



NEWSLETTER

Volume 1 Issue 2

August 2026

WELCOME

Welcome to the second issue of the AWS Educational Foundation Newsletter. The goal of your AWS Educational Foundation Board of Directors is to publish this at a minimum of 4 times each year and we hope to increase the frequency. Content we look to report on includes scholarship updates with features on the recipients and the donors as well as any Board of Trustees updates.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to anyone who might be interested.



Pictured above is a vineyard row Carriage House Wineworks (CHWW) in Waterford, Virginia

WHAT IS THE AWS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

The AWSEF was established in May 1993 as a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt organization and has the following mission:

...support educational and research activities that will advance the viticultural and enological sciences to achieve a world-class North American wine industry.

Any member in good standing of the American Wine Society is eligible for membership in the AWSEF. So, in other words, all AWS members are members of the AWSEF. The other category of membership is that of Affiliate, which is open to any person or organization not a member of the American Wine Society that has made a qualifying donation to the AWSEF is eligible for "Affiliate" membership in this Foundation.

Questions about membership can be directed to Kristen Lindelow, AWSEF President at president01@awsef.org or Walter Rachele, AWSEF Treasurer at treasurer01@awsef.org.

The AWSEF is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions to AWSEF are tax deductible to the maximum amount permitted by law.

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AWSEF 2026 Graduate Scholarships by Isabelle Lesschaeve, the AWSEF Vice President, Scholarships

The applications for the 2026 program closed on March 31, 2026. Isabelle Lesschaeve, the AWSEF Vice President, Scholarships is pleased to report that the AWSEF received 26 submissions split equally among Masters and Doctoral candidates. Under the Scholarship rules, previous candidates are eligible to resubmit for additional support. New in 2026 will be a session for top scoring submissions to provide an update on their research at the AWS National Conference. In addition, the AWSEF will provide an AWS Student Membership for one year.

If you want to learn more about the 2025 Scholarship recipients you can see short videos on their supported research projects on YouTube, be sure to enter AWSEF once you are on the YouTube site. The research projects reflect the myriads of challenges facing those growing grapes today and include research in areas such as climate to rootstock and other topics of importance to the North American Wine Industry.

To date 25 universities and their graduate students have received research grants from the AWSEF, totaling over \$600,000 in support since 1994. A complete list of these universities can be found at <https://awsef.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2024-Scholarship-Statistics.pdf>.



Pictured above is Douglas Vines, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota,

The 2026 Recipients

The AWSEF is pleased to announce the 2026 recipients of our annual scholarships, awarded to graduate students conducting advanced research that supports the North American wine industry.

This year, eight outstanding scholars from leading research institutions were selected for their innovative and impactful studies in viticulture, enology, grape breeding, plant pathology, and soil science.

The 2026 AWSEF Scholarship Recipients

William Anderson, MSc Candidate at Texas A&M, is developing GLRaV-3-resistant *Vitis vinifera* rootstock varieties using traditional and novel techniques.

Virginia.Wylder.Scholarship

Aliyah Brewer, PhD candidate at Cornell University, is advancing the resilience of new wine grape varieties through downy mildew disease resistance.

AWS.Chapter.of.Dayton-Springfield.OH.Scholarship

Sarah Caballero, PhD candidate at Oregon State University, is developing a protective coating designed to prevent smoke-derived compounds from entering grapes pre-harvest.

AWS North.Wake.Chapter.Scholarship

Harper Esterak, MSc candidate at Texas A&M, studies how growing conditions of American oak in Texas may influence how oak expresses itself in wine.

AWS.North.Alabama.Chapter.Scholarship

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Hannah Frank, PhD candidate at Cornell University, studies grapevine interactions with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) to help growers produce high-quality wine grapes with optimized inputs.

AWS.Carroll.County.Chapter?Gj.Hamilton.Mowbray.Memorial?in.memory.of.Bill.Eisberg

Agostino Gamba, MSc candidate at the University of California at Davis, investigates and quantifies the effects of Grapevine red blotch disease, GRBV, on vine physiology, as well as production and fruit quality metrics.

AWS.Educational.Foundation.Scholarship?In.Memory.of.Ken.Brewer

Daniela Menendez, PhD candidate at Virginia Tech, works to advance the sustainable management of the spotted lanternfly (an invasive planthopper, SLF) in American vineyards.

WjJj.RACHELE.Endowment.Scholarship

Taran Rowles, MSc candidate at the Pennsylvania State University, develops innovative techniques and tools for ground cover and soil management that improve North American vineyard sustainability and wine quality.

AWS.Smoky.Mountain.Chapter.Scholarship?in.the.name.of.Alcide.L.Porell

AWSEF Sponsors Session at the AWS Conference

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The AWSEF is dedicated to supporting the next generation of leaders in the grape and wine industry.

Scholarships are made possible by generous contributions from AWS chapters, endowed funds, and individual donors. The AWSEF is proud to feature two of our scholarship recipients during the AWS Annual Conference.

Session E7.E.Sessions.Title: New Research™ Discoveries in Enology.Presenter: This session will highlight the research work of PhD and Master's students funded by American Wine Society Educational Foundation (AWSEF) Research Grants. This session will provide an opportunity for two AWSEF research grant recipients to provide attendees with an in-depth understanding of their research and how it will assist both farmers and winemakers in addressing challenges that they face in the ever-changing landscape caused by climate change, invasive pests and diseases, and genetic engineering of new varieties; the specific speakers for this session are as follows:

Daniela Menendez, PhD candidate at Virginia Tech, The sustainable management of the spotted lanternfly (an invasive planthopper, SLF) in American vineyards.

Research supported by the WjJj.RACHELE.Endowment.Scholarship

And

Aliyah Brewer, PhD student, Cornell University, The resilience of new wine grape varieties through downy mildew disease resistance. Research supported by AWS Chapter of Dayton-Springfield OH.Scholarship

Session E1 is scheduled for Saturday, October 24, 2026 at 9:00 am. Each presentation should be in 15-20 minute range and in addition allow another 15 or 20 minutes for questions so the total time is 30-40 minutes including Q & A. The AWS meeting is in Jacksonville, Florida. The conference website is

[AWS National Conference 2026 - American Wine Society](#)

We hope to see you there.

ELLIS FAMILY ESTABLISHES (AWSEF) STUDENT RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS

Lisa and Bill Ellis (AKA, the Ellis Family) have established an AWSEF fund through an endowment gift in the amount of \$5000 to help defray the cost associated with attendance at the AWS National Conference for the top scoring applicants in the current award cycle to the AWSEF scholarship program to present their research findings in progress or otherwise, when accepted for presentation. Both Bill and Lisa are AWS members and Bill is the current AWSEF Vice President of Corporate Development.

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The AWSEF will offer travel stipends through this endowment of up to \$750 to help defray the travel costs student researchers incur when attending the AWS national meeting to present their AWSEF supported research. The AWS will assist with a discounted registration per the guidelines for conference presenters. This award will be limited to travel expenses not covered by another source, such as registration. All travel expenses should meet the current reimbursement guidelines covered by the AWSEF. Student Travel Awards are administered through the AWSEF and funded by the Student Travel Award Fund, which was established by the Ellis Family. You can email Bill at vpcorporatedev01@awsef.org.

2026 SILENT AUCTION HELP!

The AWSEF Silent Auction takes place each year at the AWS National Conference and is a significant fundraiser for your Foundation. The AWSEF needs volunteers in several roles. In 2025, this event raised \$5770. If you are interested in volunteering contact the AWSEF President, Kristen Lindelow at president01@awsef.org

Also, your AWSEF is also in need of wine themed items to auction at the event, these may be tax deductible, because the AWSEF is a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt organization but we always urge you to contact your tax advisor before claiming any deduction as the laws vary and each person's situation is unique.

Board Member Profile

Meet.the.AWSEF.Treasurer?Walter.Rachele



Pictured Above: AWSEF Treasurer, Walter Rachele

Walt Rachele has been a member of AWS for 40+ years, serving as Past Chapter Chairman (Carroll County), Wine Judge Certification Program Graduate and Instructor for 20 years. He has traveled in search of the Mother Vine to Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary finding only wonderful local wines, unusual varietals and making new friends. He is completing a 3-year term as Treasurer with AWSEF and he also served a prior term (2000-2005) as Treasurer of AWSEF he is again combining his love of learning about wine with his profession of Accounting & Finance to serve the AWSEF BOD as Treasurer. His heartfelt goal is to help provide funding for the next generation of students that will be the future of the wine industry.

Email Walt at treasurer01@awsef.org

LEAVE A LEGACY

Any time there are personal income tax planning issues, AWSEF gifts can be considered. Including the opportunity to gift appreciated assets (e.g., stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate) to qualifying organizations, such as the American Wine Society Educational Foundation. Such gifts are normally tax deductible to the donor at full market value.

The AWSEF has three fund types established to support both operation of the Board of Trustees and to provide scholarships. These funds are.

The General Fund that supports the AWSEF operation,

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The Endowment Fund that provides the AWSEF scholarships into perpetuity, and

Special Scholarship Funds that bear the name of an individual, group or corporation. Please note the minimum amount to fund a scholarship will be going up soon but this can be established for as little as \$5000. These scholarships are designed to be in perpetuity and are restricted as to purpose in accordance with the gift letter agreement by both the donors and a Board member of the AWSEF.

As a tax-qualified 501(c)(3) organization, the AWSEF welcomes charitable gifts. Contributions should be tax deductible but to be sure please check with your tax advisor.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY TO LEAVE A LEGACY TO THE AWSEF

Leave a gift in your will to the AWSEF.

Name the AWSEF as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, IRA or pension plan.

Purchase a life insurance policy naming the AWSEF as the beneficiary or name the AWSEF as the beneficiary of an existing life insurance policy.

Remember deceased AWS members with memorial gifts to the AWSEF.

Consider using appreciated assets to fund current charitable and planned gifts. These include, but are not limited to stocks, bonds, CD's, real estate, vehicles, art and jewelry.

Encourage family members and friends to leave gifts to the AWSEF in their will.

The AWSEF requests that those who are considering charitable gifts remember the AWSEF in their planning. Please contact your personal financial advisor for advice. Planned Giving Options include:

Charitable Gift Annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a donor and the AWSEF whereby the donor transfers cash, marketable securities or other assets, to the AWSEF in exchange for a partial tax deduction and a lifetime stream of annual income. The payment will not fluctuate regardless of the stock market or interest rates. When the contract is terminated, the remainder is contributed to a donor designated AWSEF fund to provide for future scholarships and/or grants to deserving students.

Long-Term Appreciated Securities

Making a gift of long-term appreciated securities can benefit you in two ways: you can receive a charitable income tax deduction for the full market value (some restrictions may apply) of the appreciated securities, while at the same time avoid paying capital gains tax on the profit.

If you, have questions contact the AWSEF Treasurer, Walt Rachele at treasurer01@awsef.org

SPONSORS

Thank you to our sponsors: Banfi and Elevage Digital.

Banfi has had a long-standing involvement with the AWSEF, which is very much appreciated.

Banfi

Founded in 1978 by the vision of Italian American brothers John and Harry Mariani, Banfi represents a marriage of winemaking passion and technological innovation. Through collaboration with Ezio Rivella, one of Italy's most eminent winemakers, the land purchased in Montalcino was transformed into a crucible of quality and potential. The acquisition of the historic

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Piedmontese winery Bruzzone subsequently further enriched the portfolio, integrating the sparkling wine tradition of Piedmont into the Banfi world. Information about Banfi can be accessed at <https://www.banfi.it/eng/>

Elevage Digital

Elevage Digital provides affordable WordPress services, using best-practice tools and techniques for website accessibility, website management, performance, and SEO. Information about Elevage can be found at <https://elevagedigital.com/>

If your company is interested in helping to sponsor AWSEF activities, you can contact Bill Ellis at vpcorporatedev01@awsef.org.

ANNUAL FRUIT WINE AWARD

The AWSEF awards the Best Fruit Wine in the AWS amateur wine competition known as the “Les Sperling Fruit Wine Award” each year. The award, known as the “Les Sperling Fruit Wine Award” will be presented at the 2026 AWS National Conference in Jacksonville, Florida this November. There is something for everyone, for more information on entering click here Commercial Wine Competition - American Wine Society Information on the Amateur Competition can be obtained here: <https://americanwinesociety.org/amateur-wine-competition/>

AWS National Wine Conference 2026

October 22-24, 2026

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, Jacksonville, FL.



Jacksonville is a modern and active city with equal parts Florida Flavor and Southern Hospitality! As the largest city in the continental U.S., Jacksonville is the perfect place for a weekend getaway or a vacation to explore and discover something new, from its extensive park system (the largest in the nation with two national parks, seven state parks, and more than 400 city parks), to its beautiful white-sandy beaches (22 miles of them), and its historic neighborhoods that include Riverside, Avondale, Downtown, Jacksonville, Springfield and Murray Hill. More details will be announced soon.

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