



HOUSTON DENNY'S COMMUNITY  
**BUILDERS**  
SCHOLARSHIP

# Meet the 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners!





## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **DANIEL ALVARADO**

**Houston, TX  
Texas A&M University**

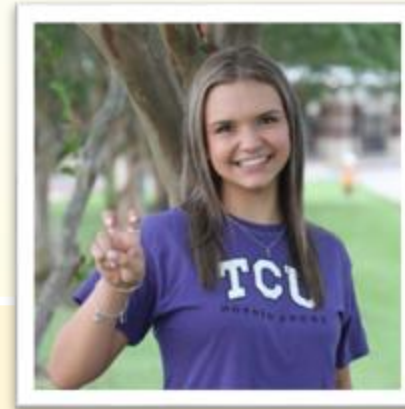
“Denny's can sponsor community-based disaster preparedness programs and in this way, increase the capacity building of individuals and communities by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be more resilient for disasters.”



### **AILEEN AVILES**

**Houston, TX  
Houston Christian University**

“Communities are more open to seeking comfort in these locations, where companies that put effort to reach out to the community are seen with being helpful and supportive. Providing an atmosphere that actively welcomes groups to feel wanted is one step forward to bringing communities together.”



### **IZABELLA BAEZ**

**La Porte, TX  
Texas Christian University**

“Creating a presentation to give to different areas of the Houston community including, but not limited to, police and EMS stations, schools, and restaurants can make an impact. [...] We can bring awareness and light to a topic that is overlooked in society, but specifically the Houston community we have the honor to call home.”



### **HINA CLINEFELTER**

**Katy, TX  
Houston Community College**

“There can be various commercials where people from all walks of life are filled with joy, laughter, and contentment when they gather together to share conversations and stories over their appetizing comfort food in a cozy and relaxed setting.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **ISABELLA DUJKA**

**East Bernard, TX  
Texas State University**

“Promote employee engagement in community service by offering volunteer days, paid time off, or incentives like gift cards. Such initiatives improve morale, strengthen company culture, and enhance public perception.”



### **SHUNICHIRO FUTAKATA- WASHINGTON**

**Houston, TX  
Lamar University**

“With this environment that they have created they can further grow their communities by connecting with local organizations to host events, like fundraisers for a local school or a local youth sport team.”



### **TEMILOLUWA ILORI**

**Houston, TX  
University of Houston**

“Denny's could make an even greater impact by offering a Family Feast Deal. This could be a meal that brings families together around the table, no matter their budget. [...] It would not just be a meal; it would be a tradition, a chance for families to make memories and feel the warmth of togetherness, just as I did growing up.”



### **KARISMA GARCIA**

**Houston, TX  
Texas Southern University**

“Through its efforts to support local causes, host events, and provide a welcoming environment for all, Denny's demonstrates its commitment to being more than a restaurant—it's a community hub that brings people together as a family.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### TRENTIS LANE

Houston, TX  
Hesston College

“Denny’s can unite people in many ways, whether by uniting a neighborhood after a disaster or providing space for a gaggle of teenagers fresh from the stage. The restaurant, though unassuming to many at first, is a great community builder.”



### JULIANA LACY

Cypress, TX  
University of Dallas

“Denny’s can unite people in many ways, whether by uniting a neighborhood after a disaster or providing space for a gaggle of teenagers fresh from the stage. The restaurant, though unassuming to many at first, is a great community builder.”



### ETHAN KIERNAN

Sugar Land, TX  
The University of Texas at Austin

“By expanding its role beyond its restaurant walls, Denny’s can help establish neighborhood micro-farms in underutilized spaces across the Houston area. These community gardens would serve as both a food source and a meeting ground—bringing together families, students, and retirees to grow fresh produce and build lasting relationships.”



### CEILI LEONARD

Montgomery, TX  
Texas A&M University

“Denny’s builds a community. It is an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to be able to come together, network, and transform society. Through food, morality, or fundraising, Denny’s remains the true definition of a community.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **TIARA LUCKEY**

**Houston, TX  
Lamar University**

“Since college costs are skyrocketing, it would be a positive if Denny’s continues to invest in the future of neighborhood youth by providing awards supporting higher education to help students reach their full potential. [...] Local youth will hopefully achieve their college degrees and also display the principle of paying it forward.”



### **EMERIE MCCANN**

**Pearland, TX  
The University of Texas at Austin**

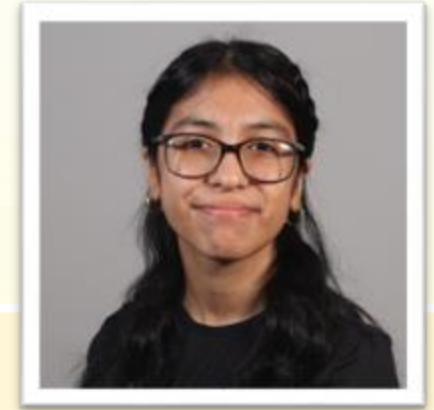
“In Third Ward, where food insecurity is a reality for many families, something as simple as rounding up a bill at Denny’s could mean breakfast for a child who would otherwise go without. When hunger isn’t holding a child back, they can dream bigger, play harder, and believe in a future that isn’t defined by an empty plate.”



### **AUSTIN MERLO**

**Houston, TX  
Texas A&M University**

“Together, Denny’s and the Astros create programs that inspire young people and promote healthy lifestyles, along with rewarding community service. [...] When fans like me see their favorite team working alongside a brand they trust and love, it strengthens the idea that community success requires teamwork.”



### **LIZBETH ROBLEDO**

**Houston, TX  
Northeastern University**

“Denny’s should offer opportunities for community members such as high schoolers, college students, and families to volunteer in events like this. One of my favorite aspects of community service is getting to meet the volunteers and although we could be at different stages in our life, we are able to come together to do something for our community.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **UKPONO UDOBONG**

**Fulshear, TX**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

“Community meal events can not only lift a weight off parents' shoulders but also serve as a memorable experience for children. [...] Beyond providing meals, these events can encourage a sense of belonging and stability for children who may otherwise associate holidays and summer months with uncertainty and stress.”



### **SAMARA ALFARO**

**Houston, TX**

**Northeastern University**

“With homeless rates growing, a plate of food can help that person in need. With this foundation started Denny's can expand to schools that have low income families or low income communities that need extra support when needed food.”



### **STEPHANIE TORRES**

**Houston, TX**

**Texas A&M University**

“Denny's may promote the idea that everyone should have a seat at the table by making sure its restaurants are inclusive of customers from different ages, socioeconomic origins, and circumstances. Houston can become a stronger, more connected city by offering reasonably priced dining options, hiring locals, and establishing outreach initiatives for those in need.”



### **AVA WINN**

**Sugar Land, TX**

**Spelman College**

“Denny's can implement three initiatives to support the youth: mentorship programs, employment shadowing opportunities, and community partnerships benefitting youth organizations, further elevating the company's commitment to young leaders.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **JOSSELYN BECERRA**

**Houston, TX  
Lonestar College**

“Due to the presence of a strong and happy community, Breakfast at Denny's has always been my family's favorite spot for spending time together. [...] In a world that can sometimes make people feel divided, Denny's will continue to make their customers feel like a big family.”



### **ERICK CAMACHO**

**Pasadena, TX  
The University of Texas at Austin**

“It is amazing how much he has been through and how big he still smiles. He should be a role model for everyone, but for now he sure is one at my local Denny's. Mr. Silvia is a great example of how Denny's is a center for people to feel connected and supported, creating a stronger unified community.”



### **JULIA GARCIA**

**Houston, TX  
Northeastern University**

“Denny's active involvement in annually offering scholarships to scholars who submit essays on the impact Denny's has brought on communities just goes to show the positive impact the franchise is willing to bring to other communities such as a group of scholars who are passionate about receiving a higher education after high school.”



### **ARI BOCANEGRA**

**Houston, TX  
New York University**

“While home-cooked meals symbolize love and togetherness in our household, nothing compares to the moments we share around a table at Denny's. [...] The food is familiar, but what truly makes it special are the stories we share, the laughter that fills the air, and the memories we create.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### NEVAEH GOMEZ

Houston, TX  
Baylor University

“Partnering with local organizations, Denny’s could offer access to affordable healthcare and insurance programs, assistance with job placement, and guidance on securing housing or transportation. This event wouldn’t just provide temporary relief but could serve as a stepping stone for long-term stability, reinforcing Denny’s commitment to uplifting the community.”



### EMILY HERRERA

Houston, TX  
Texas Tech University

“With Denny’s being open 24/7, there is always an opportunity to go there no matter the time, and be able to come together, share a meal and spend time together. With the affordable prices Denny’s offer, there is accessibility for anyone and everyone to have an opportunity to enjoy a nice meal along with their friends and family.”



### JOY OBOR

Missouri City, TX  
Texas A&M University

“With all of us sitting at the table sharing laughs and stories, it felt like home. Beyond helping families like mine, Denny’s also brings communities together when hosting fundraisers giving back to schools and charities. Whether it’s providing a warm meal or giving back through charity, Denny’s has made a difference in my life and many other people’s lives.”



### ANNA NGUYEN

Sugar Land, TX  
Texas A&M University

“Whether it’s celebrating special occasions, supporting local causes, or simply engaging in a conversation, Denny’s serves as more than a restaurant: it’s a place where relationships are built, differences are long forgotten, and the heart of a community comes to life.”





## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### JESUSEFUNMI OLUWALEKE

Richmond, TX

The University of Texas at Austin

“What inspires me most about Denny's is their realization that nourishing people extends beyond the physical. Their dedication to "feeding people's bodies, minds, and souls" reflects my nursing goals – to heal, inspire, and empower families like mine.”



### SANJUANITA PINEDA

Houston, TX

Stanford University

“Denny's has demonstrated that they are also there to support the communities. Through scholarships such as this one, and through the continuous support to local charities Denny's has been able to give back to their beloved community.”



### HANNA PINANG

Houston, TX

Vanderbilt University

“Denny's didn't just feed us; it gave us a memory we'll always treasure as a family. That experience taught me wealth is about sharing, about feeling cared for, and I believe Denny's has the power to create these moments for others.”



### ADAMARY PENALOZA

Houston, TX

The University of Texas at Austin

“Denny's is but a collection of people's memories. Its widespread presence across the country reminds us that we are all one regardless of how different or distant we may appear at times. We are all still eating, just the same!”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### LUCIANA RINCON

East Bernard, TX  
Texas A&M University

“The initiative I would like to see from Denny’s is “Meals and Mentorship.” This would provide a supportive environment for those in need as well as guidance and resources for personal growth. [...] Sharing a meal can foster conversations and relationships that can help these individual’s emotional well-being.”



### DEREK RODRIGUEZ

Houston, TX  
Texas Tech University

“I believe nothing brings families and communities closer than breaking bread and enjoying each other's company at the dining table. [...] Dennys does so much more for America than just fill empty stomachs, Denny's fills the empty gaps that we have with each other.”



### BRANDY ROMINE

Friendswood, TX  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

“Denny’s could partner with the Houston Public Library to create reading nooks within local Denny’s locations. This initiative would give school-aged children access to books and a safe space for reading, helping to encourage early literacy development.”



### IVAN TORRES

Katy, TX  
University of Houston

“Denny’s is more than just a place to eat a grand slam breakfast or drown your hashbrowns in syrup. [...] From the bright yellow “Denny’s” sign to the hot smell of pancakes, Dennys is a place where all families come to eat and celebrate the joy of spending time with each other over a special meal.”



## 2025 Houston Denny's Community Builders Scholarship Winners



### **KASSANDRA ROSALEZ**

**Katy, TX  
Texas A&M University**

“Whether it be conversing with a neighboring table, celebrating milestones with your favorite waitress or being greeted by generous managers, exchanges and conversation with others are what bring the community together. In this modern era, we all need a dependable place like Denny’s to reunite the community and bring happiness to our faces and stomachs.”



### **D'ALESSANDRO VILCHEZ**

**Houston, TX  
Vanderbilt University**

“I feel a festival that incorporates all these diverse cultures would attract a lot of people in the area. In result, all these people will have a chance to spend some time with their family, as well as meet new people and form new friendships. A cultural festival is a great way that Denny’s can bring communities together, allowing for quality family time, new friendships to form, and promote cultural exchange all in one place.”