The NAJA Graduate Scholarship Program was established in 1962, and for most of us, it is simply a name we have heard mentioned from time to time at the national level, but really unaware of its impact in our individual communities. The NAJA Graduate Scholarship Program is the Association’s only Service project and it is funded through donations from JA Chapters and individuals and can be designated to honor someone or given in memory of a friend or loved one. Most of us rarely stop to consider how significant the NAJA Graduate Scholarship Program is. The NAJA Graduate Scholarship’s primary purpose is to present a gift to the children, not to the recipient. The children are always at the forefront of a NAJA project!

Scholarships are awarded to individuals seeking graduate degrees that plan on working directly with children who have special needs. Great importance is attached to the applicant’s purpose in life, dedication to the chosen field and scholastic record. Financial need is not the determining factor. This spring the Scholarship Committee members reviewed 45 applications; 16 applicants were selected for telephone interviews; and 10 were awarded a total of $40,000—a long way from the first $2000 grant awarded in August, 1962. In the years between 1962 and 2018, 552 scholarships have been awarded for a total of $1,308,504.

Of the ten recipients, three want to receive their Masters in Speech, Hearing & Language Pathology, two want to receive their Masters and one a Doctorate in Counseling, and another is pursuing a Doctorate in Audiology. One will receive a Masters in Dyslexia Therapy, one a Masters in Pediatric Acute & Primary Care Nurse Practitioner and one a Doctorate in Acute Care & Family Nurse Practitioner. They range in areas from Seattle, WA to Knoxville, TN with Searcy and Conway, AR; Slidell, Covington, Ponchatoula and New Orleans, LA; and Southaven and Brandon, MS in between. They will attend ten different Universities located in five states.

This year 82% of the Chapters gave to the scholarship program. 87% of those Chapters donated at a Crown level. Just think what could be accomplished to help children if we achieved 100% participation. Please remember that the program relies on all of us to help make it continue to grow. The NAJA Scholarship Committee would like to urge every Chapter to contribute to the NAJA Graduate Scholarship Program. No contribution is too small. If your Chapter has limited means, please look into your hearts, pass the hat, and send what you can. If you are fortunate to have a generous budget, please consider increasing your donation this year.

We have just this year established new donation levels as jewels in the NAJA Scholarship Crown: Jade ($350-499), Sapphire ($500-749), Ruby ($750-1249), Emerald ($1250-2499), Pearl ($2500-4999), and Diamond ($5000 and above).

If you have someone who has everything and wants nothing, consider a donation in that person’s name. Think what it will mean to them to be honored in this way. Individual or Chapter checks can be mailed to NAJA Graduate Scholarship Program; P. O. Box 1873; Greenville, MS 38702. Please help us assist graduate students who have limited means, please look into your hearts, pass the hat, and send what you can. If you are fortunate to have a generous budget, please consider increasing your donation this year.

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