

Darien Student Named One of 10 National Merit Scholarship Winners in Connecticut

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Brianna Zhang, a Darien resident and a senior at Groton School, has been named a National Merit scholarship winner, one of 10 Connecticut students whose names were announced Wednesday and one of 840 named across the country.

Other students are expected to be named in three more announcements in upcoming months. More than 7,140 scholarship grants will be announced this year, with about \$28 million to be awarded.

— an announcement from the [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#)

Zhang's probable career field, the organization said is neurosurgery. Her award comes from a contribution by the Novartis Group, a pharmaceuticals and healthcare products company. [Her high school](#) in Groton, Mass. is one of the most selective private [college-preparatory](#) boarding schools in the country.

Most National Merit scholarships are paid for by 340 independent corporate and college sponsors.

"This is the first announcement of national merit scholars in 2023 by National Merit Scholarship Corporation," the organization said in its announcement. "NMSC will name recipients of National Merit \$2,500 scholarships on May 10, and winners of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards on June 7 and July 10.

"By the conclusion of this year's competition, more than 7,140 academic champions will have won National Merit scholarships worth approximately \$28 million."

Most of the awards can be renewed for as many as four years of college undergraduate study, the organization said. The awards range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per year. Some awards provide a single payment of \$2,500 to \$5,000. Winners can use their awards at any regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

How Students Get National Merit Scholarships

Here's how the announcement described the selection process:

"High school juniors entered the 2023 National Merit Scholarship Program when they took the 2021 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

"In September 2022, more than 16,000 semifinalists were designated on a state-representational basis in numbers proportional to each state's percentage of the national total of graduating high school seniors. Semifinalists were the highest-scoring program entrants in each state and represented less than one percent of the nation's seniors.

"To be considered for a National Merit Scholarship, semifinalists had to fulfill requirements to advance to Finalist standing. Each semifinalist was asked to complete a detailed scholarship application, which included writing an essay and providing information about extracurricular activities, awards, and leadership positions.

"Semifinalists also had to have an outstanding academic record, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, and earn SAT or ACT scores that confirmed their qualifying test performance. From the semifinalist group, over 15,000 met finalist requirements. [...]

"Winners are the finalist candidates judged to have the strongest combination of academic skills and achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies."