

Rankin/Mon Valley/Pittsburgh Section National Council of Negro Women, INC.

“True Worth” Academic Scholarship Honoring V. Schnel Simmons

*“The true worth of a race must be measured by the character of its womanhood.”
- Mary McLeod Bethune*

Historical/Biographical Context:

Born on a farm near Maysville, South Carolina in 1875, Mary McLeod Bethune, the 15th child of formerly enslaved parents, rose from humble beginnings to become a world-renowned educator, civil and human rights leader, champion for women and young people, and an advisor to five U.S. presidents.

Education was the first step in her remarkable journey. The young Mary McLeod worked in the fields alongside her parents and siblings, until she enrolled at the age of 10 in the one-room Trinity Presbyterian Mission School. There, she learned to read, and, as she later noted, “the whole world opened to me.” She went on to study at Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago with the goal of becoming a missionary. When no missionary openings were available, she became a teacher, first at the Haines Institute in Augusta, Georgia and then at the Kendall Institute in Sumpter, South Carolina, where she met and married Albertus Bethune. The dream of opening her own school took Mary McLeod Bethune to Florida first to Palatka and then to Daytona Beach, where she started the school that would become Bethune- Cookman University.

As she worked to build the school that she founded, she also became a national leader on issues related to civil rights, education, women and young people. As president of the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, she organized the group to fight against school segregation and inadequate healthcare for black children. She later served as president of the prestigious National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and founded the National Council of Negro Women. She was appointed to numerous national commissions including the Coolidge Administration Child Welfare Conference, the Hoover Administration's National Commission on Child Welfare and Commission on Home Building and Home Ownership. She eventually became an advisor on minority affairs in the Roosevelt Administration, organizing two national conferences on the problem of black Americans.

While she gave counsel to presidents and made connections with America's elite, Mary McLeod Bethune was readily accessible to average men and women and the college students that she mothered and mentored.

Her access to people of power and privilege was never something she used to benefit herself. It was always an opportunity to gain access for those shut out of opportunities in our society. She enlisted leaders of government and industry to support her vision and dreams for her school in Daytona Beach, for social justice and positive change for all.

Bio Source: https://www.cookman.edu/about_bcu/history/our_founder.html

Award Details:

- The Rankin/Mon Valley/Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of Negro Women's Annual "True Worth" Scholarship is a tribute to the singular legacy of educational commitment and leadership excellence exhibited by our founder Mary McLeod Bethune. Its purpose is to provide financial assistance to a Black woman community leader seeking to further her education in college and beyond. V. Schnel Simmons was added to the name of our scholarship in memory of an outstanding woman who was an active member of our section.
- **One \$1,000 non-renewable scholarship is being offered.**
- **Award recipient will be notified on or by March 9, 2026, via both email and phone.**

Eligibility:

- Must identify as a woman of African descent
- Must be attending high school in Rankin, Mon Valley, or the Greater Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area and graduating in Spring of 2026
- Affiliation with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) is **NOT** a requirement for eligibility

Application Submission Requirements:

- Complete & attach application information form
- Submit a typed response to the essay topic on page three(3)
- Attach a 1-page personal resume including a list of extracurricular activities
- Provide a transcript from the current school you are attending, which includes GPA
- Provide **up to three** letters of recommendation. Letters must come from adult individuals with whom the candidate has had legitimate education, organization or religious affiliations, i.e. people who can attest to the character of the scholarship candidate. The letters must include the name, position and contact information of the person writing the letter of recommendation; the office(s) held by the student; in the organization. Letters from relatives and/or personal friends will not be accepted.
- Provide a copy of the letter of acceptance on letterhead from the college, university, or trade school you plan to attend.
- Submit completed application via email (rmvpscholarship2026@gmail.com) by **11:59 PM, Sunday, February 16, 2026**
- Email rmvpscholarship2026@gmail.com with any questions and/or concerns

Application Information Form:

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Permanent Address: _____

City: _____ State: PA Zip: _____

School Currently Attending: _____

Current GPA: _____ Expected Graduation Date: _____

Prospective College/University/Trade School: _____

Expected College Major: _____

Essay Question:

Write a 350-500 word essay that describes a time/times in your life when you demonstrated leadership and overcame school, social and/or family issues. Describe how you handled the challenges.

The Essay Response must be detailed, well planned, well thought out, and organized with supportive content that includes rich vocabulary, correct grammar and excellent mechanics.

The RMVP NCNW Scholarship Review Committee will use the Essay Response, along with the submitted letter(s) of recommendation and QPA in their final determination.