**  
Executive Director



## LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERS

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Communications & Development Director
- Lyric Bingham  
Post-Secondary Transition Coach
- Marissa D'Angelo  
Next Level Scholars Program Manager
- Christa Funk  
Executive Director
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Next Level Scholars Program Director
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Awards and Alumni Manager
- Robert Tscherniwetz  
Operations Specialist
- Sandy Valdez  
Next Level Scholars Program Coordinator
- Tania Vega  
Post-Secondary Transition Coach
- Grace Verhines  
Executive Assistant

### NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS PROGRAM ADVISERS

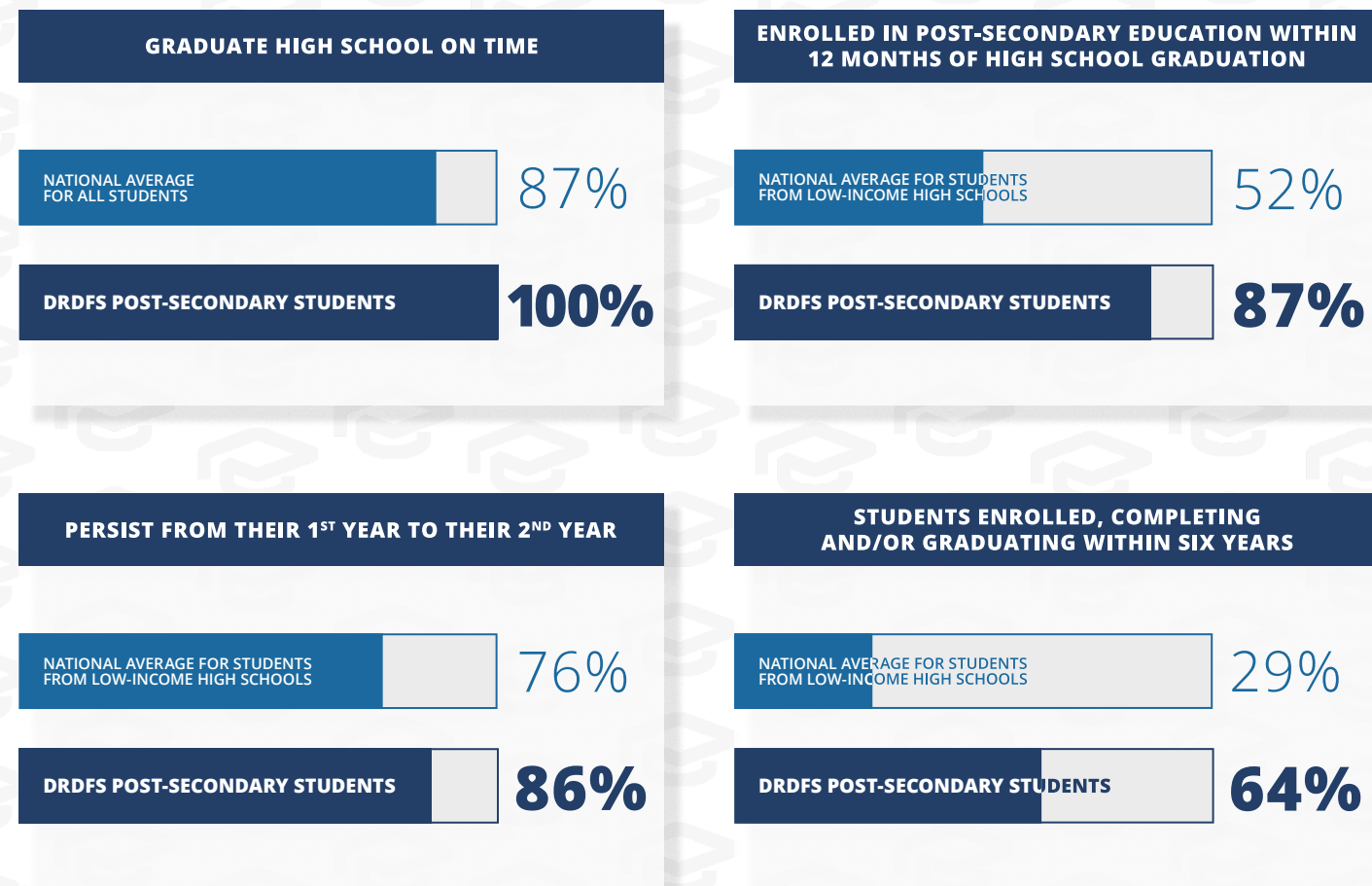
- BERKLEY HIGH SCHOOL**  
Christina Belsky  
Hillary Tye
- CENTER LINE HIGH SCHOOL**  
Dori Babcock
- CLINTONDALE HIGH SCHOOL**  
Courtney Carroll
- COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA ARTS HIGH SCHOOL**  
Mia Gwendolyn
- DETROIT CRISTO REY HIGH SCHOOL**  
Maria Rangel
- EAST ENGLISH VILLAGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY AT FINNEY**  
Kianta Bankston
- HENRY FORD II HIGH SCHOOL**  
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- IDA HIGH SCHOOL**  
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Chris Leonard
- LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL**  
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- MADISON HIGH SCHOOL**  
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Devon Tocco
- MASON HIGH SCHOOL**  
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- REDFORD UNION HIGH SCHOOL**  
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Asha Shaw
- ROMULUS HIGH SCHOOL**  
Jennifer Lock  
Melissa Carr
- STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL**  
Kelli McCloud
- YPSILANTI COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**  
Amber Berryman

# PROGRAM IMPACT

# STUDENT OVERVIEW



The Next Level Scholars Program provides the support, access and resources students need to enroll in post-secondary education, stay engaged, and earn a credential. The program positions our students for success as they continue to outpace national averages.\*

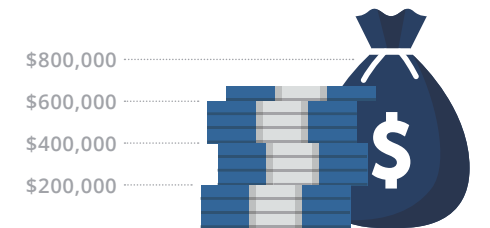


\*Data as of November 2023



**78%** OF STUDENTS WILL BE THE FIRST GENERATION IN THEIR FAMILY TO ATTEND A POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION

**\$34,000** WAS THE AVERAGE ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS



**4.5** AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE



**13** DIFFERENT LANGUAGES SPOKEN



**19%** SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AS THEIR PRIMARY LANGUAGE IN THE HOUSEHOLD



**65%** OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFY AS STUDENTS OF COLOR

WE HAVE **16 PARTNER HIGH SCHOOLS** & SERVE **OVER 400 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** ANNUALLY

## OUR HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERS ON THE MAP



- Berkley HS  
Oakland County
- Center Line HS  
Macomb County
- Clintondale HS  
Macomb County
- Communication & Media Arts HS  
Wayne County
- Detroit Cristo Rey HS  
Wayne County
- East English Village Preparatory Academy at Finney  
Wayne County
- Henry Ford II HS  
Macomb County
- Ida HS  
Monroe County
- Lincoln HS  
Washtenaw County
- Madison HS  
Oakland County
- Mason HS  
Monroe County
- Melvindale HS  
Wayne County
- Redford Union HS  
Wayne County
- Romulus HS  
Wayne County
- Stevenson HS  
Macomb County
- Ypsilanti Community HS  
Washtenaw County

# NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS PROGRAM: SOPHOMORE YEAR

## INSPIRE

The Next Level Scholars (NLS) Program begins sophomore year to provide experiences that inspire students to explore post-secondary opportunities.

In the fall of 2022, over 400 sophomores applied to the Next Level Scholars (NLS) Program. We were excited to welcome 150 students into the Next Level Scholars Class of 2025.

All of the sophomores came together at Eastern Michigan University to attend Project Runway, an all-day event that included leadership and networking training, a campus tour, financial literacy training, and a Q&A panel of NLS post-secondary students. Later in the school year, they joined the NLS juniors to experience another college campus, the University of Michigan – Dearborn.

### INSPIRING STUDENTS



**"I joined Dollars for Scholars because I wanted to see how colleges work, and help finding the college that fits me best."** — Mackenzie, Ida High School

**"I wanted to be a role model for the future generations to go to college in my family, and inspire those who feel like they won't be able to succeed."** — Andrea, Communications & Media Arts High School

### WELCOME

In January, we welcomed the Class of 2026 from our newest partner school, Redford Union High School.



### LEADERSHIP & NETWORKING



**"Jacqueline Baker was the most helpful because she explained her experiences. She showed us some tools to be comfortable, confident, and proud of ourselves."** — Hosn, Melvindale High School

**"My favorite session today was with Jacqueline. She taught me a lot of things, especially on how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable."** — Alexis, Redford Union High School

### ALUMNI PANEL

**"The Alumni Panel gave me a good insight on the actual experience of being in college."**

— Montgomery, Berkley High School



**"It was nice hearing from current college students who were in the program share tips on college. It made me feel more reassured."**

— Taylor, Berkley High School

### CAMPUS VISIT: EASTERN MICHIGAN



**"This session was the most helpful because it presented a preview of what a day could look like as an Eastern student. It was helpful to find out what things I liked about campus and will be looking for in other school tours as well."**

— Lily, Lincoln High School

### CAMPUS VISIT: U OF M DEARBORN



**"Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to visit another school. It is very helpful to see what matches with my needs and wants."**

— Lily, Lincoln High School

**"The tour was honestly the most helpful part for me because I am able to see if I can imagine myself at U of M and I think I can. It's a good school for me!"**

— Sierra, Melvindale High School



# NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS PROGRAM: JUNIOR YEAR

## PREPARE

In the second year of the NLS Program, students gain additional experiences and resources as they prepare to make their post-secondary decisions in their senior year.

Through one-on-one and on-demand tutoring with Tutor.com and SAT preparation, juniors receive academic support to strengthen their academic standing. Students say they feel more confident after tutoring sessions and often increase their scores on the SAT after participating in prep courses.

By visiting campuses and speaking to admissions officers, students start to envision the type of post-secondary experience they want to have and start to plan to make that a reality.

### OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

**"I feel that OU is a match school for me because it's a university that is the right size for me and it is a good fit for my grades."** — James, Romulus High School



**"I felt like OU would be a really good match for me since I liked the dorms, campus, and classes that are being offered. I could definitely see myself there, especially since it's close to home."**  
— Julia, Stevenson High School

### UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO



**"It is a very nice campus with a variety of groups and majors that I could see myself interested in!"**  
— Ashley, Detroit Cristo Rey High School

### U OF M DEARBORN

**"UM-Dearborn fits pretty much everything I'm looking for but I still want to explore more options."**  
— Xavier, Henry Ford II High School



**"I want to remember the small class sizes! I'd like to go to a school with small class sizes."**  
— Michael, Stevenson High School

### SAT PREP

**"I learned many different tips and tricks for both of the SAT sections that I will be able to apply when practicing and taking the SAT."**  
— Olivia, Center Line High School



**"I'm feeling way more confident about the SAT after today. The best trick I learned would probably be the process of elimination."** — Angela, Stevenson High School



### CAMPUS TOURS

By the time they complete the program, students in the Next Level Scholars Program will have visited five college campuses.



### SAT PREPARATION

5 hours of SAT Prep for over 120 juniors, including 3 hours in person and 2 hours virtually

100% of participants felt more confident about the SAT after the program  
140 SAT Prep Books distributed



### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

250 logged Tutor.com tutoring sessions  
30 minutes average session time

# NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS PROGRAM: SENIOR YEAR

Working with their Transition Coaches, seniors determine and apply to their reach, match, and safety post-secondary institutions. They learn more at Apply Day, which includes a college fair and FAFSA, financial literacy and scholarship workshops.

At the Empowered Workshop, they learn leadership, networking, and modern etiquette skills to empower them with the knowledge and confidence to navigate everything from complex college institutions and financial aid offices to job interviews and networking events.

Seniors receive first-hand experience to practice their networking skills at the Celebration Luncheon where their hard work and success is celebrated with over 650 DRDFS supporters.

All throughout the year, students work with their coaches to determine the best post-secondary fit from an academic, financial and social perspective. Once the decision is made, they celebrate with friends and family at Suited for Success, where each student announces their post-secondary decision.

Upon graduation high school, each student receives a \$4,000 DRDFS scholarship.

## EMPOWERED WORKSHOP

**"After today's workshop, I feel empowered to be a leader and be more confident with myself."**

— *Joselyn, Detroit Cristo Rey High School*



## APPLY DAY

**"The college fair was the most helpful part of the day because I was able to explore different colleges, apply on-site, and also got more information on the college I want to go to!"** — *Juhayra, Center Line High School*

**"I am thankful for Dollars for Scholars because they opened up a lot of opportunities for me that I didn't know I had, while also letting me explore some of those opportunities in more depth to see if they would be a good fit for me."**

— *Caleb, Romulus High School*



## SUCCEED

Senior year, students participate in workshops and events and also begin working with coaches who support them as they navigate the post-secondary transition process.

## CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

On March 8th, 2023, students and sponsors gathered together for the 10th Annual Celebration Luncheon.



## SUITED FOR SUCCESS

**"My favorite part of Suited for Success was walking up on the stage with my peers and announcing where I'll be going in the fall."** — *Athena, Mason High School*

**"Overall, Suited for Success was actually motivating since everyone was so supportive of each other."** — *Alyssa, Mason High School*



## COACHING

5 rounds of advising and 1:1 coaching for 100 seniors totaling over 600 hours



## APPLY DAY

40 colleges, universities, and trade schools at Apply Day

90 on-site admissions

97% completed the FAFSA



## SUCCESS

Students received over \$630,000 in scholarships from DRDFS

100% were accepted to post-secondary institutions

# NEXT LEVEL SCHOLARS PROGRAM: POST-SECONDARY

## ENROLL, ENGAGE, & EARN

DRDFS stays engaged with students after high school to give them the support and resources necessary to persist and achieve post-secondary success.

Coaches continue to work with students the first year of their post-secondary education to ensure a successful transition. Throughout the year, coaches proactively reach out to students to provide information and resources and 1:1 support to address any concerns or issues.

The Next Level Scholars Program continues to provide support throughout the rest of the students' post-secondary journey. Newsletters and social media keep students aware of resources and opportunities available to them. In addition, they are connected with opportunities to build their network, gain access to internships and make connections.

### CAMPUS VISITS



### SCHOLAR SUCCESS FUND



Our Scholar Success Fund exists to help fill gaps and make ends meet to ensure students can remain enrolled in post-secondary. It provides support for necessities like replacing a broken laptop, covering a car repair for a commuting student or even ensuring a student has food.

**"If I didn't receive emergency funds, I would have had to drop the semester. I am so thankful to have the support of DRDFS." — NLS Post-Secondary Student**

**Between July 2022 - July 2023**

- 38 grants allocated
- Total granted: nearly \$14,000
- \$365 average grant amount

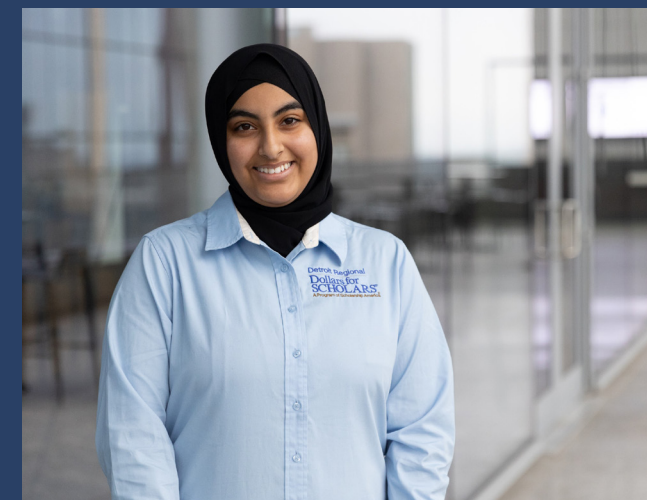
### HOLIDAY PARTY



### POP-UP CELEBRATIONS



Sabrina, pictured with Coaches Lyric and Tania, is studying to become an architect. When asked what advice she would give to high school DRDFS students, she said, "Enjoy the time that you have. Even when you feel lost, just know that it's a trial and error process."



Omiyah, pictured above, just recently changed her major to Health Services Administration. She recently founded the Yemeni Student Association on campus. While going to school, she is also working as a behavioral technician to gain experience in the medical field.



### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

229 tutoring sessions  
~30 minutes average session time

**"I really loved the tutor's feedback. It was kindly put and not too judgmental."**  
— NLS Post-Secondary Student



### COACHING

5 rounds of advising and 1:1 coaching for 114 students, totaling over 600 hours

15 campus visits by post-secondary coaches

# DRDFS ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## ALUMNI MIKE ZLONKEVICZ

DRDFS alumni Mike Zlonkevicz grew up in a room painted maize and blue in honor of the University of Michigan football team's colors. As the first in his family to go to college, not only was a post-high-school academic path not a priority, it wasn't even on his radar at the time. With DRDFS, however, that all changed.

"Just the exposure to the college experience was hugely helpful. College trips, scholarship opportunities, you name it. Those early experiences with DRDFS really opened my eyes and broadened my horizons in so many ways."

There was one memorable moment stuck with him in particular: a DRDFS luncheon where he had an opportunity to speak with Kurtis T. Wilder, a Michigan graduate who was the first African American judge elected in Washtenaw County and someone who would not only go on to serve on the Michigan First District Court of Appeals, but also the Michigan State Supreme Court.

"He talked to me about my aspirations and shared some perspective from his own career. He encouraged me to follow my heart: to do what I love and let the finances fall into place."



Mike took Judge Wilder's advice to heart. His passion for psychology and for communicating and engaging with people is now part of his everyday experience. Today, he is an Account Executive at Brooksource, an IT services and staffing solutions provider for Fortune 500 companies. As a hiring professional, Mike still quotes some of the wisdom he heard at that luncheon and at other events like it.



A 2016 graduate of Ida High School in Monroe County, Michigan, Mike was a member of the first class from his high school to join the DRDFS network. His connections to the program didn't end there. He was involved as a college student, a program alum, and now as a working professional where he is an enthusiastic advocate for the DRDFS mission. Sitting in a seat where he focuses on hiring and talks to people early in their careers who are coming from a range of different backgrounds, he is in an ideal position to pass that passion and perspective on to others.

"DRDFS means a lot to me. Not just because of what the program has done for me personally, but for the ways in which I see it opening up new opportunities for so many smart, hard-working, and talented young people who need and deserve a hand."

Mike sees how the young people that DRDFS supports are part of an untapped and underutilized pipeline of talent that will help drive the future of Detroit. As someone who loves the city he calls home, keeping talented young professionals in Detroit is a worthwhile and valuable mission to Mike.

"I'm very much aware of the real-life impact of DRDFS. I've lived it! So I know that this is an organization that is helping those who deserve the help and who haven't traditionally had access to the resources they need for one reason or another—whether systematically, socially, or financially."

In his line of work, Mike sees how pernicious and pervasive those cycles can be. Which is why DRDFS's proven ability to break that cycle is so exciting to him and



why he loves not just being a part of that story, but also helping to perpetuate that mission in his own work.

"People that have unconventional journeys are just as valuable—and I want to make sure that they are just as valued. DRDFS is focused on making sure they have the resources to achieve their potential."

Mike feels that he is in the position to help make a difference today because of DRDFS. The impact and influence that DRDFS has had on him makes it possible for him to pass that passion and perspective on to others.

"I want to do as much as I can for DRDFS because of how much they are doing for people in communities across Southeast Michigan. I'm just one person, of course, but if I can help break the cycle, pay it forward, and help others in the process, that's something I feel really good about."



# THE SPARK AWARD

# OUR SUPPORTERS

## 2023 SPARK AWARD RECIPIENT: HAROLD DUBROWSKY



"I've always been active in not-for-profit organizations, serving on boards and in leadership positions where I could use my skills to help raise money and organize events. When Bill reached out to ask if I was interested in serving on the board and helping DRDFS evolve from a grassroots model to an executive-led, board-driven organization, I saw an opportunity to help."

And help he did. Working alongside the dedicated DRDFS staff and board members, Harold has had significant influence in helping reshape a group of enthusiastic volunteers into an efficient, committee-led model that drives the growth of an impactful charitable organization.

"I've had a front row seat to see this organization evolve from a relatively small startup to an influential regional non-profit that serves 15 high schools," says Harold. "We are well on our way to reaching our target of 25 schools."

For Harold, it's rewarding to help students dream big, envision, and articulate what they want, and help them map out a plan academically and financially to achieve it. But getting the chance to see them go out and do it is the most rewarding part of all—and it continues to inspire him every day.

For this year's Spark Award recipient, being a part of it is reward enough. "It's so gratifying because this organization means so much to me. I'm hardly the only deserving recipient; there are so many influential and selfless and hard-working people that have made this organization what it is today. I've never been involved with an organization where I felt the kind of passion, joy, and commitment that I see regularly from everyone who is a part of DRDFS. And I'm so proud to count myself among them."

### PAST SPARK AWARD RECIPIENTS

- 2019** – Florence Gasdick
- 2020** – David Provost & Ambassador Ron Weiser
- 2021** – Paul W. Smith
- 2022** – Bill & Vivienne Young

For Harold Dubrowsky, longtime Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars (DRDFS) supporter and board member, finding out that he was the 2023 recipient of the organization's Spark Award came as quite a surprise. The award is given annually to an individual who embodies the DRDFS founding principle of igniting a spark in a student's interest in education into a passion for their future.

To anyone familiar with Harold's work with DRDFS, news that he was the 2023 Spark Award honoree comes as no surprise at all. Harold has been an active supporter of DRDFS for more than a decade and has played an integral role in DRDFS' evolution into a recognized, respected, and influential regional organization. He's someone that DRDFS Executive Advisory Board member Michael Plotzke describes as a "smart, dedicated, and passionate advocate and a steadfast supporter of scholars in our community."

A native Detroit, Harold was a CPA when he first met DRDFS Board President Bill Young in 1998. The more he learned about the organization from Bill, the more he wanted to get involved.

Ronald Acho  
Adlai E. Stevenson High School  
Nicole Alexander  
ALLStar Chauffeured Service  
Ally Bank  
Americhem  
AmeriNet  
Anonymous Donors  
Anserteam Workforce Solutions  
Apparatus Solutions Inc.  
Jamie Applegate  
Steve Applegate  
Angela & John Aufdemberge  
Autotec Engineering  
B & G Products  
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BDO  
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Berkley Community Schools  
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Kathy Berryman  
BGR Packaging  
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Lorrena Black  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan  
Blue Point Capital Partners  
Bodman PLC  
Bostik Adhesives  
Trea Bowers

Janice Boyd  
Kristina Bradley  
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Paul Chosid  
Citizens Bank  
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Cognitus  
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Craft Barresi Consultants

Crain Communications  
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Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho P.L.C.  
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Jen Darrouzet  
David Daugherty  
Maggie Davidson  
Davis Standard  
Kelley Demiryman  
Michael Depoli  
Evan DePotter  
Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Detroit Cristo Rey High School  
Dickinson Wright  
James Dlugos  
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Eagles for Children  
EAM - Mosca Corp.  
Kim Eberhardt  
Edw. C. Levy Company  
Cindy Eggleton  
Ernst & Young  
Faygo  
Ryan Fewins-Bliss  
Fifth Third Bank  
Lynette Findley  
Bruce Finkbeiner  
Fish & Richardson

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 FM Global  
 Focus Sales & Marketing, Inc.  
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 Christa & Zach Funk  
 Alison Gass  
 Russ Gentner  
 George Johnson and Company  
 Ryan Giacolone  
 Mary Gollan  
 Leo & Dianne Gonzalez  
 Gonzalez Enterprises  
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 Rick Greene  
 David Hale  
 Richard Hale  
 Kimberly Hanson  
 Amanda Harbison  
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 Hollingsworth Logistics  
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 Erick Hosner  
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 Husky Injection Molding Systems  
 Ida High School  
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 INEOS Olefins Polymers USA  
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 Logistics, Inc.  
 International Paper  
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 Family Foundation  
 Robin Jordan  
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 J.P. Morgan Chase Private Bank  
 Jeffrey Judge  
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 Sam Kanj  
 Alain Karaoglan  
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 Nick Kaufman  
 Kaufman Engineering Systems  
 Kem Krest  
 Eric Kerkmaz  
 Key Bank  
 Klint Kesto  
 Michael Houry  
 William & Stephanie Kingsley  
 Barbara Kiseda  
 Matt Knezek  
 Derrick & Kate Kuzak  
 The Kuzak Family Foundation  
 Sheryl Laidlaw  
 Joe Lalik  
 Jonathan Lau  
 Lau and Lau Associates  
 Kevin Layden  
 Tina Lee  
 Jametta Lilly  
 Lincoln Consolidated Schools  
 Lincoln High School  
 Raymond Lopez  
 Matthew Loussia  
 Mark Lovelace  
 Mitchell Lowery

Scott & Sheere Lowery  
 Christopher Lynch  
 Tom MacFarlane  
 Madison District Public Schools  
 Madison High School  
 Ben & Barb Maibach  
 Maibach Family Foundation  
 Michael Maney  
 Autumn Manning  
 Denise & Mitch Marecki  
 Jillian Marecki  
 Santiago Marquez  
 Greg Martin  
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 Brian Maxson  
 Barbara McBee  
 Mike McInnis  
 McKinley Associates, Inc  
 Brenda McKinney  
 Jessica McLemore  
 Mike McNamara  
 Ryan McNamee  
 McNaughton McKay Electric  
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 Ezella McPherson  
 Melvindale High School  
 Melvindale-North Allen  
 Park Schools  
 Jennifer Menke  
 Merrill Lynch  
 Belal Mheisen  
 Martha Michalak  
 Michigan College Access Network  
 Michal Mikrut  
 Vicki Mitchell  
 Pradeep & Madhu Modi  
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 Morgan Stanley  
 Jeff Mosley  
 Gene Mueller  
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