

# Herald-Tribune

## Embracing Our Differences awards scholarships to students

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Embracing Our Differences recently awarded scholarships to three graduating high school seniors and renewed funding for eight college students who previously received the honor.

The students are part of EOD's Coexistence Club initiative, which supports student-led groups dedicated to fostering inclusion, respect, kindness and meaningful dialogue in area schools and communities. The annual \$1,000 renewable scholarships are made possible through private donors, including the Jody Beresford and Robert Mayer Scholarship Fund.

This year's new scholarship recipients are:



• **Madelyn Francolini (Venice High School)** will attend the University of Pittsburgh, where she plans to major in applied developmental psychology. A member of the Coexistence Club for over two years, Francolini says one of her most meaningful experiences was participating in Bucket Fillers Reading Day at Venice Elementary School. "The experience taught me that I truly want to be a bucket filler by courageously leading others to choose kindness, even when it forces me to step out of my comfort zone to meet someone new," she says.



• **Taylor Humphrey (Booker High School)** will attend Florida International University and major in nursing. Humphrey participated in Booker High School's Coexistence Club for four years and says the experience helped shape the way she connects with others. "The Coexistence Club was a safe space where I learned to communicate and connect with all kinds of people from different backgrounds," she says. "It gave me the confidence to speak up and turn kindness into real action."



• **Abigail Lauber (Riverview High School)** will attend the University of South Florida, majoring in psychology. A four-year Coexistence Club participant, Lauber says the organization deeply shaped her high school experience. “I have seen the difference that one act of compassion and kindness can make in how someone feels about themselves,” she says.

These new recipients join the eight returning scholarship recipients, who are now attending colleges across Florida and beyond, including Bryson Day, Kennedy Flatch, Melissa Graham, Max Hunter, Melora Saing, Kasey-Huong Nguyen, Lucia Warren, and Mateo Rizzo.

“These students embody the values at the heart of Embracing Our Differences,” says Patrick Arthur Jackson, EOD’s vice president of learning and engagement. “What’s especially inspiring is seeing how those lessons continue to shape them long after high school, influencing how they lead, collaborate, and engage with the world around them.”

Coexistence Clubs are currently active at area schools, including Booker High School, North Port High School, Venice High School, Sarasota High School, Riverview High School, Imagine North Port, Suncoast Polytech High School and Woodland Middle School. For more information, visit [EmbracingOurDifferences.org](http://EmbracingOurDifferences.org).