

The Hannah L. Taylor Memorial Award: A Legacy Reborn

In the early 1900s, a bright young woman named Hannah Litzelman was named Valedictorian of the Dushore High School Class of 1903. Born in 1885, Hannah's dreams of attending college did not materialize due to family circumstances. Though she was never able to pursue higher education herself, she became a certified teacher after attending a summer program and went on to teach school in Sullivan County until she married William Taylor in 1906. Their 10 children were raised to have a deep respect for education, service, and career.

Hannah's belief in the power of learning endured through hardship. When her husband passed away in 1937 during the Great Depression, four of their children had yet to graduate high school. Despite the challenges she remained steadfast in her encouragement to pursue careers. She urged her children and other local students to chase education with determination and grit. To Hannah, education was not only a path forward—it was a tribute to resilience.

When Hannah passed away in 1973 at the age of 88, her son Bob created an open-ended \$1,000 trust in her name. In a letter to his siblings, he laid out plans for a scholarship to honor their mother. He carefully outlined the judging criteria, essay guidelines, and his vision for how the award would carry forward Hannah's legacy. For years the trust funded a modest \$50 scholarship to a graduating Senior of the Sullivan County High School.

In 2019 Hannah's great-grandson, Pete Beckary of Lancaster County, PA, and his family uncovered the original scholarship materials. Moved by the strength of Hannah's story and Bob's detailed plans, the Sullivan County School District informed the family that the original \$1,000 had diminished to \$1.96. The school guidance office and teachers had quietly funded it for years! With the help of Hannah's descendants, the award was financially revived. In 2024 the fund was reimagined as a permanent endowment with the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers.

The revival of the Hannah L. Taylor Memorial Award is more than just a tribute to a remarkable woman. It is a family honoring the past while building a brighter future for generations of students in Sullivan County. Through the Foundation the fund is now professionally managed and invested. Hannah's values will continue to inspire and support young scholars for decades to come.

By choosing to partner with the Community Foundation, the Taylor family ensured that Hannah's legacy would not simply survive but would grow. The Foundation plays a vital role by safeguarding the endowment, handling all administrative needs, and working directly with the school to ensure the award reaches students who reflect Hannah's perseverance and passion for learning.

Today Hannah's story is a living investment in the future of Sullivan County made possible by a family's devotion, a community's commitment, and the enduring power of a mother's belief in the value of education.