

**Springfield Council of Jewish Women**  
**Eleanore A. Dunn Scholarship Breakfast**  
**Paula Asinof Keynote Address**  
**June 17, 2026**

Hi, I'm Paula Asinof - here from Dallas, TX today.

I have a deep personal connection as part of the "origin story" of the scholarships being awarded this year.

- This program was established by my grandfather in memory of my grandmother, Pauline Adelstein Asinof, in 1943- before I was born.
- I grew up in Springfield and then Longmeadow.
- My mother, Gertrude Asinof, was active in - and eventually President of - the SCJW in the 1950's.

Today, there are about 35 separate endowed funds that comprise the SCJW scholarship program. A few years ago, I established a fund in my own name that 80 years later that carries the legacy forward.

On the way to preparing for this speech, I asked several people for input- including Claude. Claude was able, as you might expect, to gather some relevant information and make some good suggestions. One thing Claude really did get wrong was the suggestion of an opening joke.... He suggested "Nothing says 'we believe in your future like breakfast at 8 am'" to poke some fun and get a laugh. Nothing could be further from the truth. This breakfast says everything about your future.

This breakfast was the inspiration of my aunt Eleanore Dunn, and mother of my cousin Joan Hendrickson, who is here today and who has watched over this event for many years. Eleanore wanted all of the volunteer committee members, staff, parents, guidance counselors, teachers, and whoever else wants to come to hear your stories and share in your pride of accomplishment and your promise as you move to the next part of your life journey.

So for us, nothing says more about our belief in your future than this breakfast today.

I am so proud to be here and to meet all of you.

The Springfield Council of Jewish Women is obviously a Jewish organization. There is a concept at the core of Jewish tradition called TIKKUN OLAM, which literally means "repairing" the world. The idea is both simple and radical: the world is broken in places, and it is our obligation - not just our option, our obligation - to do something about. Not to wait for someone else. Not to wait until conditions are perfect. To act, now, with what we have.

Unlike many scholarship programs, this program is unique. These awards are open to all qualified students - regardless of race, religion, cultural heritage, or gender. As a scholarship rooted in Jewish values and supported by the Jewish community, these awards are given freely and fully to every young person in the area who earns it. It is what Tikkun Olam means in practice. It doesn't say "repair the world" for people who believe what we believe. It says: "Repair the world." Full stop.

The value of education is deeply embedded in Jewish culture. It has been a matter of survival and identity for thousands of years. But the women of the SCJW looked at that value and said: "This doesn't belong only to us. This belongs to everyone." So, in a time when communities can feel fractured and divided, this room - this breakfast - is a quiet, powerful answer to all of that.

What is a Scholarship, actually?

It is more than money or a resource, It is permission; Permission to believe you belong, permission to take a risk, permission to say yes to an opportunity

When the committee reads your application and says "yes, this person" - they are saying: "We see you. We see what you are capable of. We are putting our faith - and our money - behind it.

Scholarship does not end with one student. There is a ripple effect: A student gets an education, that student graduates, builds a career, supports a family; Maybe they move back to Western Massachusetts - or maybe they carry this community with them wherever they go. They become leaders, innovators, teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, community changemakers. They hire people. They mentor people. They give back.

If we do this right, some of them come back and write a check, or read an application, or stand at a podium.

Every scholarship given here today is not one investment. It is a hundred investments, rippling outward across decades.

You cannot fully count what has been set in motion since 1943.

That is the definition of TIKKUN OLAM in action. Not a grand gesture. A persistent, faithful, repeated act of repair, year after year.

You earned this. Not your parents, not your school - **you**. Someone read what you wrote, learned who you are, and chose you. Don't let anyone - including that little voice in your own head - tell you otherwise.

I invite you to come back as a donor, mentor, or volunteer. The chain only holds if each generation adds a link.

To our Families: You are the original scholarship. Long before any committee read an application, you invested in your child. You showed up on the hard days and said, "You can do this".

To our Teachers, Guidance Counselors, mentors: You saw something in these young people, and helped them find the path.

To our Volunteers, Donors, and Federation members and staff: You could have written a check and stayed home. You didn't. You showed up, read the files, organized the breakfast - AGAIN and AGAIN. In doing so, you told every student here: You matter enough for my time, not just my money.

This is an act of love.

From my grandmother Pauline to her daughter Eleanore to my mother Gertrude, through every family that added their name to the fund, to every SCJW volunteer, to the guidance counselor who encouraged a student to apply: The belief that the way to honor education is not just to fund it but to celebrate it. Together in a room. Over breakfast. Like a family.

And today it travels through each of you. The students leaving this room will go out and do things none of us can predict. They will build, teach, heal, create, and lead. And someday - maybe without even realizing it - they will pass something forward

THAT IS NOT JUST GENEROSITY. This is TIKKUN OLAM. That is how communities survive. That is how future get built.

In 1943, with a single initial donation, a group of women in Springfield decided the future was worth investing in - for everyone.

83 years later, you are the proof that they were right.

This year nearly \$75,000 in scholarships will be awarded - about half to renewal applicants and the other half to new applicants.

What an impact this will undoubtedly have!