



## **National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Announces Inaugural STEAM Star Scholarship Program**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*October 16, 2024* – The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) is thrilled to announce the launch of its brand-new [STEAM Star Scholarship](#) program for K-12 students who have faced the challenge of homelessness or foster care. This innovative initiative will award up to ten scholarships of \$500 each to support K-12 scholars pursuing their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) dreams through extracurricular activities.

Awards can be used for academic competitions, art classes, dance, theater productions, or other STEAM-related after-school programs, camps, and associated programming. Students must be nominated by an adult familiar with their specific STEAM activity or interest. Completed applications will be reviewed in November, with awards distributed directly to the ten recipients' extracurricular programs or organizations in early 2025.

"There are very few, if any, national programs like this one," said Deirdre Lynch Nicholson, Executive Director of NAEHCY. "We hope to generate such enthusiasm that we can rapidly expand this program's reach," she added.

The STEAM Star Scholarship program is one of several new initiatives launched by the 36-year-old membership-based nonprofit representing district and state homeless liaisons across the United States. NAEHCY's new initiatives – collectively known as NAEHCY Next – are in answer to the critical question: "What is the most effective coordinated response for the unhoused, specifically for our vulnerable youth populations and their families?" Through generating and synthesizing new ideas, encouraging advocacy, and highlighting exemplary models of positive change throughout the country, NAEHCY aims to significantly broaden its impact.

"NAEHCY's launch of this program fills me with pride," says Nicole Steward, MSW, NAEHCY Board President. "It is my hope that this will inspire more organizations to support vulnerable K-12 students in pursuing their academic and career-driven extracurricular interests, both financially and through advocating for school and

district policy changes that enable greater participation for homeless and foster youth."

Participation in STEAM programs and activities has been linked to improved academic performance and increased student engagement – two crucial factors for improving graduation rates among vulnerable youth populations.

On average, homeless, unaccompanied, and foster youth experience lower academic achievement and more behavioral difficulties compared to their peers. Extracurricular activities can be immensely beneficial for students facing academic, behavioral, and identity challenges. STEAM programs, in particular, can help students identify potential career paths, especially in emerging 21st-century fields.

This program offers a platform for students to explore their interests and passions, cultivate their talents, and begin this journey of self-discovery at a younger age.

NAEHCY's new scholarship arose from the question: "How can we invigorate learning and engagement for vulnerable students, starting earlier than with our traditional scholarship program?" Designing a program to support younger students is an extension of the work NAEHCY has been leading for many years in support of [postsecondary students](#) who have faced the challenge of homelessness.

NAEHCY encourages its partners, members, and all interested stakeholders to help spread the word about student nomination and application procedures. For more information, please visit [naehcy.org/scholarships](http://naehcy.org/scholarships).

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## **About NAEHCY**

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) is the leading national organization working to ensure the educational equity of homeless children and youth. NAEHCY provides professional development, technical assistance, and advocacy support to educators, policymakers, and advocates at the federal, state, and local levels. Learn more at [naehcy.org](http://naehcy.org).

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