# A logo with white text Description automatically generated Parsons Family Scholarship for LGBTQ+ Youth and Allies Scholarship Application

## Guidelines

### History

### For 30 years, Betsy Parsons (1954-2019) taught English in Portland high schools and fiercely advocated for Maine LGBTQ+ youth. In 1996 she observed that anti-gay hostility, language, and verbal and physical harassment were on the rise in high school hallways and classrooms.

### Consequently, she helped found the Southern Maine Chapter of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), which fights to ensure safe schools and spaces for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. She led the way statewide in establishing approximately 90 student clubs called GSAs (Gender and Sexuality Alliances, previously Gay-Straight Alliances or Gay-Straight Transgender Alliances) for which she encouraged student leaders and advisors and provided continued support. A convergence of pivotal student-related experiences in 1998 convinced Betsy that she could make more of a difference in students’ lives if she came out as a lesbian, despite the certain personal and professional costs and risks of doing so. During a class discussion of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s "The Scarlet Letter" about stigma and judgment of the main character, Hester, Betsy announced to the class that she was a lesbian and said:

### *In the novel, we see how different people respond to stigma. And we see Hester’s decision to live openly and turn her energy into something healing for her community. I am now changing my way to Hester’s way. What way will you all choose? (Mason Funk, The Book of Pride, p.235)*

### One of the first public school teachers in Maine to come out publicly, she taught many more years as an openly lesbian teacher, setting an example which offered hope, love and inspiration to students who felt lonely, isolated or afraid. Betsy received several awards for her teaching and LGBTQ+ advocacy and in 2019 was recognized with a legislative sentiment by the Maine Legislature for her leadership in making schools safe for students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. That said, she was humble, shunned the limelight, and always wanted the fruits of her labor to focus on the youth for whom she advocated.

### Betsy came from a long line of Maine families and teachers. Her mother was born and grew up in Portland while her father hailed from the woods of western Maine. Thus, the perpetual argument in the family household was about which was better: the Maine coast or its mountains. Her parents moved to the Midwest after Betsy was born where they served their community for many decades, her father as a doctor and her mother as a high school English teacher. Summer trips were always taken home to Maine. The oldest of five children, Betsy never wavered from what she knew at an early age: that she wanted to grow up and be a teacher in Maine. Her first job out of college was teaching English at Portland High School in 1977, and she never left her beloved city by the sea.

### Determined and unflagging, Betsy believed public school education is a human right and essential building block of democracy. This credo, combined with an ambition to serve and heal others, which she learned from her parents, is what drove her. She tirelessly fought for causes that encouraged equality for everyone, regardless of race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic background.

### Purpose

The Parsons Family Scholarship for LGBTQ+ Youth and Allies provides support for LGBTQ+ graduating seniors and their allies (also graduating seniors) at Maine high schools in their pursuit of post-secondary study at any accredited, not-for-profit, non-sectarian college or university in the United States.

This scholarship is inspired by the lives and work of Betsy Parsons and her parents and has been created by their family who staunchly support their ideals and share their deep love for and commitment to Maine and its people.

### Eligibility

### The Parsons Family welcomes and encourages Maine graduating high-school seniors of any gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background to apply.

### Awards

Number and size of awards depend on the funds available each year. This award is not renewable.

### Administration

Awards are paid directly to the university or college for the benefit of the student. Awards are paid in December for the spring semester. **All applications must be received in PDF format, no later than 5 pm on May 1.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Questions:** | **Submission Deadline:** | **Submission Address:** |
| **Maine Community Foundation** (207) 412-2004 scholarships@mainecf.org | **May 1** | **Parsons Family Scholarship**  ParsonsFamilyScholarship@gmail.com |

***All applications, supporting documents, and applicant information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with the public or anyone outside this scholarship committee and Maine Community Foundation, which processes the awards and issues the scholarship payments.***

### Scholarship-Specific Information

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Student is Graduating Senior at:** |  |
| **Current school’s address:** |  |

### Personal Statement

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| --- |
| **In approximately 300 words each, please provide answers to the following questions: (attach as a separate sheet)**   * Describe your activities and leadership roles both in high school and outside of school in your community. Which have been most meaningful to you, and why? * What academic and extracurricular goals do you hope to pursue at your next school, and how will achieving them help you promote diversity and LGBTQ+ equality in your life and community beyond school? * Discuss what you think is the most important issue facing the LGBTQ+ community right now. In five years, where do you think things will stand on this issue? |

### Certifications

I certify that I am a legal resident of the State of Maine and that all information on this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I may be asked to provide proof of information stated on this form.

In addition, I hereby authorize the college I will attend in the school year to release information on financial aid awarded to me by the college and other sources to the Maine Community Foundation.

**Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

### Application Checklist

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| --- | --- |
| **Please review this list and make sure you have taken care of all required parts, including attachments listed. This committee requires all materials to be in PDF format.** | ☐ **Parsons Family scholarship application** *(attach)*  **☐ Scholarship-specific information** *(complete above)*  **☐ Personal statement** *(attach)*  **☐ High school transcript - unofficial** *(attach)*  ☐ **Two recommendation letters** *(sent separately)*  **☐ Financial Information Release Form** *(found on MaineCF website, send directly to school, if awarded)* |

# Maine Community Foundation Scholarship Application

**Important Note:** This application must be completed **in addition to** individual requirements for each MaineCF scholarship. For scholarship-specific requirements, please visit: [Available Scholarships – Maine Community Foundation](https://www.mainecf.org/find-a-scholarship/available-scholarships/)

### Scholarship Name

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of MaineCF scholarship:**  *Indicate which scholarship for which you are applying.* |  |

### Applicant Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant’s chosen name:** |  |
| **Pronouns:** |  |
| **Full legal name:** |  |
| **Full mailing address:** |  |
| **Phone number:** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |

### Academic Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Intended post-secondary school:** |  |
| **Current Status at chosen school:** | ☐ Accepted ☐ Applied, hope to attend ☐ Plan to apply |

### Permission

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **I do/do not grant permission to the Maine Community Foundation to publish my name and/or likeness when publicly announcing scholarship winners** | ☐ I **DO** grant permission ☐ I **DO NOT** grant permission |

*Thank you for applying for the Parsons Family Scholarship for LGBTQ+ Youth and Allies. For your application to be considered, you must email a PDF version of your completed application to* [*ParsonsFamilyScholarship@gmail.com*](mailto:ParsonsFamilyScholarship@gmail.com) *no later than 5:00pm ET on May 1*