

PH Balance Scholarship

The PH Balance Scholarship was first approved by the Iowa Retired School Personnel Association (IRSPA) Board in 2021. The scholarship is intended for students who plan to continue their education after high school by pursuing a degree, diploma, or certification at a trade school, two-year college, or four-year college. To be eligible, a student must have experienced the death of a parent or legal guardian prior to graduating from high school.

The “PH” in PH Balance stands for **Parent in Heaven**. The concept for the scholarship is rooted in agriculture. From a farming background, we understand that soil must maintain the proper pH balance in order to produce a healthy and productive crop. In much the same way, a child who has lost a parent needs a balance of love, encouragement, support, and financial assistance to pursue their goals after high school. The purpose of the PH Balance Scholarship is to help restore some of that balance as these young people move forward into their futures.

As educators and individuals who have worked in schools, we understand the importance of a strong family and the role that family support plays in helping children establish goals and build successful futures. When the unimaginable happens and a child loses a parent or legal guardian, that sense of balance can be profoundly disrupted. Through this scholarship, we want these students to know that they are not forgotten after the funeral or memorial service. We want them to know that we continue to see their potential, believe in their abilities, and stand behind them as they move forward in life.

In times of tragedy, many of these young people find comfort and support from someone within their school community. That person may be a bus driver, school nurse, custodian, office professional, teacher, or another caring adult. A teacher or staff member may also be the person who recognizes a student's interests, encourages their dreams, and helps them begin to develop plans and goals for the future.

In their scholarship essays, students frequently express how important it is to be “**seen**” for who they are and for the potential they possess. That is one of the most meaningful goals of the PH Balance Scholarship. We hope to provide that recognition not only to our scholarship recipients, but to every student who takes the time to apply.

Each PH Balance Scholarship provides **\$1,000** in financial assistance that applies to all majors and fields of studies. The scholarship is funded through voluntary contributions from IRSPA members, local IRSPA units, memorials, individual donations, and business partners. Donations and memorial gifts are accepted throughout the year.

IRSPA also raises funds through a variety of activities. These include a “pass the basket” collection at district meetings in May, as well as cash donations and a silent auction at the IRSPA state meeting in October. We have also been fortunate to receive generous support from business partners. In recognition of their contributions, business partners are acknowledged on

the IRSPA website and in each of our four newsletters published annually. Our goal is to establish at least one business partner in each IRSPA district each year.

The state of Iowa is divided into six IRSPA districts, and scholarships are awarded by district rather than on a statewide basis. Our first scholarship recipient was selected in 2022 from Colfax-Mingo High School in District Five. In 2023, the recipient was from Turkey Valley High School in District Three, followed by a recipient from Perry High School in District Four in 2024.

By 2025, we were able to expand the program and offer scholarships in Districts One, Two, and Six, with recipients from Webster City, Graettinger, and Sioux City.

Most recently, we were proud to award PH Balance Scholarships in all six IRSPA districts. Recipients represented the following school districts:

- **District 1:** Odebolt
- **District 2:** Wapsi Valley
- **District 3:** Don Bosco
- **District 4:** Logan-Magnolia
- **District 5:** Grinnell
- **District 6:** Louisa-Muscatine

The growth of the PH Balance Scholarship reflects the generosity of IRSPA members, local units, and community partners who believe in supporting young people during one of the most difficult experiences of their lives. More than financial assistance, the scholarship is a message to these students: **We remember you. We see your potential. We believe in your future. And we are here to support you as you move forward.**

Our not for profit EIN# is 42-6065400.

