



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 16, 2020

**Pandemic crisis moves LAFCU to double number of scholarships**  
*Credit union awards \$10,000 in scholarships, \$2,000 in charity donations  
for its annual Write to Educate Essay Contest*

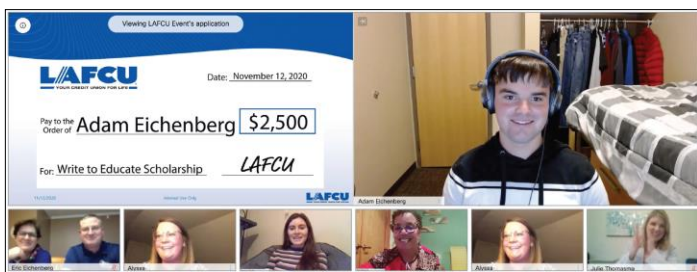
LANSING, Mich. — Four recent high school graduates have each won a \$2,500 college scholarship through LAFCU’s Write to Educate Essay Contest.

The winners are Abigail Payment, Ovid; Adam Eichenberg, St. Johns; Madeline Smith, Grand Ledge; and Jack LaFevre, South Lyon.

Typically, two winners are selected for this annual contest, but with the state’s stay-at-home orders closing schools and interrupting seniors’ final classes, traditions, graduation ceremonies and possibly college plans, LAFCU decided to support more graduates.



Scholarship winners, bottom row from left, Abigail Payment, Adam Eichenberg and Madeline Smith are honored at a virtual presentation for the LAFCU Write to Educate Essay Contest. Also pictured are LAFCU’s Alyssa Troub, top right, and Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, bottom row center, The Arc of Mid-Michigan’s Lynn Brenckle and Madalyn Holyfield, and Child and Family Charities’ Julie Thomasma.



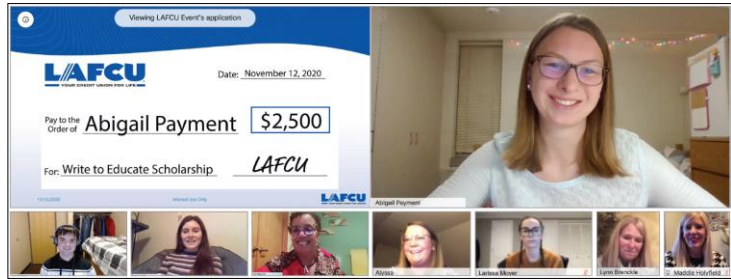
Adam Eichenberg, top right, won a LAFCU Write to Educate scholarship. Also pictured at the virtual presentation are, bottom row from left, Adam’s parents Eric and Lynn Eichenberg; other winners Abigail Payment and Madeline Smith; LAFCU’s Kelli Ellsworth Etchison and Alyssa Troub, and Child and Family Charities’ Julie Thomasma.

“The pandemic has been a huge disruptor in the lives of these students just as they are beginning to pursue their post-high school aspirations,” said Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer. “We decided we could do more to help this year’s graduates. They have dealt with a great deal of uncertainty; we wanted to provide some financial

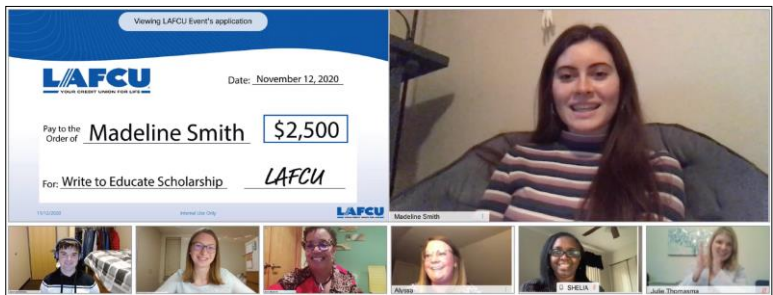
stability.”

The winners were selected based on their one-page essays about the role of technology in their lives and its positive or negative effect on personal safety.

Part of the contest is for each winner to select a charity to receive a \$500 donation from LAFCU on behalf of the winner. Expanding the number of winners also increased total charity donations from \$1,000 to \$2,000.



Abigail Payment, top right, won a LAFCU Write to Educate scholarship. Also pictured at the virtual presentation are, bottom row from left, Adam Eichenberg and Madeline Smith; LAFCU's Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, Alyssa Troub and Larissa Moyer, and The Arc of Mid-Michigan's Lynn Brenckle and Madalyn Holyfield.



Madeline Smith, top right, won a LAFCU Write to Educate scholarship. Also pictured at the virtual presentation are, bottom row from left, other winners Adam Eichenberg and Abigail Payment; LAFCU's Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, Alyssa Troub and Shelia Scott; and Child and Family Charities' Julie Thomasma.

“The charitable-giving component within this contest helps demonstrate the leadership skill of ‘giving back,’” Ellsworth Etchison said. “This year has shown how important it is for those who can, to step forward and help those in our community who are hurting.”

**About the winners**

**Abigail Payment**, a 2020 graduate of St. Johns High School, is attending Saginaw Valley State University. She directed the LAFCU charity donation in her name to The Arc of Mid-Michigan, in support of people with developmental disabilities in Shiawassee, Ingham, Clinton and Eaton counties.

**Adam Eichenberg**, a 2020 graduate of St. Johns High School, is attending Davenport University. The LAFCU charity donation in his name was directed to Child and Family Charities, which works to strengthen and support children, families and individuals in mid-Michigan.

**Madeline Smith**, a 2020 graduate of Grand Ledge High School, is attending Western Michigan University. She also directed the LAFCU charity donation in her name to Child and Family Charities.

**Jack LaFevre**, a 2020 graduate of South Lyon High School, is attending Western Michigan University. His LAFCU charity donation was directed to The Arc of Mid-Michigan.

The winning essays are online at [www.lafcu.com/writetoeducate](http://www.lafcu.com/writetoeducate).

Applicants did not need to be LAFUCU members, but must have been attending high school in Michigan, LAFUCU's geographical service territory.

The Lansing State Journal is the contest's community sponsor for 2020.

LAFUCU has awarded \$55,200 for this essay contest since it began in 2009: \$47,200 in scholarships and \$8,000 in charity donations, which were added to the contest in 2012.

### **About LAFUCU**

Chartered in 1936, LAFUCU is a not-for-profit financial cooperative open for membership to anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in Michigan and to businesses and other entities located in Michigan. The credit union serves more than 68,000 members and holds over \$835 million in assets. It was named a Best Credit Union to Work For in 2020. LAFUCU offers a comprehensive range of financial products and services as well as an expanding complement of financial technology solutions. Members enjoy benefits such as low fees, low interest rates on loans, high yields on savings, discounts, knowledgeable employees and nationwide access to fee-free ATMs. A recipient of the national Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award for credit unions, LAFUCU enriches the communities it serves by supporting many organizations and causes. To learn more about LAFUCU, call 800.748.0228 or visit [www.lafcu.com](http://www.lafcu.com).

# # #

**Lansing State Journal**  
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

The Lansing State Journal is the community sponsor of the 2020 LAFUCU Write to Educate Essay Contest.