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EMILY COURIC  
LEADERSHIP FORUM

**Eleven area high school women recognized for leadership will be awarded college scholarships by the Emily Couric Leadership Forum on April 30, 2024. Senior Correspondent for PBS NewsHour, Judy Woodruff, will speak at the event as recipient of the Women’s Leadership Award.**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA - The Emily Couric Leadership Forum will award \$250,000 in college scholarships in 2024 as investments in the next generation of women leaders. Eleven high school senior women nominated by Charlottesville and Albemarle schools for their excellence in leadership will receive college scholarships ranging from \$18,000 - \$50,000.

The Forum’s annual awards luncheon on April 30th will feature a keynote address by Judy Woodruff, remarks by Aicha Hermes (winner of the top Emily Couric Leadership Scholarship), recognition of all eleven college scholarship winners, and appreciation for supporters who make the scholarships possible.

#### Scholarship Award Recipients

Aicha Hermes of Albemarle High School will receive this year’s \$50,000 Emily Couric Leadership Scholarship. Aicha is an audacious woman unafraid to challenge norms and break barriers. After losing her closest friends in a drowning accident, Aicha turned her grief into action. With the goal of preventing drownings, she reached out to the YMCA and the Charlottesville Rescue Team to secure free swimming lessons and pool time for people from minority communities. Aicha believes that water safety and swimming proficiency is a universal human right and not a privilege. Aicha is also the first female student with a headscarf in Albemarle’s Math, Engineering, and Science Academy, and has been an inspiration to other young women who wear the headscarf and want to pursue STEM. Aicha plans to study medicine to help others in the way doctors have helped her and her family. Aicha taught herself to sew and started a sewing club through which she mentored younger students as they sewed in a single day more than 200 bibs and blankets for women in need. As a doctor, Aicha knows she will keep her needle and thread nearby so she can sew chemotherapy turbans for women and make toys for her young patients.

The winner of the 2024 Joshua J. Scott Merit Award (\$38,000) is Sonia Kamath of St. Anne’s-Belfield School. Sonia loves finding ways to engage with people across barriers. For instance, she volunteers at the International Rescue Committee, and went so far as to teach herself French and Spanish in order to communicate with the people there. As someone who also cares deeply about agriculture and the impacts of climate change, Sonia is president of a school club called



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F.E.E.D. (Food Education, Equity, and Distribution), and hosts discussions, book talks and food drives to get people involved. A school journalist and a songwriter, Sonia uses songwriting to combat the depression and anxiety she feels about environmental issues facing the planet. A true Renaissance woman, Sonia puts many talents to good use throughout the community and plans a career in foreign service.

The other nine scholarship winners, each receiving \$18,000, are:

- Evelyn Wellmon, Charlottesville High School
- Lily Sarina Hollinger Krall, Community Lab School
- Grace Wolf, Covenant School
- Lucy Strandquist, Miller School
- Haniyya Sanad, Monticello High School
- Madeleine Parham, Regents School
- Zoë Shelley, Renaissance School
- Jenk Lancheros Sepulveda, Tandem Friends School
- Opal Kendall, Western Albemarle High School

Beth Kennan, chair of the Forum board, said, “On April 30th, we will recognize these eleven impressive young women. Their leadership skills, excellence in academics and commitment to serving their community are all inspiring. Also inspiring is the support we receive from this community each year, which enables us to provide these scholarships. It is wonderful to see a community so wholeheartedly come together to support future generations of women leaders.”

While the luncheon event is sold out, it is not too late to donate to the scholarship fund, which benefits these young women and future recipients. Donations can be made at [www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org](http://www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org).

For additional information and photographs, or to arrange interviews with a board spokesperson or scholarship recipient, please contact Ashley Woodard, Marketing Committee Chair, Emily Couric Leadership Forum, at [adw5x@virginia.edu](mailto:adw5x@virginia.edu) or 434-569-5225.

About the Emily Couric Leadership Forum: The Forum established a scholarship fund at the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation to honor the legacy of the late Virginia State Senator Emily Couric. Through the scholarship and Women’s Leadership Award, the Forum encourages all women to adopt an active role in government, public issues, and policy debates affecting their communities, and to inspire young women to pursue activities which will enable them to become effective leaders. For more information, visit [www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org](http://www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org).