

## George Smigel Scholarship

I have grown up in the community formed by Harmony and Zelienople Pennsylvania. My family has deep roots here, and I am so blessed to have grown up in my town filled with kind faces and supportive people.

One thing I love about my community is constantly seeing people my parents, my grandparents, or I know. I can be walking around the town during the summertime and see so many familiar faces. These are the people who attend churches in the town, greet each other at small businesses, and attend community events together. There is such a strong sense of belonging in this area. This community makes people feel safe and welcome as well as nostalgic for the deep history that exists around here.

A special thing about my community is the number of small businesses that are successfully running in my community. These businesses all celebrate and support each other. When you enter each building, the owners greet customers with familiarity and a smile. Additionally, Harmony shows support to its local bands and businesses by putting on concerts in Harmony Square each Thursday over the summer. Bands from the area come to perform their music while people sit in camping chairs to watch. From shopping in the small businesses all along Main Street, to celebrating local bands, the people in my community always support each other.

In my community, we celebrate holidays and events in memorable ways that keep bringing back families through each new generation. Harmony Square is filled with people every year at six o'clock, waiting to ring in the new year. Harmony's history of being a German town

leads to us having our own ball drop to celebrate the German new year. This is such a special celebration. It creates a lasting community who celebrates the past year and hopes and dreams for the next. Later in the year, the Fourth of July is a huge celebration in Zelenople and Harmony. The parade is filled with people from small businesses, local bands, and emergency vehicles from around the area. The streets of Zelenople are flooded with people from all walks of life. Grandparents who attended with their own kids years ago now hold their grandchildren and wave at fire trucks passing by. As the day goes on, these towns are filled with families and friends gathering together and celebrating at each other's houses. The night is ended by shooting off fireworks from the local park. These celebrations are part of the reason I love my community. Everyone supports and celebrates with each other.

My community has given me a place of belonging. It makes me feel proud to be a part of such a rich and supportive network. It has taught me the value of traditions being celebrated and the importance of people showing up and caring for each other. I will be forever grateful to childhood filled with memories and traditions that my small town contributed to.