

# Fund for blind, visually impaired students awards first scholarship

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BRISTOL – The Bristol Lions Club/James J. Keating Scholarship Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation, set up to assist those students who are legally blind or vision impaired, has awarded its first scholarship to a Plymouth student.

"Jeremey Evanoski, a Plymouth resident, received a \$2,800 scholarship from the Fund," said Samantha Rajotte, scholarship and program officer with the Main Street Community Foundation. "He will be attending Central Connecticut State University this fall to study computer science."



Brian Johnson Staff Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation.

The scholarship was intended for Bristol residents who were graduating high school students and classified as legally blind. But, Rajotte said, while scholarships with specific criteria allow for students with "particular life experiences" to apply within a smaller pool, the specificity of the criteria can make it difficult to grant the scholarship annually.

"The scholarship continues to be available first and foremost to a graduating senior from Bristol who is classified as legally blind or visually impaired," she said. "However, in a year when there may be no Bristol applicants, the scholarship may be awarded to students from the other communities served by the Foundation, which are Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington and Wolcott."

Rajotte said that The Bristol Lions Club received a bequest several years ago from the estate of Mark M. Keating to establish a scholarship fund in memory of his father James J. Keating.

James J. Keating was born in 1890 and died in Bristol, living to be 107 years old. After retiring, he became invested in eye health after his friend lost their eye sight, and he joined the Bristol Lions Club.

As part of James J. Keating's work with the Lion's Club, he helped organize glaucoma and vision screening drives. He also led efforts to set up vision screening machines in Bristol schools and institute mandatory vision testing of schoolchildren.

"It is no doubt that it was this passion and generosity that inspired his son to create this scholarship fund," said Rajotte.

A commitment to eye health and those with visual impairments is one of the cornerstones of the mission of the Lions Club, locally, nationally, and internationally.

"Locally, our club focuses on pediatric sight screening and assisting the needy to secure eye examinations and prescription glasses," said Everett Lyons, president of the Bristol Lions Club said. "We also provide therapeutic assistance in conjunction with Bristol Hospital to residents suffering from diabetic retinopathy

or macular degeneration. We support the state Lions' efforts to fund eye research at both Yale and UConn medical laboratories. We also fund summer camp experiences for diabetic children, as diabetes is the number one cause of blindness in our country.”

Anyone interested in making a contribution to the Bristol Lions Club/James J. Keating Scholarship Fund may donate online at [mainstreetfoundation.org](http://mainstreetfoundation.org) or by sending donations to Main Street Community Foundation, P.O. Box 2702, Bristol, CT 06010.

Applications for this scholarship as well as the dozens of other scholarships the Foundation administers, are available on Jan. 15 of each year. The deadline to apply is the middle of March.

For more information, or for questions, call Samantha Rajotte at 860-583-6363 or email her at [samantha@mainstreetfoundation.org](mailto:samantha@mainstreetfoundation.org).

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