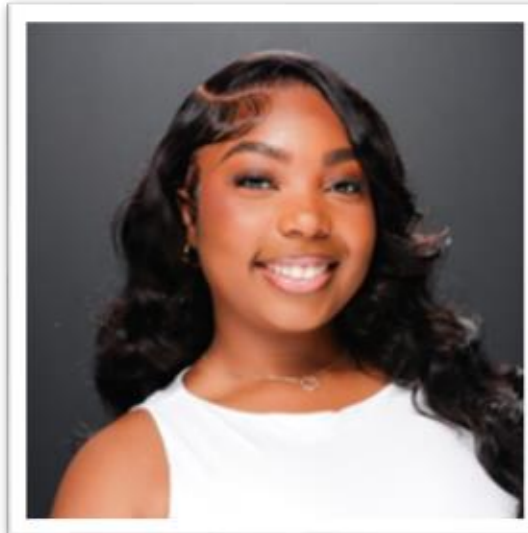
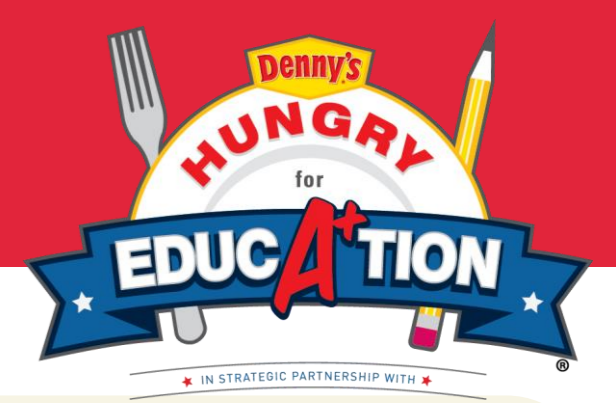


2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Cadeyn Bender

Kannapolis, NC | Undecided | USHLI

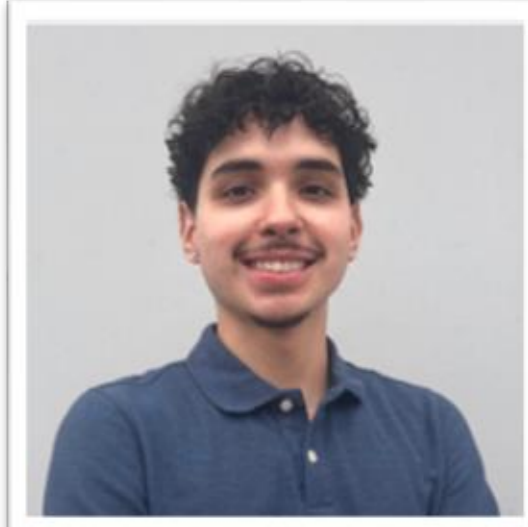
“Denny’s can play a meaningful role in bringing communities together by offering a neutral, welcoming space where people from all walks of life can connect. Food has a unique way of breaking down barriers, and Denny’s could use that power to create moments of understanding, support, and connection. Denny’s can help expand that spirit, reminding people that no matter our differences, we all deserve a seat at the table.”



Devion Howell

Chester, VA | Old Dominion University | USHLI

“It’s a welcoming space where diverse groups can gather, share stories, and build meaningful relationships. Strategic partnerships with local organizations, such as youth sports leagues, school programs, and community development groups, have further cemented Denny’s role as a social anchor.”



David Rubio

Melrose Park, IL | Dominican University | USHLI

“In Hispanic culture especially, food is not just nourishment; it is a way of preserving traditions and welcoming others in. Bringing that spirit into Denny’s would transform the diner into a place where conversations happen naturally and understanding grows. Community grows strongest when people feel valued and included, and Denny’s is perfectly positioned to make that happen, one conversation and one meal at a time.”

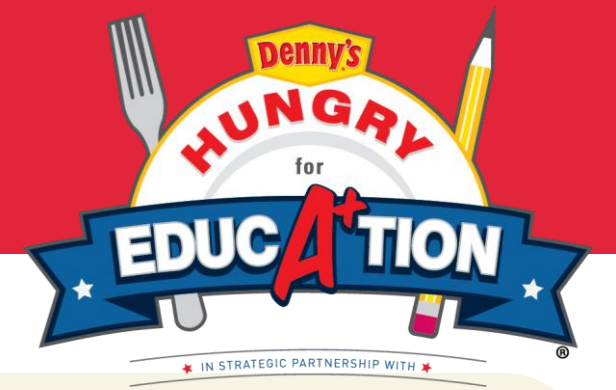


Samantha Torres

Prospect Heights, IL | University of Illinois Chicago | USHLI

“I carry my community with me into every classroom, lab, and hospital unit. My success is not just mine; it’s proof that our stories don’t have to end where they started. On the surface, it’s just a restaurant—but in reality, it can be a community living room built around the same idea my culture lives by food as love. In my life, a single “yes” changed everything. Denny’s has the chance to be part of that “yes” for many others—not just by serving food, but by serving as a bridge between nourishment and opportunity, whether it’s between long nights or brighter mornings.”

2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Bryan Villicana

*San Juan, TX | Our Lady of The Lake University | **NGLCC***

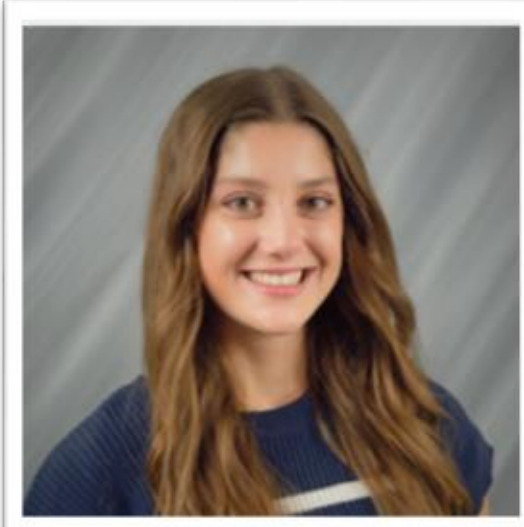
“Denny’s should offer a food drive devoted to the seasonal changes, regardless of finance unifying the homeless and their families, as every family deserves the quality, delicious, soul nourishing food Denny’s can provide. The end goal is to showcase the forgotten community that deserves just as much of affection and care within its foods, [...] a form of giving not a meal, but an act of love for those in their hardest times.”



Alejandra Moreno

*Dallas, TX | CALArts, Montserrat College of Art | **NGLCC***

“Be accessible to everyone. As an affordable restaurant, [Denny’s] allows people from all walks of life to share a space, enjoy a meal, and connect with one another; students meeting for a late-night study session, coworkers grabbing lunch, or friends catching up over coffee.”



Natalie Leavy

*Waterloo, IO | University of Northern Iowa | **NGLCC***

“A small pantry in the lobby area [...] to provide nonperishable food items and basic necessities for SLP graduate students, clients, and their families who are in need. It would allow individuals to take what they need with no questions asked. There have been times in my own life where I needed basic necessities because I was short on money but I did not want to go to a food pantry out of embarrassment.”

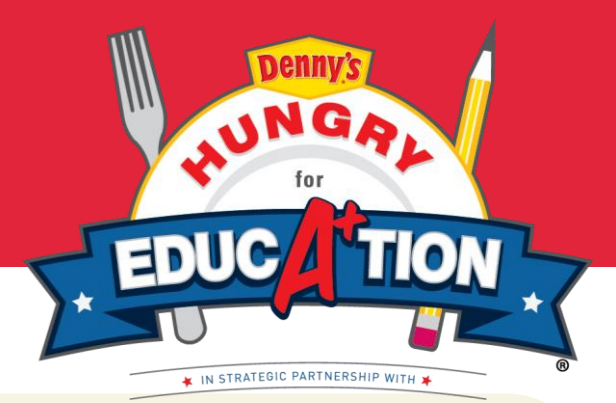


Talia Baker

*Smyrna, GA | Savannah College of Art and Design | **NGLCC***

“The Pancake Passport Project—a monthly cultural exchange night hosted inside local Denny’s restaurants. Every month, a different cultural community becomes the “featured host,” inviting neighbors to sit, eat, and learn together through food and storytelling. Guests receive an actual folded “passport” that gets stamped each time they participate.”

2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Akayla Major

*Fuquay-Varina, NC | North Carolina Wesleyan University | **NGLCC***

“That constant availability turns a diner into a neighborhood hub—a spot where a high school robotics team holds a late-night strategy meeting, a nurse grabs breakfast after an overnight shift, and a grandparent treats grandkids to pancakes on a tight budget. In a time when many public spaces feel transactional or exclusive, Denny’s cultivates connection through openness, accessibility, and warmth.”



Monserrat Sanchez Vazquez

*Austin, TX | Undecided | **USPAACC***

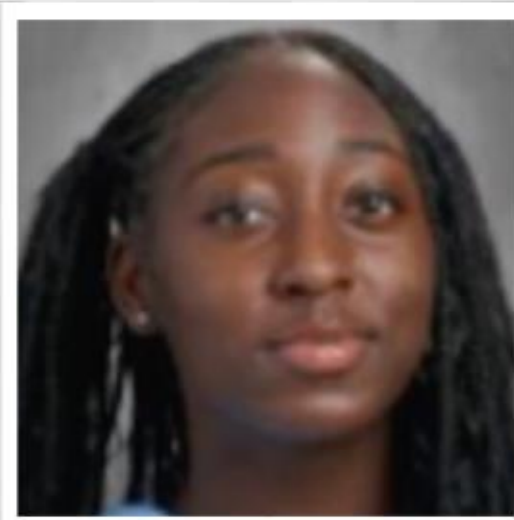
“As a young mother and the primary caregiver for my siblings, I know firsthand how important spaces like Denny’s are for families seeking comfort, connection, and support. By embracing its role as a hub for families and caregivers, Denny’s can help build bridges, foster understanding, and create a sense of unity that lifts everyone up.”



Prakriti Adhikari

*Watauga, TX | Undecided | **USPAACC***

“Students, especially those in high school are constantly looking for ways to help our society and most schools even require community engagement before graduating. [They] can make social media posts and come up with new ideas that would draw more attention to the cause. Denny’s can teach the youth and influence the future leaders of the community so that way this cycle of empathy toward making a better community continues.”

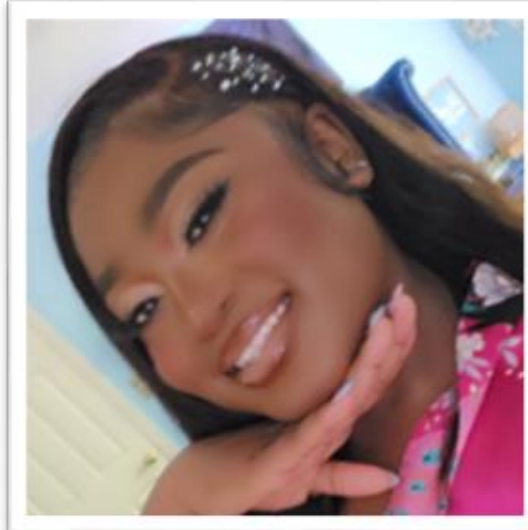
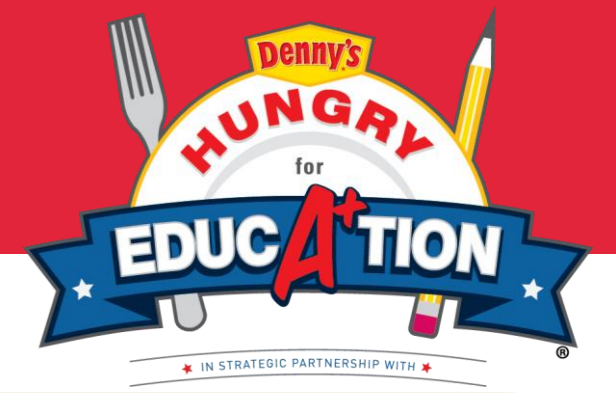


Kayla Matthews-Smith

*Atlanta, GA | Undecided | **USPAACC***

“Through mental health awareness initiatives, accessible internships, and self-advocacy programs in schools, Denny’s can help students feel supported, encouraged, and capable of growth. By investing in practical and meaningful opportunities for young people, Denny’s can help create communities where students have the resources, confidence, and connections to succeed while creating lasting bonds and a sense of belonging.”

2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



MyJoi Williams

Alpharetta, GA | Kennesaw State University | PYD

“Denny’s could create Cultural Dinner Nights highlighting cultural foods, music, and stories from the diverse communities it serves. By combining food, accessibility, cultural celebration, and genuine community engagement, Denny’s can be the table where everyone has a seat, and every community’s bond becomes stronger.”



Eli Breen

Jasper, GA | University Of Georgia | PYD

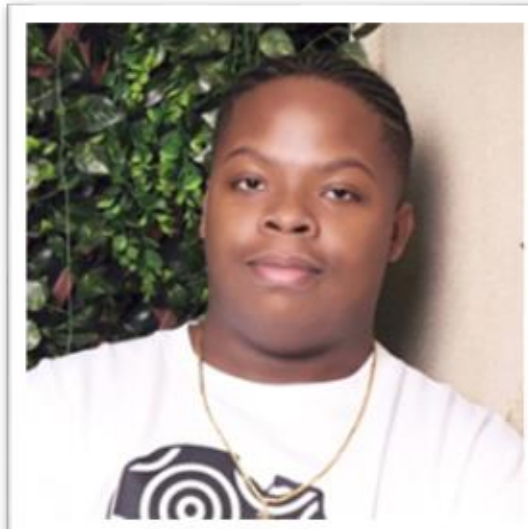
“Not everyone has a space where they feel included, and Denny’s can continue to be somewhere people of all ages and backgrounds can sit down and feel like they belong. These moments matter because they build a sense of comfort and familiarity. When a place feels steady and welcoming, people naturally come together there.”



Tyara St. Jean

Miami Gardens, FL | Morgan State University | PYD

“By supporting and collaborating with student-led disability organizations, Denny’s can bring people with disabilities, allies, families, health organizations, and local businesses together; All united around a shared goal of awareness, empowerment, and inclusion. [...] This event could become a positive and impactful movement that strengthens community bonds and celebrates the importance of supporting every individual.”

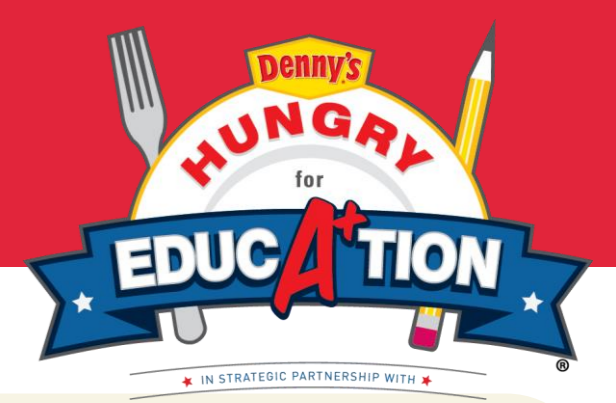


Kaiden Taylor

Oakland, CA | California State University Sacramento | PYD

“Denny’s could be that space, a symbol of hope, love, and unity for the whole community. It could be a place where pain turns into purpose and strangers become family. Denny’s has the power to be more than just a name; it can be the heart of the community. By creating opportunities for learning, art, service, and connection, Denny’s can show that even through struggle, we can rise together.”

2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Lawrence Stanton Edwards

*Gwynn Oak, MD | Morgan State University | **PYD***

“The perfect event for me would be a chill night at Denny’s with soft lighting, quiet music, and maybe some games or trivia. Just a space where people can talk, laugh, and be themselves and not be too overwhelmed or overstimulated. That kind of environment could make a huge difference for someone who usually feels out of place in typical social settings.”



Amani Lewis

*Hartford, CN | Greater Hartford Classical Magnet School | **National Urban League***

“I know that one person’s effort can make a difference, but when an entire community rallies together, the impact is even more significant. Denny’s has the platform and the heart to be that gathering place—where people connect, support each other, and celebrate what makes us unique.”



Dekarion Wimberly

*Elyria, OH | Morehouse College | **National Urban League***

“Denny’s could create a youth training program that teaches essential skills, with an emphasis on communication, teamwork, customer service, problem-solving, and financial literacy. A program like this doesn’t just teach skills, it gives teens a real chance to fly. By committing to youth workforce development, Denny’s can help reduce unemployment, build stronger communities, and prepare the next generation for success.”

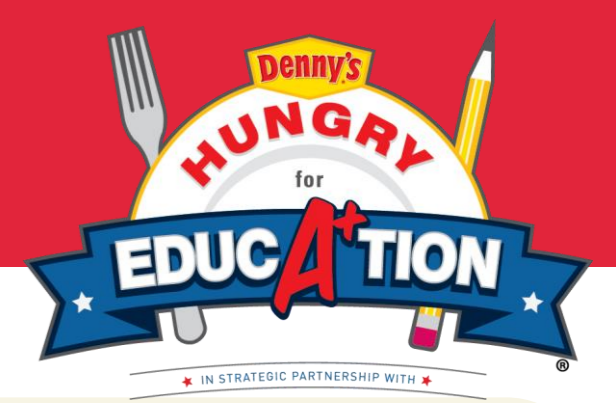


Ava Odum

*Ooltewah, TN | University of Chattanooga at Tennessee | **National Urban League***

“The inclusivity that Denny’s restaurants provide is a rare and important reminder to care for one another. Every conversation over a meal, every break room session between coworkers breaks down barriers that often divides communities. In their efforts to feed the hungry, Denny’s does not only serve meals, but also become a catalyst for unity—where conversations start, friendships form, and communities grow stronger.”

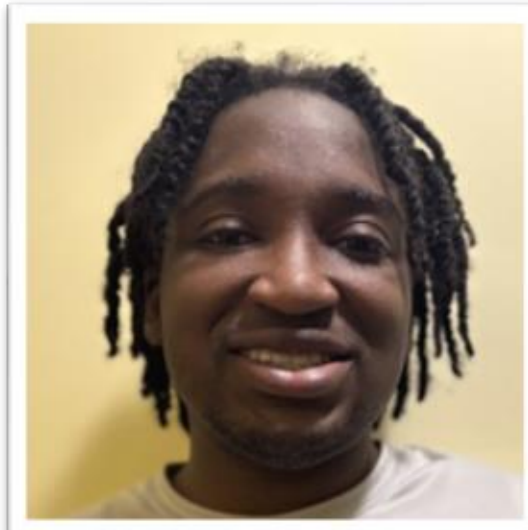
2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Micah Sheppard

*Virginia Beach, VA | University of South Carolina | **National Urban League***

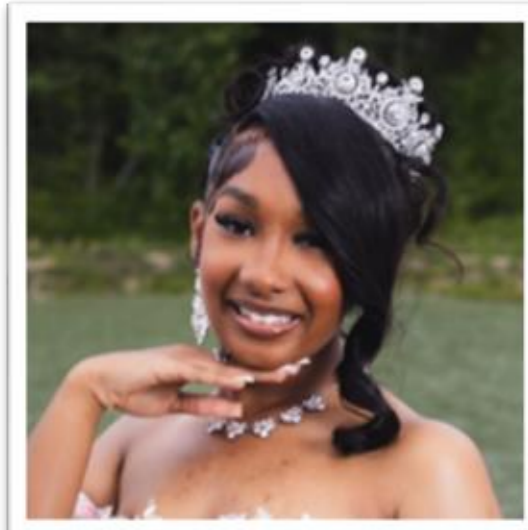
“Denny's brings communities together by supporting, offering jobs, and genuinely being a comfort restaurant. Denny's has always supported the community and done the best that they could; I would say continue being the support and comfort that the community can rely on.”



Brayden Gillespie

*Randolf, MA | The Roxbury Latin School | **National Urban League***

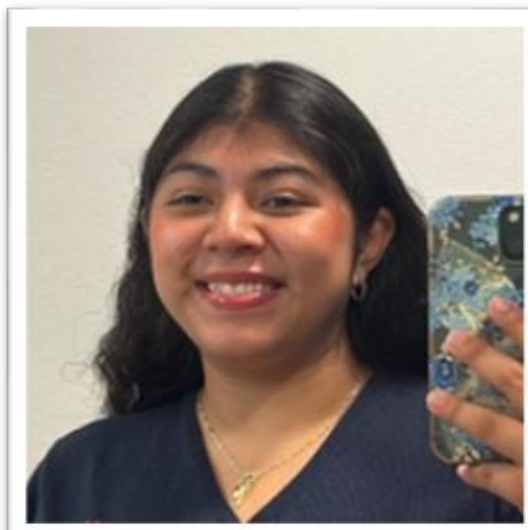
“Denny's recent collaboration with Artists for Humanity, where teen artists from underserved neighborhoods design murals and décor for refurbished locations, demonstrates that a restaurant can do more than serve food. If scaled nationally, this model would help secure Denny's identity as "America's Diner", not just a place where America eats but also where America creates.”



Cassidee Woods

*Louisville, KY | Undecided | **NVBDC***

“Denny's can continue bringing communities together by doing what it already does best—providing comfort, consistency, and care. Supporting youth programs, local schools, and community initiatives can make that impact even stronger. Whether it's helping students afford college or sponsoring events that unite neighborhoods, In a world that often feels divided, we need places that remind us of our shared humanity.”

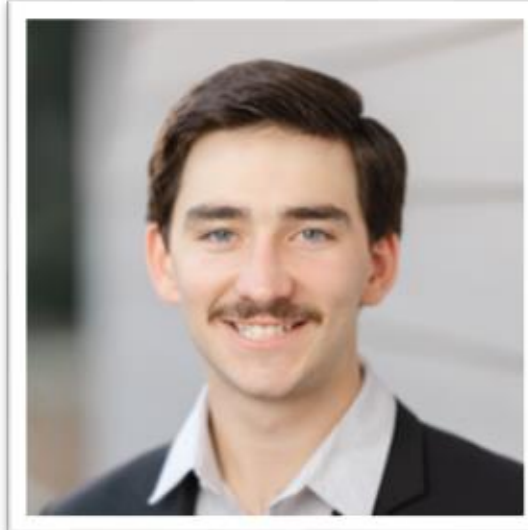
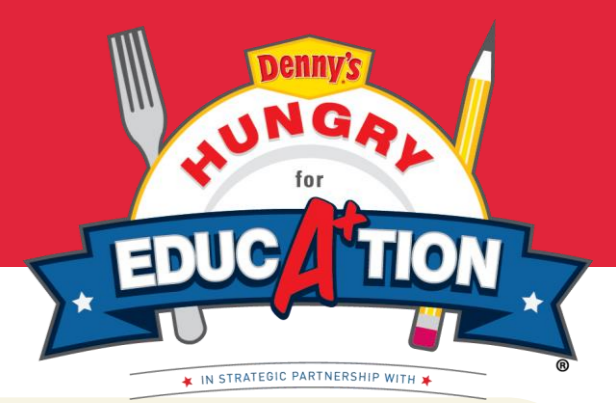


Elsa Chaveco

*Louisville, KY | Illinois Champaign University | **NVBDC***

“Denny's [can] bring communities together not only through food, but also through fellowship, service, and accessibility. For me, its role reflects the same values my Latin American family taught me at the dinner table: meals are not just about eating, but about belonging. Denny's can remind us that something as simple as sharing a meal can unite people, honor traditions, and strengthen the bonds that hold communities together.”

2025-26 Denny's Hungry for Education™ Scholarship Winners



Owen Horrell

College Station, TX | Benedictine College | NVBDC

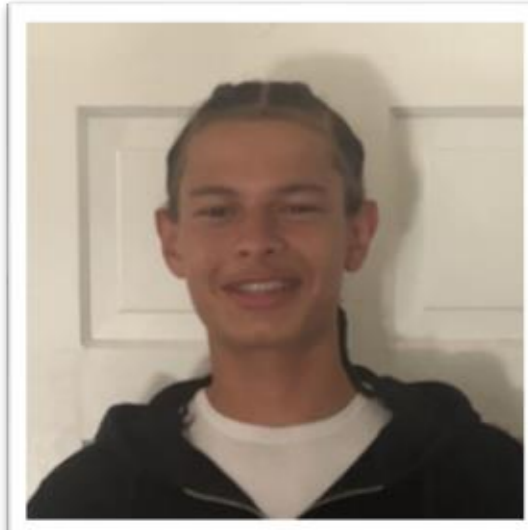
“My idea for how Denny’s can bring communities together is this: host events where members of the community can share unique dishes from their background—whether cultural, ethnic, or rooted in family tradition—so that others may experience new foods and stories. Denny’s could serve as a safe haven for respectful dialogue—something our nation needs more of.”



Angelo Flores

Fairfield, CA | St. Mary’s University | NVBDC

“To me, Denny’s is already a place that brings people together. Families go there after games, friends meet there to talk, and travelers stop to rest. I think when people sit together, share food, and help others, they build stronger connections. Denny’s has the chance to make that happen, one meal, one person, and one community at a time”



Antonio Goins

Milwaukee, WI | University of Wisconsin Milwaukee | NVBDC

“For first generation college students like myself, this scholarship not only eases the financial burden of tuition and other campus needs like books, but offers a chance to break a generational cycle of poverty. Many families often fail to chase their career ambitions as a higher education seems out of reach, but scholarships like Denny’s form a pathway to professions that seem unattainable.”