



August 29, 2019

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

George O'Donnell
The Melanie Foundation
347-463-4304
george@themelaniefoundation.com
245 Washington St. #4666
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

The Melanie Foundation Announces 2019 Scholarship Recipients

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY, August 29, 2019 – The Melanie Foundation is proud to announce that Catherine Cobetto of Pittsburgh, PA, Kaelyn Madero of Jackson, MI, Samantha North of Shakopee, MN and Lauren Schaefer of Germantown, TN are the 2019 recipients of the Foundation's annual scholarship, honoring the life and work of Melanie Merola O'Donnell. The scholarship is awarded to graduate-level students in the mental health field that demonstrate commitment to helping others through the exercise of empathy and wisdom. Recipients are awarded based on who best exhibits their devotion to their fields of study. The recipients convey their commitment to their studies both inside and outside the classroom through research, volunteering, and work experience. Those awarded are recognized for serving communities in a manner consistent with Melanie Merola O'Donnell's values of compassion, generosity, respect and commitment to others. George O'Donnell, president of The Melanie Foundation states, "We're always honored to support those who, like Melanie, are committed to providing mental health services as part of their personal missions. This year is no different, and it's incredibly exciting to us to provide this modest measure of encouragement to Catherine, Kaelyn, Samantha and Lauren."

Catherine Cobetto is currently pursuing her Masters of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Catherine aims to use her MSW education to work in a collaborative, team-based, integrated healthcare setting addressing PTSD in underserved populations.

Ms. Cobetto said "I cannot fully express in words how excited and grateful I am to have been selected as a Melanie Foundation scholarship recipient. Melanie Merola O'Donnell's unwavering compassion and dedication to the mental health field has helped and inspired so many, and I commit to honoring and furthering her legacy to the best of my ability as a mental health practitioner."

Kaelyn Madero is currently pursuing her Masters of Social Work from the University of Michigan. Additionally, she holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Eastern Michigan University. Ms. Madero's long term goals include earning a PhD in both Psychology and Social Work.

The Saratoga Palio Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race
raceinfo@themelaniefoundation.com
www.themelaniefoundation.com



Upon receiving notification of the award, Kaelyn responded, “I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Melanie Foundation. I am beyond excited to be a recipient of a scholarship that truly makes a difference in the area of mental health and the lives of graduate students. Receiving a scholarship from a foundation with such a powerful story is an honor. I will do my best to use my compassion, perspective, and experience to carry on Melanie's legacy.

Samantha North is a student of the Master of Arts: International Disaster Psychology program at the University of Denver. In addition to pursuing her Masters Degree, Samantha has served as a Psychiatric Associate at the University of Minnesota Medical Center- Dual Adolescent Unit and a Suicide Prevention Program Assistant at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ms. North said, “Suicide prevention is my passion. When I heard I was awarded the Melanie scholarship, I thought of one more conference I can attend, one more training I can become certified in, and hopefully one more life that can be saved.”

Lauren Schaefer is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Memphis, working within the Resilience Emerging Amidst Childhood Hardships (REACH) Lab. Lauren earned her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Psychology from UNC Wilmington. Lauren is currently working on her dissertation through which she will be aiming to determine what brings comfort and healing to children who have been recently bereaved.

Upon receiving news of the award Ms. Schaefer said, “I am honored to extend Melanie’s legacy by helping others who are suffering through the provision of kindness, warmth, and understanding. I am wholly appreciative of the generosity of the Melanie Foundation to assist me in my dream of bringing light into the darkness of those who are suffering with mental health concerns. I can only hope to bring a portion of the light, love, comfort, and compassion that Melanie brought to her family, community, and to the world.”

About Melanie Merola O’Donnell

Melanie Merola O’Donnell lived an inspirational life, and though it was cut short, it was extremely full. Throughout her life, Melanie worked to help people in need. She volunteered with, and later became a staff member of, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, and she was a board member of the Capital Area Crisis Response Team for 8 years. She trained crisis responders for both organizations until 2004. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Melanie coordinated and managed 28 crisis response teams in New York City and 8 teams in Washington. She also aided crisis responders in Somerset County, PA, following the attacks. She spent several weeks in New York City, helping grieving families who were visiting the site of the attacks and coping with the aftermath. She provided care to individuals affected by natural disasters, plane crashes, school violence, the civil war in Sierra Leone, workplace violence, and homicide. In June 2004, she was honored by CACRT as the first recipient of the Melanie Merola O’Donnell Award



for Excellence. At the time of her death, she was enrolled in a doctoral program in clinical psychology at Antioch University New England, in Keene, NH. Amidst Melanie's professional responsibilities and accomplishments, her devotion to her husband, son, mother, father, sister, family, and friends was never compromised.

About The Melanie Foundation

The Melanie Foundation was created with the principal purpose of extending Melanie Merola O'Donnell's legacy of helping others through caring and compassionate mental healthcare, with a particular focus on enhancing a sense of community. O'Donnell's family and friends have joined together to celebrate her life with this cause, hoping to identify others who share O'Donnell's commitment to helping those in need, and providing those individuals financial assistance for the pursuit of graduate degrees in a mental health field. The Melanie Foundation's mission is to foster support for mental health. The Foundation contributes to this mission in two ways – scholarships to students pursuing graduate education in a mental health field, and direct contributions to local organizations that address mental health concerns.

For more information about The Melanie Foundation or to register for The Saratoga Palio Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race on September 15, 2019 visit www.themelaniefoundation.com