

The Greater Pottstown Foundation's 2025 Shandy Hill Scholar is Emma Staniec. Emma was born in New Jersey and lived in a small town called Elmer, close to Millville, until she was the age of nine. Her father then accepted a job offer working in Upper Perkiomen and they moved here to Pottstown. The difference between those environments forms the underside of her story.

Emma's essay was one of the very few we have seen in all these years where someone has cogently focused on an aspect of the education system that's personal and yet an idea that can be expanded to benefit the whole community and is reflective of an educational attribute that too often does not get recognition.

Emma explained how forcefully and broadly insisting on student excellence is frequently frustrating to a student. Such was Emma's concern until she arrived here where she found an entirely different educational perspective – the individual student. As Emma wrote:

“Math that year began the same way it always had; filled with tears and heated frustration. However, this time, it was met with support and encouragement. Here, instead of trying to rank and compare me with my peers, my teachers would go lengths to cater to my own mind and comprehension. Quickly, I gained confidence within my own intellect and the education system.”

GPF is happy to see that here there is still focused attention on the students. Education is a great thing, so long as we recognize that students are all different and learn in different ways. For a teacher to recognize that, and to understand how to enable a student to excel, is really a great thing. In Emma's case, that concern for her development has led to Emma majoring at the University of Pittsburgh in the subject she originally feared most. Better yet: Emma's appreciation of what this community has done for her has led her to intend to return here when her education is complete, in an endeavor to give back to the community that gave her so much. We are certain that Emma's future will be bright and whatever she decides to do, her impact will be great.

Paul A. Prince, Chairman of the Greater Pottstown Foundation