

# Excellence in Education scholarship recipients named



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
**Sophia Nielsen**



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
**Luke Blackhurst**



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
**Svetlana Balejev**



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
**Audrey Charman**



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
**Trinity Keen**

*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation (LBEEF) has funded five \$1,000 scholarships to 2026 Long Beach High School (LBHS) graduates. To be eligible for consideration, applicants had to possess strong leadership skills, academic achievement, strong work ethic and community involvement.

The LBEEF scholarship honoring Fred Walker was awarded to Sophia Nielson; the LBEEF Connie Tucker Memorial scholarship recipient was Luke Blackhurst; and Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation scholarships were given to Svetlana Balejev, Audrey Charman and Trinity Keen.

Nielson plans to continue her education at the University of Southern Mississippi and study speech and hearing sciences. While at LBHS, Nielson was active in Beta Club, LBHS Marching and Symphonic Band, Bearcat Buddies and the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Team. She was ranked near the top of her graduating class and has been recognized at the Superintendent’s Awards all four years of high school. She has also volunteered in her community with Camp Awesome, Camp Able and with Riding Buddies, all serving individuals with special needs. She earned membership into Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society as a dual credit student at MGCCC. Nielson is an active member of Lifeteen at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church and is a member of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi Spirit Movers.

Blackhurst plans to attend Southern Virginia University in the fall and study business, marketing and finance. During high school, he was involved in

National Honor Society, Student Council, EPIC (recycling club), and was recognized all four years at the Superintendent’s Awards. Blackhurst was also involved in athletics as member of the track, cross country and soccer teams. He was on the soccer team when they won two state championships,

and he served as Captain during his senior year. Blackhurst is also a certified soccer referee and enjoys playing piano. He was honored with multiple recognitions in the LBHS Who’s Who and has served his community as a volunteer with Camp Able, Buddy Ball and Food Drop.

Svetlana Balejev plans to attend the University of Mississippi and pursue a political science degree. While at LBHS, she was very active in band, serving as Band Council President and Head Drum Major. She was President of LBHS

Young Democrats, and was also elected Homecoming Queen, Miss LBHS and Beauty in the LBHS Who’s Who her senior year.

Audrey Charman plans to attend the University of South Alabama and study business. She was very involved in high school through various clubs and had the honor of being elected Wittiest Girl, Friendliest Girl and Most Beautiful in the LBHS Who’s Who her senior year.

Trinity Keen plans to attend Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College’s Perkinston Campus and study business/marketing, with the goal of eventually attending aesthetician school. Keen worked during high school and completed a six-week business internship. She has taken the opportunity to volunteer in numerous community service organizations including the VFW, Salvation Army, Orange Grove Little Free Pantry, Beach Clean Up and Toys for Tots.

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation was formed to support the LBSD by supplementing programs for staff and students. During the 2025-26 school year, the foundation has also funded teacher grants and sponsored several staff recognition programs. The group’s efforts are funded through donations and fundraising. For more information regarding the foundation, visit their website at [www.lbexcellence.org](http://www.lbexcellence.org). Tax-deductible donations may be made at <https://bit.ly/LB-EEF>.

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**Gulf Shores, AL June 15-27, 2026**  
OUPV/6 Pack License  
Monday-Friday 6-10 PM  
Saturday-Sunday 8:30-5:30 PM  
Monday-Friday 6-10 PM  
Saturday 8:30 AM Exam

**Killen, AL July 13-24, 2026**  
OUPV/6 Pack License  
Monday-Friday 8:30-5:30 PM  
Saturday-Sunday (No Class)  
Monday-Thursday 8:30-5:30 PM  
Friday 08:30 AM Exam

**Killen, AL Jul 25, 2026**  
STCW CPR/First Aid Certifications - Saturday 8:30 AM Start Time

**Gulf Shores, AL Aug 17-29, 2026**  
OUPV/6 Pack License  
Monday-Friday 6-10 PM  
Saturday-Sunday 8:30-5:30 PM  
Monday-Friday 6-10 PM  
Saturday 8:30 AM Exam

**Gulf Shores, AL Aug 30, 2026**  
STCW CPR/First Aid Certifications - Sunday 8:30 AM Start Time

