

## **Georgie Smigel Group Real Estate Scholarship**

Cranberry Township is not just where I live. It is where I became who I am. I have spent my entire life here, and the older I get, the more I understand how much that has shaped me. It is easy to take a community for granted when you grow up in it. But when you start paying attention, really paying attention, you realize that the people and places around you have been building you the whole time.

I love this community because it shows up. That is the simplest way I can put it. I saw it firsthand when I volunteered and helped set up the Cranberry CUP golf tournament. Adults giving entire days of their time, not because they had to, but because they believed in what the event stood for. People from all different backgrounds coming together because they cared about the same place. That is not something every community has. Cranberry Township has it in a way that I did not fully appreciate until I was old enough to be part of it myself.

Seneca Valley shaped me just as much as the township did. I played football for over ten years in this community, starting in the Seneca Valley Junior Football and Cheer Association as a kid and finishing my senior season as a first team all-conference selection and two-year team captain. That journey happened here. The coaches who pushed me, the teammates I competed alongside, the Friday nights under those lights. None of it happens without a community that invests in its young people the way Cranberry Township does. The SVJFAC program alone gave me a second family. It gave me my best friend Hayden Regal, who I lost during our high school years. Grieving him while still being part of this community reminded me how much it matters to have people around you who actually know you and care about you. Cranberry Township showed up for us in that loss the way it shows up for everything.

There are practical benefits to living here too. It is a safe place. It has good schools and real opportunities for young people who are willing to work for them. I have worked at Capriotti's sub shop for over a year and a half, and the people who walk through that door are the same kind of people I grew up around. Hardworking. Neighborly. Proud of where they live. That culture does not happen by accident. It is built over time by the people who choose to stay and invest in a place.

I am leaving Cranberry Township for college, but I am not leaving it behind. The plan has always been to build something in finance and eventually come back and contribute the way so many people contributed to me. This community gave me a foundation that most people spend their whole lives looking for. I already have it. And I do not plan to waste it.