

**BRAIN**  
**HEALTH**  
**INITIATIVE**



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL  
TEACHING HOSPITAL

# *Letters of Gratitude*

*From the Inaugural Class of the*

*Brain Health Initiative*

*Brain Health Scholar Program*

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# BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE

## BHI TEAM



Dr. Stephanie Peabody



Dr. Erin Dunn



Dr. Alvaro  
Pascual-Leone



Dr. Jonathan  
Rosand



Dr. Rudy  
Tancig



Dr. Ana-Maria  
Vranceanu



Dr. Heidi  
Hanna



Dr. Shelley  
Carson



Kim  
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Paula  
Hancock



Leslie  
Williamson



Dr. Linda  
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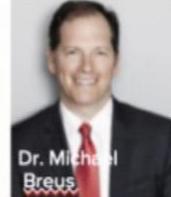
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# BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE

## BHI FACULTY



Dr. Stephanie Peabody



Dr. Shelley Carson

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Kim Miele

## STUDENT LIAISON



Keri McGahren

# 2020 INAUGURAL CLASS BRAIN HEALTH SCHOLARS



Max Banach  
Pine View School



Noelle Bencie  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Deeya Bhatt  
Seaside High School



Jordan Blake  
North Port High School



Helen Cala  
Riverview High School



Emma Cecili  
Lakewood Ranch High School



Rosanna Chan  
Pine View School



Piper Chan  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Ella Chatham  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Nicholas Coelho  
Riverview High School



Jhons Richard Costa  
Sarosa History Academy



Gabrielle Devita  
University of South Florida



William Diesel  
Rutgers College



Caroline Diesel  
Florida State University



Megan Dowdell  
Out-of-Door Academy



Phoebe Duval  
Lakewood Ranch High School - State College of Florida



Liya Elin  
Sarosa High School



Anthony Fabyanic  
Riverview High School



Valerie Fiori  
Lee One College of Diagnostic Medicine (CSDM) Bradenton



Georgis Flint  
Riverview High School



Gabriela Gonzalez  
Riverview High School



Hilten Hudson  
Out-of-Door Academy



Charlotte Hunnewell  
Cohasset High School



Lindsey Hyer  
University of Florida



(Grace) Ziwei Jiang  
Pine View School



Grace Johnson  
Pine View School



Matthew Konkol  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Noah Kunkel  
Pine View School



Denny Lu  
Manatee High School



Barrett (Bear) Mancini  
Homeschool



Blake Martini  
Cohasset High School



Jake Miele  
Manatee High School



Dana Molina  
Riverview High School



William Moragne  
Riverview High School



Erick Morales  
Pine View School



Jonah Patterson  
Gadsden River High School



Ashley Pelton  
Pine View School



Annabel Peterson  
Boston University



Julianna (Julie) Pung  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Anton Rappold  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Florella Reccioni  
Bradley River High School



Kaylen Rivers  
Out-of-Door Academy



Hillary Rouse  
University of South Florida



Diana Rudel  
Riverview High School



Vincent Scuteri  
Florida State University



Joshua Segebre  
Riverview High School



Gabriella Siro  
Seaside High School



Edward Shen  
Pine View School



Olivia Sherry  
Out-of-Door Academy



Giovanni Simon  
North Port High School



Supawadee Surattamont  
Out-of-Door Academy



Victoria Thompson  
Blessington Christian School



Megan Touchstone  
State College of Florida Collegiate School



Liam Tvenstrup  
Bradley River High School



Reece Whitmore  
Out-of-Door Academy



Jonathan (Nathan) Widjaja  
Pine View School



Ary Wolfe-Herman  
Sarosa High School



Janyla Woodie  
Bradley River High School



Tianyu (Danny) Zhang  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School



Alexa Ziff  
Riverview High School

## NOT PICTURED

Eriel Crispin  
Manatee High School

Jorge Hernandez  
Riverview High School



## 2021 Brain Health Scholar Quotes of Gratitude

- “Being a scholar has enhanced my ability to work in teams, discuss sensitive issues among others, collect data as a researcher and conduct surveys for those in my community. Through this program I have learned more about myself with respect to my own, personal mental health and the various perspectives of those around me.”
- “This program has taught me so much about brain health and how each choice I make during the day has an overall effect on my brain health in both the present and the future.”
- “Since being in the program, I have adjusted my sleep schedule and started to eat more balanced meals to support the health of my brain.”
- “The program heightened my awareness on the global health crisis related to brain illness and taught me that brain health is more than just being free of disease; brain health is an integral part to our overall well-being.”
- “I learned that I am in charge of my own brain health and that the choices I make on a daily basis such as exercising, eating, sleeping- impact not only my physical function but my cognitive and emotional wellbeing.”
- “I am able to educate my classmates at school about the current global health crisis related to brain illness.”
- “From the Brain Health Scholar Zoom lectures I've attended, I learned more about brain health than I would have ever thought was possible in such a short amount of time.”
- “I was able to learn how social media, physical exercise, and even the foods you eat can affect the way your brain grows throughout your lifetime.”
- “In future discussions with people I meet or already know, I feel confident discussing brain health.”
- “I learned that our brains, though incredible and multifaceted, are not keeping up with our continuously elongating life spans.”
- “I didn't expect that my mental health, my physical health, and even my grades would improve due to my involvement in this study, but they did.”
- “Without the Brain Health Initiative, I wouldn't have known what direction to take in improving my own life.”
- “During my time at the Brain Health Initiative, I learned how to be a better researcher and work with a dedicated team to collect accurate, scientific data.”
- “The program taught me multiple important aspects that go into maintaining one's brain health, as well as the extent to which brain illness is present in society today - more so now than ever before.”
- “I know now that brain health is about the health of the whole individual, not merely isolated to the brain itself.”
- “One of my most important takeaways from the first semester has been that "brain health" *is* health of ourselves, and should not be treated as an inaccessible, specialized area.”
- “The more I learned, the more I realized how pertinent brain health is to my own community.”

## **Letters from The Brain Health Scholars**

Dear Generous Supporters,

I wanted to start off by thanking you for giving the chance to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. As a senior at Pine View, unique opportunities like these don't present themselves without generous help from community organizations. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative gave me an unparalleled learning experience I couldn't find in the classroom.

The program taught me how important brain health is to everyone, not just a select few. I also learned about collecting data, surveys, working with a team, the pillars of brain health, and risk factors and protective factors of brain health.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. We can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this.

With Appreciation and Thanks,



Max Banach  
Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Noelle Bencie and I am a senior at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton, FL. For the past 6 months, I have been a part of the Brain Health Scholars Program. This program has helped me understand the importance of protecting brain health, fighting brain illness, and improving performance for all ages throughout Bradenton and Sarasota County. When deciding whether or not to participate, I found that the specialized research would allow me to discover an alternate aspect of my career interests while helping my community as a whole. I have been beyond pleased with the experience thus far.

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to participate in this amazing program. The Brain Health Scholars Program strengthens local students who are looking to increase their understanding of brain health and support a community willing to understand varying brain health issues.

As a Brain Health Scholar I have had the ability to make my own choices while educating others on the importance of every day brain health. With each survey and research task, I am able to delve deeper into the diversity of mental wellbeing that I would rarely consider if not introduced through this unique program. Being a scholar has enhanced my ability to work in teams, discuss sensitive issues among others, collect data as a researcher and conduct surveys for those in my community. Through this program I have learned more about myself with respect to my own, personal mental health and the various perspectives of those around me.

Being part of this program has been a privilege that I have not taken lightly. I am grateful for the opportunity to work and learn from a captivating group of people who have altered my perspective as a member of society. I hope more students are able to be part of the Brain Health Scholars Program and gain the same insight I did on the importance of fighting brain illness and improving mental wellbeing as a whole.

This has truly been an amazing experience and I am extremely thankful to have had your support throughout the program.

All the best,



Noelle J. Bencie  
Saint Stephen's Episcopal School Class of 2021

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Deeya Bhatt and I am currently a junior at Southeast High School. This past year, I have been involved with the Brain Health program and it's an honor being a scholar.

Thank you for helping to provide me and my fellow scholars the chance and opportunity to be involved with a program like this, as it is closely related to our community and peers. With the help of your contribution, I was able to learn more about my community and how the people in it have been affected. Through all the Zoom calls, meetings, surveys, and data, I have been able to increase my knowledge on this issue and I didn't realize how many forms this issue could take and how my family and friends, as well as myself, unknowingly are affected by this problem every day.

This has been an incredible opportunity for me as I had originally joined because I thought it was focusing on mental health such as depression and anxiety which I have personally been affected by in the past. As I got more involved with this program, not only did I learn that these mental healths also affect many other people, but that there are so many other brain health problems that almost every person deals with every day but no one seems to talk about how it affects them. I have learned ways we can prevent or get around certain situations to ensure that we take control of a seemingly negative situation and to reassure that we are in charge of our own brain health. I also learned how brain health is physical function, cognitive function, and emotional function and wellbeing.

With the knowledge I have acquired through this program, not only can I take it into account as I pursue my dream of having an occupation in the medical field, but I could use this information in my daily life to ensure my personal brain health stays safe and healthy. Additionally, I can spread the information I have learned to my friends, family, or even complete strangers in hopes that their life, or even their day, can get better as long as they know they can take control.

Once again, thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of this program. Especially with the pandemic going on this year, I know a lot of people have been struggling with self-isolation and have been feeling alone and this program let me know that there is hope and that there is something that can be done to help the people who feel helpless.

With appreciation and thanks,



Deeya Bhatt

Southeast High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Jordan Blake and I go to Sarasota High School. I am a Brain Health Scholar and I applied to be an integral part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program because I aspire to pursue psychology as a career. I am greatly appreciative of your support for this program and further inspiring me to pursue my passion for learning about brain health. I am honored to be a Brain Health Scholar. Through the class, I was able to find like minded peers that are also passionate about the brain sciences. A topic that resonated with me was how our brain changes with age and how certain stimuli such as lack of sleep or high technology use could speed up that aging process.

With the information gained from the Brain Health Scholar program, I am motivated to take the steps to further improve my brain health and the brain health of others. This program can positively impact our society in a positive way if more teens become Brain Health Scholars like me.

Once again, I am thankful for this critical learning opportunity. It changed the way I thought and the way I interpreted the meaning of self-care as well.

With appreciation and thanks,



Jordan Blake

Sarasota High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Helen Cala Guerra, and I am a student at Sarasota High School in Florida. I chose to be part of the Brain Health Scholar Initiative because I would love to explore neuroscience and make an impact on the lives of a great number of individuals who are affected by brain diseases.

Because of the great impact this program has made in mine and others' lives, I am incredibly grateful for your support towards the Brain Health Initiative.

Through our Zoom calls, I've been able to meet other students that are interested in brain health, take note on ways of improving my brain health, and how to help others with their brain health. I have also learned incredible facts about the brain. Most importantly for me, I have had the opportunity of working with an incredible group of individuals.

With the knowledge I have gained from the Brain Health Scholar program, I will share the lists and information I have with the people around me. In the Suncoast area, I will continue to assist in the program's research and volunteering opportunities. More importantly, I have been inspired to continue to learn about brain health and how we can prevent something as life-threatening and heartbreaking as a brain disease. I will also be joining Duke groups that are centered around brain health and hopefully engage in research regarding new brains.

Once again, thank you for the incredible opportunity to be part of the Brain Health Scholar Initiative program. We will change how individuals care and look at brain health, and I am incredibly proud of being part of it.

Thank you again,



Helen Cala Guerra

Sarasota High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Emma Cecil, I am a Brain Health Scholar, and I am a junior at Lakewood Ranch High School. I applied to be a part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program so that not only could I be a part of something that will make a big impact, but also so that I could possibly learn prevention methods for Alzheimer's, a disease that runs in my family.

Thank you for giving me, as well as, other students in the Bradenton/Sarasota community the opportunity to be a part of the inaugural class of Brain Health Scholars. The Brain Health Initiative worked hard with your support to make this amazing experience possible.

The program has taught me how my brain health controls the health of the rest of my body. Additionally, something I will never forget is the great reminder that brain health IS health. While I may not have the desire to go into the medical field like many of the other Brain Health Scholars, I plan to use my knowledge of brain health with my friends and people I meet in the community. Since being in the program I have adjusted my sleep schedule and started to eat more balanced meals to support the health of my brain. I believe the Brain Health Scholar program should continue because it provides an education to students about their brain that they do not receive in a basic health class in school. Even though many students do not receive an in-depth education on their brain and how to keep it healthy, it is very important because our brain is our most important organ.

The Brain Health Scholar Program gave me not only an education on brain health, but hope for the future generations. I hope that we can keep our brains healthy and fight back against all mental illnesses, but especially Alzheimer's. It has been a privilege to be a part of this program, and I can only hope that other students will be able to gain the same knowledge I have.

Thank you,



Emma Cecil

Lakewood Ranch High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Rosenna Chan, and I am a Brain Health Scholar attending Pine View School. Over the summer, I discovered the Brain Health Initiative while looking for ways to continue staying involved in the community while at home. As a student who is passionate about both science and medicine, the program's mission really spoke to my interests and piqued my curiosities which is why I applied to be part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program. I wanted to learn more about brain health and scientific research and the program definitely exceeded my expectations. Thank you for providing me with this incredible opportunity to improve my local and global community and work toward a better understanding of brain health. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative will be able to provide even more opportunities for students like me as well as improve the overall health of the Suncoast community.

During my time as a Brain Health Scholar, collaborating with dedicated scientists, educators, and fellow students helped me broaden my perspective on how we define health and develop initiatives to find solutions to some of the most pressing issues that we face today. The program heightened my awareness on the global health crisis related to brain illness and taught me that brain health is more than just being free of disease; brain health is an integral part to our overall wellbeing. Brain health IS health. With this in my mind, I also realized that I am in charge of my own brain health and how important the choices I make today and every day can affect this status. While engaging in discussions with the other scholars, it was surprising to hear how we all shared similar concerns in regard to brain health proving that it is an issue that greatly extends into the larger community which is why the Brain Health Initiative is an important opportunity for the Suncoast to understand and address this topic. In addition to learning about the science, the program also provided me with the chance to observe how scientific research is conducted outside of the laboratory. It was fascinating to learn how to obtain data from the population using sample surveys and know that the information being collected will help guide the initiative's overarching longitudinal study.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I plan to use the knowledge I gained to be a champion for brain health wherever I go and be an innovative and responsible scientist in the future. As a Brain Health Scholar, I was able to interact with so many individuals from across the Sarasota and Bradenton area to share ideas, learn together, and create solutions, and I hope that more students will have the same opportunity to participate in this amazing program so that together, we can work towards improving the Brain Health of our own communities and across the globe.

With appreciation and thanks,



Rosenna Chan

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hello! My name is Piper Chan and I am a Junior at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton, Florida. I've been a Brain Health Scholar the past semester, and am hoping to continue with the program for the next semester. I applied to be a Scholar because I have a passion for psychology and the brain, and figured the BHI was the best way for me to get my foot in the door before college. I am interested in majoring in Psychology at university, so clearly being a Brain Health Scholar was the right choice!

Thank you so much for the opportunity to work with the Brain Health Initiative. It was one of the highlights of my semester and I am so thankful for your contribution. The program heavily influenced my decision on pursuing higher courses of study on psychology and brain anatomy, and without your graciousness I would not have had such a privilege.

Working with the Brain Health Initiative allowed me to learn more about the brain and how to combat brain illnesses. It also taught me how to work as a team at a time in which teamwork is challenging. Not being able to work with my fellow Scholars in person was difficult, but because of the Zoom meetings I was able to overcome these challenges and connect with kids my age who have the same interests as me. I doubt that I would have met them had it not been the BHI, and for that I am very grateful.

I plan to use the knowledge I received from the BHI meetings when dealing with my own "bad brain days" and sharing it to the people around me who are most vulnerable to brain illness, like my mom and grandparents. I also will use this information as a go into college. Once again, I thank you sincerely for your contribution in providing me the opportunity to be a Brain Health Scholar. I am so grateful for all the hard work and time that was put in to create this program.

Sincerely,



Piper Chan

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Elia Chatham and I am a Brain Health Scholar from the class of 2021 at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton, Florida. This research program that I am apart of is incredible. The research that is taking place in the Suncoast region is incredible. For the first time, we have a group of individuals dedicated to the science, destigmatization, prevention, and cure of illness in our brains. A high functioning brain is truly so important to us, our daily lives, and our experiences. Being a part of this community, the Brain Health Initiative, I have learned how brain health is an illness and preventable. I learned the importance of taking care of our brains for this prevention too. I learned about stress resiliency and how that helps keep our brains healthy. I learned the science behind some of my friends' mental illnesses and I learned how to protect my brain. I learned that brain health is apart of our health and should be treated as such.

Without your contribution to the Brain Health Initiative, I would not have this new understanding and hope for brain health. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity. I know that continued research will cause a visible change of heart and change of mind in this community, consequentially making large changes elsewhere with increased knowledge and understanding. Thank you for taking a step into the unknowns of the brain, trusting my advisors' conviction of brain health importance and prevention. You truly are making history.

With Appreciation and Thanks,



Elia Jane Chatham

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Nicholas Coelho, I go to Riverview High School and am a Brain Health Scholar. I applied to be an integral part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program because of my interests in health sciences and my desire to give back to my community.

Thank you for supporting the Brain Health Initiative and making the opportunity possible for me to be a Brain Health Scholar. Through the past Brain Health Scholar lectures, over Zoom, that I have had the pleasure of being a part of, I have learned how important brain habits are, contributing to a person's overall health overtime. Habits that relieve stress, exercise memory, and encourage sociability, among other habits, improve long term brain health and can aid in the prevention of age related problems. I have also learned much more from the Brain Health Scholar lectures via Zoom and plan on using this knowledge in building healthy habits for myself and promoting brain health for my friends and family.

I plan on using this knowledge as I study and research neuroscience in college. The Bran Health Scholars program is important and should continue because, not only does it actively teach students about the brain, it also serves as an example of how scientists can investigate and contribute to the world around them. Once again, I appreciate all of your support and thank you for making this opportunity as a Brain Health Scholar possible.

Best regards,



Nicholas Coelho  
Riverview High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Eriel Crispin, I am currently a junior at Manatee high school in Bradenton, Florida. I joined the BHS program around August and I am glad I did. One of my school mentors sent me a link to the program description and I was swiftly interested in joining.

It was an honor to be a part of this wonderful learning experience. Without your support, the possibility of this learning experience might have not been possible. So, I extend my deepest gratitude for your support for making this reality.

The program taught me a lot of things and gave me things to think about that I never really thought of. For example, Brain illness and prevention, that is something I feel my community in general ignores. The BHI program has made me an advocate for brain health and illness prevention and I plan on sharing information learned with my community. Along with that, the BHI program also gave me an introduction into surveying and collecting data, something I think is very important because with data we learn. Most importantly, BHI gave us some tips and ways to deal with our own forms of stress that I also plan to share.

Overall, the program was worthwhile and again, an honor to be a part of. A very valuable and beneficial program and I am thankful, I hope others in the future can share the experience I had with this program. Brain health is very important and has been ignored for too long, it is time for change.

With sincere gratitude,



Eriel Crispin

Manatee High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

I am Gabrielle DeVita, a senior at the University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee. I am a pre-med student, incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. Brain illness has afflicted me personally and the field of neurology is what I wish to specialize in. My passion for medicine was ignited in me at a young age. My mother passed away from a brain tumor, specifically, a glioblastoma, while fortunately, my father survived a brain aneurysm. Therefore, our home did not go untouched by brain-related medical issues.

I am honored to be a Brain Health Initiative Scholar, participating in a study that promotes awareness of something with which I hold with high regard: brain health. It is with huge thanks to your support that this program even exists. Thank you so much for this opportunity. This program has truly come to life with your support.

Throughout the first term of the Brain Health Scholar program, I have learned very impactful information from such excellent leaders, such as Dr. Peabody and Dr. Carson. I have struggled with Brain Health personally during my time as a pre-med student. The initiative has taught me that I am not alone. I learned that I am in charge of my own brain health and that the choices I make on a daily basis such as exercising, eating, sleeping- impact not only my physical function but my cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

I wish to continue to actively assist in creating brain healthy communities in my hometown. I was born and raised in Sarasota, Florida, and through this study, brain health scholars are able to contribute valuable knowledge, regarding the health and well-being of the community. I really hope more students are able to join this program and learn the valuable lessons I have. This is a longitudinal study and will have impacts far beyond outreach. It is essential to emphasize the role the brain plays in our health, especially during this time where we are all afflicted by the virus and unforeseen circumstances.

With gratitude,



Gabrielle DeVita

University of South Florida

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Will Diesel and I'm a sophomore at Rollins College. I'm from Sarasota, Florida and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn as part of your Brain Health Initiative.

With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to offer my sister and I the privilege of learning more as we progress through college. The program taught me a great deal in terms of taking care of myself and helping others take care for themselves.

I specifically learned about collecting data to help future generations, as well as working with a team of interested students in Sarasota learning about brain health too. I hope that other students have this opportunity to learn about Brain Health as it is a vital ingredient to feeling mentally strong.

It's truly inspirational to think about the number of lives we can change by simply learning and teaching others. I feel blessed to be a part of the Brain Health Initiative as a result. Thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity, as I will remember it for a long time.

Sincerely,



Will Diesel

Rollins College

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Caroline Diesel, and I am a sophomore at Florida State University. I am from Sarasota, Florida and am currently studying Media Communications. I am so beyond grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program as I have also always been interested in health and medicine since I can remember.

This program has taught me so much about brain health and how each choice I make during the day has an overall effect on my brain health in both the present and the future. With your support, I now have a clearer understanding of how to take care of myself and reach out to help others around me, especially in a college setting.

My favorite part of the experience has definitely been being able to work with other students who are interested and motivated to learn more about improving Brain Health around our communities. It is truly uplifting to see how many people my own age care about Brain Health and want to make a difference in understanding how our everyday lives affect our Brain Health.

I was able to learn about collecting data and take surveys regarding risk factors and protective factors of Brain Health, which is extremely beneficial to understand for anyone in any community. Your support has provided me with knowledge about my own Brain Health, but also has enabled me to share my knowledge with my peers as well as my family members.

It was such a privilege to be a part of this extraordinary program and inspirational to me to see how large of a change can be made by understanding more about our Brain Health and sharing our knowledge throughout our communities.

Thank you so much for the amazing opportunity and I truly feel so blessed to be a part of changing the future of Brain Health. I hope many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important and outstanding program.

With so much appreciation and thanks,



Caroline Diesel

Florida State University

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Megan Dowdell. I am a Brain Health Scholar who attends the Out of Door Academy in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I applied to be a member of the Brain Health Scholar Program because I wanted to bring awareness to the topic of brain health and brain illnesses in my community.

Attending the Brain Health Scholar lectures through zoom has allowed me to work with my peers on a shared passion to better our community. This opportunity has allowed me to grow my knowledge in an area that is essential to my health. I am able to educate my classmates at school about the current global health crisis related to brain illness. We would not be living without a healthy brain, and I am glad that I am able to be a part of this organization that is so important to our Suncoast region.

Although I am planning to study engineering in college, I am so grateful to be able to expand my knowledge in one of my interests that I may also be able to pursue in college through a double major or a minor. I am also incredibly impressed that I have had this opportunity as a teenager. The Brain Health Scholar program is giving countless opportunities for young adults to better their community, work with others, and pursue passions while teaching us in a way we never thought was possible.

I am so grateful to have been a part of this program and I look forward to hearing about other students participating in this incredible experience.

With appreciation and thanks,



Megan Dowdell

Out of Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Phoebe Duval and I'm a junior at Lakewood Ranch High School. I am a Brain Health Scholar. I applied because I wanted to be part of an up-and-coming program of people who, just like me, wanted to learn more about the brain and its functions, no matter the age of the brain's owner.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for your support; without it, I would not have the opportunity to be a Brain Health Scholar.

Throughout the program, I have learned a vast number of new things, but the one that has stuck out to me the most is the overall topic of emotional wellbeing. We have control over our brain health and I have learned ways to improve my own brain health including meditation, taking deep breaths, and limiting screen use/time spent on social media. In addition, I found it fascinating to learn about the impact our environment has on developing, mature, and aging brains. Being part of this program allowed me to work in a team, collect scientific data, and meet other people my age who were as interested in the brain as I am!

It was a privilege to be part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. We can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this.

Sincerely appreciative and thankful,



Phoebe Duval

Lakewood Ranch High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Valerie Fiore and I am currently a 2nd-year medical student at LECOM. I am a Brain Health Scholar and am writing in absolute appreciation of this initiative.

I applied to this program since I have a profound passion for neurosciences, as I have obtained my undergraduate degree in molecular neuroscience. I have enjoyed attending the very informative lectures given by the insightful leaders of this program. What I am most thankful for is the opportunity to meet other community members, especially local high school students that have demonstrated their fervor for neuroscience, psychology and their impact on the lifespan. It excites me to think that these passionate students might one day pursue a field in medicine or the sciences.

I am forever thankful for the opportunity to have taken part in this initiative and wish you many successes in your future endeavors.

Regards,



Valerie Fiore

OMS-II, LECOM 2023

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Georgia Kate Flint, and I am a junior at Riverview High School in Sarasota, Florida. I am blessed to be a part of the Brain Health Scholar Program; this program has already taught me so much as an individual, but also has worked to create profound impacts in the community. I applied to be a part of this organization so that I could assist in improving physical, mental, and emotional brain health, as well as learn further information about the career field I aspire to go into.

I am beyond grateful for your support towards the Brain Health Initiative, and thus the Brain Health Scholar Program. Without your support, BHI's positive impact on the community and young people could not be possible. The long term benefits that this initiative will have will make your support even more helpful in the future.

As I mentioned before, I have already learned so much as an individual in the Brain Health Scholars Program. For the first time, I had the opportunity to hear that the future is looking bright and there are things we can do to prevent brain illnesses. I have learned that I am in charge of my own brain and health, so BHI has helped my personal brain health along with others. Not only have I learned prevention techniques for brain illness, but I have also had great opportunities to collaborate and learn from fellow students, which aided me in gaining perspective. Thus, this initiative and program have sincerely influenced my vision on the future of brain health.

From the knowledge I have gained from the Brain Health Scholar Program, I strive to help the people that surround me put their brain health first. I hope to start my influence by working within my local community first, but plan to have an impact in the global atmosphere as I grow older and pursue my interest in medicine. The Brain Health Scholar Program will continue to help me develop as a student, learner, knower, and influencer, so that I can discover more ways to have a world wide impression.

Again, I would like to make sure my appreciation of your support is made known, as your support of the program that I know and love has had an inexplicable impact in the local and global community. I hope to continue with the Brain Health Scholar Program for as long as I can, since I genuinely enjoy having a part and it will aid in my growing as a knower. Thus, thank you for your support and for your generous support of this initiative and program.

Thank you,



Georgia Kate Flint - Riverview High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Gabriela Gonzalez-Duarte and I am a student at Riverview High School in Sarasota, Florida. I applied to be a member of the BHI because it was an extremely unique opportunity to learn from great minds about brain health and what it really means while being virtually surrounded by students from all backgrounds with a drive to learn and serve the community.

Thank you for supporting the Brain Health Initiative and creating an opportunity for me to become a Brain Health Scholar.

The BHI had many interesting and informative classes but by far my favorite was when we watched the Netflix documentary “ The Social Dilemma” and discussed the effects of social media in society, and how it affected our brains while sharing our own experiences when dealing with social media.

For me, having a brain routine is as important as having an exercise routine because my brain deserves to be treated with respect and care. In the end, the brain is not the most important organ in our bodies without it due reasons. I am sure that with the help of the BHI we can make a big impact in the Suncoast region and teach more people about the importance of brain health and how to prevent brain illness.

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,



Gabriela Gonzalez-Duarte

Riverview High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Jorge Hernandez-Perez and I attend Riverview High School. I am a Brain Health Scholar under the Suncoast Brain Health Initiative. I am writing to thank you for the support you have given not only to this wonderful initiative, but to us Brain Health Scholars. I first became a Brain Health Scholar so I could educate myself regarding vital community issues of mental health. I realized that with the mentoring of professionals working for the Brain Health Initiative, I could aid in conducting research to tackle this aforementioned issue head on.

However, I quickly learned that “Brain Health” is an umbrella term for concepts vastly more important. Rather than simply researching mental health, I learned that “Brain Health” is a simultaneous physical, cognitive, and emotional function for wellbeing.

Now, I have the capacity to take the important knowledge the Brain Health Initiative has granted me and spread to members of my community while concurrently applying it to my own life! I am excited for the positive impacts the Brain Health Initiative will have in the Suncoast area, and remain ever more delighted for the future prospect of learning more as a Brain Health Scholar.

Once again, I wanted to thank you for your endless support of this, truly, life-changing community project.

Thank you,

Jorge Hernandez-Perez  
Riverview High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Hilton Hudson, and I am one of the Brain Health Scholars.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students.

The program taught me even more about brain health than what I had already learned, and how important the choices I make today and every day affect my brain health. I also learned about collecting data, surveys, working with a team, the pillars of brain health, and risk factors and protective factors of brain health.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. We can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this.

With appreciation and thanks,



Hilton Hudson

Grade 11

The Out of Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Lindsey Hyer. I am a student at the University of Florida and a part of the Brain Health Scholar Program. I applied to take part in the inaugural class as I am studying to be a pharmacist. For so long, I have loved learning about medication and the impact it can have on the human body. As technology and medicine has increased our physical age, our mental age hasn't advanced as greatly. The mission of this program intrigued me and I desired to be a part of the project that I believed would be a difference in the scientific community.

I cannot thank you enough for supporting the Brain Health Initiative, which ultimately allowed me to become a Brain Health Scholar. I have learned so much throughout this semester and am excited to continue this journey. This is an amazing opportunity for the Suncoast region as we are finally addressing the global health crisis related to brain illness.

This project has allowed me to learn so many things that I will take with me as I continue my efforts of becoming a pharmacist. The research work that I have taken part in will allow me to have new perspectives as I learn new things. I hope the Brain Health Initiative continues to grow and succeed, as well as allow other students to have the same opportunity I have had.

Thank you again for your support!

Sincerely,



Lindsey Hyer

University of Florida

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hello! I'm Grace Jiang, a current senior at Pine View School. I'm a Brain Health Scholar in the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program. I love biology and wanted to learn more about it, so I applied to be a part of this program.

I just wanted to thank you guys for this one-of-a-kind opportunity. Without your support for the Brain Health Initiative, this amazing program wouldn't have been possible. I'm truly thankful for the support you've given to this program!

From the Brain Health Scholar Zoom lectures I've attended, I learned more about brain health than I would have ever thought was possible in such a short amount of time. Just a few examples are what I've learned about the vital role of the brain within the human body, the ins and outs of executing scientific research, and the importance of brain health for the entire lifespan. I've also met dozens of other young scholars with similar interests to mine, and I'm glad to say that we really formed a community over our Zoom lectures.

In future discussions with people I meet or already know, I feel confident discussing brain health. I now also have the resources to know how I will maintain my own brain health as I get older. I hope to use my newly acquired knowledge to benefit my community for future generations to come!

Again, thank you so much for your support!

Best,



Grace Jiang

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Grace Johnson. I am a Junior at Pine View School and a Brain Health Scholar. In hearing of The Brain Health Scholars program, I immediately knew I had to apply. I have known for a long time that I want to go into neuroscience research, and have been eager to get a headstart on it. For over a year, I had been searching for a study or a lab to participate in, and then, right here in Sarasota, I was given the greatest opportunity — thanks to you all.

Not only has your support given me the chance to jumpstart my hopeful career, but you all have given a gift of better mental as well as physical health to me and my whole community. This contribution is invaluable.

In starting BHS lectures over zoom, I expected to learn about the brain's anatomy and how to conduct a scientific study. And, indeed, I did learn about these things. I learned that our brains, though incredible and multifaceted, are not keeping up with our continuously elongating life spans. They start shrinking at the age of 30, what used to be around the end of an average human life. This process slows neuroplasticity — the process of forming new intellectual connections and neurological pathways — and halts neurogenesis — the ability to grow new brain cells or neurons. This has caused a crisis across the world in the form of degenerative brain disorders, like Alzheimer's and Dementia.

Among this terrifying yet fascinating information, I also learned that there is a way to slow down the brain's aging process: boosting "brain reserve." On its own, "brain reserve" is one's ability to cope with increasing brain damage while still functioning successfully or at least adequately.

Boosting "brain reserve" sounds like something 'easier said than done,' but, at least on an individual level, it really isn't! That is what is so exciting about this study. The brilliance of The Brain Health Initiative is in its simplicity. "Brain reserve" is dependent on lifestyle choices; from one's diet to physical activity level to the magnitude of their social interactions, an individual's day-to-day behavior is what determines the capabilities of brain function after the aging process inevitably begins.

This information is, at risk of sounding my age, really really really cool. But, as was aforementioned, I expected to learn information of this sort. What I didn't initially expect, though, was that I would learn things that I could apply to my *reallife*, outside of my interest in neuroscience. I didn't expect that my mental health, my physical health, and even my grades would improve due to my involvement in this study, but they did.

To be blunt, my brain is kind of messed up. To date, I have been diagnosed with ADHD without hyperactivity, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Panic Disorder. Before the BHS lectures, I had received resources and developed certain coping mechanisms to handle the burdens these disorders placed on my day-to-day life. It is where my interest in neuroscience sprouted from. However, in participating in this inaugural class of Brain Health Scholars, I was introduced to a whole new world of ways to combat my mental struggles.

The following are some of the things I learned about during BHS lectures that I have implemented in my daily routine:

- I run a mile or two before studying; this helps combat my ADHD as my brain can focus and absorb information more efficiently.
- I have deleted social media; this lowers my stress concerning the outside world and has forced me to spend my time more productively.
- When I feel a panic attack coming on, I counter the feelings of stress with those of gratitude; I learned that gratitude cannot exist in the same place as anxiety. This, in particular, has been a total game changer — I even wrote an article about it for one of my school publications.
- I turn my phone and all other screens off about a half hour before bed and meditate; this simply helps me sleep better, which helps me function better as a whole.

These examples are far from everything I have put into practice from the program, they are just what has been the most revolutionary for me, personally. The following are some results I credit to these changes recommended to me during the BHS lectures:

- I have only had one panic attack in the past 3 months. I used to have them, at least, once per week.
- I turned both my C in AP Calculus and my B in AP Chemistry into As. I have a 4.7 GPA, which is now maintained (and most-likely rising:)).
- My SAT score rose by 90 points.
- I was overweight, but have lost about 13 pounds since October.
- Generally, I am happier.

Of course, the healthy thing to do is to give myself credit for these achievements, which I do. However, without The Brain Health Initiative, I wouldn't have known what direction to take in improving my own life. What's crazy is that my life is not even close to the only one that this study is ameliorating. The Brain Health Initiative is making our community a living laboratory, and I can't wait to see the results. With the continuation of this study, the Suncoast Region will thrive, just as I have.

Thank you for giving me and my community a path to happier, healthier lives. Thank you for supporting The Brain Health Initiative and The Brain Health Scholars Program. I cannot begin to put into words my full gratitude for your generosity.

Wishing you the same health and happiness you have granted our community.

Most sincerely,



Grace Johnson-Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Matthew William Konkol. I am a senior highschool student at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton, Florida, and I am a Brain Health Scholar. I applied to the Brain Health Scholar Program to learn more about how to improve the health of others and mine.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students.

I have learned so much about brain health over the last semester, but there was one piece of information that stood out to me: life span does not equate to brain span. All too often, our brains limit the lifespan of humans, not the rest of our bodies. In order to increase humanity's lifespan (and thus positively impact all facets of society), we must exercise significant attention to improving brain health.

After learning this, I have personally made changes such as drinking more water and sleeping more to improve my own brain health. I also plan on spreading this knowledge to friends and family members when I notice they might be damaging their brain health.

Thanks again for this opportunity. It was a privilege to be able to help create the survey which will be used as a longitudinal study over many future years to learn about and improve the brain health of my community.

Sincerely,



Matthew William Konkol

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Noah Kunkel and I am a senior at Pine View School. I was a member of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program, and I would like to express my gratitude for your support of this initiative. Ever since I took an advanced psychology course in my junior year, I have been fascinated behind the intricate functionality of the human brain. Being a part of this program has allowed me to expand upon these interests, and take a new approach to exploring the human mind.

Over the course of the past semester of the program, I have been given the opportunity to analyze data regarding the brain health of teens from the Suncoast region, as well as their perception of the brain health of our community as a whole. Doing so has emphasized the fact that brain illness truly is a global health crisis, and its complications can apply to anyone.

Furthermore, the development of technology and increasing awareness of brain illness has made it possible for the words “brain illness” and “prevention” to be used in the same sentence. This idea has been the cornerstone of my participation in the Brain Health Scholars Program. Through the continuation of this program, signs of brain illness can be identified proactively, and steps can be taken to remedy them before they take a toll on our community. The accessibility to treatments for certain brain illnesses is unpredictable, so by further expanding this go-ahead approach, the brain health of millions could be accounted for before it’s too late.

Once again, I’d like to express how thankful I am for this program and the fact that it was made possible through your support. I am proud to be a Brain Health Scholar, and to have been able to be a small part of a huge movement towards mental wellness for all.

Sincerely,



Noah Kunkel

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Denny Lu, junior at Manatee High School in Bradenton, Florida. I am currently part of the influential group, the Brain Health Initiative, as a Brain Health Scholar. As part of the Brain Health Scholar Program's inaugural class, I was eager to expand my breadth of knowledge on mental wellness and our need for community health in west Florida. We have learned so much about the science of brain health and the importance of preventing brain illness.

With your support, my peers and I have had the opportunity to conduct revolutionary research in our community. We've explored the boundless possibilities of prevention and learning about our brains that no one has known before. During my time at the Brain Health Initiative, I learned how to be a better researcher and work on a dedicated team to collect accurate, scientific data. I hope to use this knowledge and learning to put into practice to help our wonderful community.

The fact of the matter is brain health IS health! Our community needs a network of support to educate all age groups about healthy habits to ensure that our brains can keep up with our lifestyles and lifespan. Through the Brain Health Scholar program, I hope to share my eye opening learning to our community to find ways to prevent, mitigate, or lessen the impact of brain degradation and illness.

By the end of this year, I hope to partner with my local high school and the Brain Health Initiative to spread awareness about Brain Health's importance. For our generation, we are always dealing with stress and uncertainty. My goal is to be the founder of a Brain Health Club at my school to share the importance of this research and inspire a new generation of scholars equally committed to serving the Suncoast's health and brain needs.

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity you've provided for all of us to reach out to our community and learn more about its needs. Through your support and the Brain Health Initiative's expertise, we have hope for a healthier Suncoast!

Best Regards,



Denny Lu

Manatee High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Bear Mancini, I am homeschooled and a participant in the Brain Health Scholars Program. I applied for the scholar position because I believed it would be a great learning experience and I could contribute a unique, if not, revolutionary take. I have cerebral palsy, which meant that my take on brain health would be a little different.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for creating this program, as it has taught me new information about the brain and has helped me understand my community.

The Brain Health Initiative is a step to, for the first time ever, being able to pre-empt and prevent physical, mental, and emotional distress, I was astounded to learn that the program could lead to being able to prevent mental illnesses in the future, over just negating symptoms of them. The program also taught me a few simple practices to help maintain and strengthen my brain, which I will use myself, as well as my family.

The Brain Health Initiative has led not only to a learning experience and an opportunity to the community, but a way to improve myself.

The Brain Health Initiative will not only lead to happier and healthier communities, but may also point to a pivotal scientific discovery in the future. It was a privilege to contribute to the community this way and help propel neuroscience forward. I hope that you will continue to support the Brain Health Initiative in the future, as it will only grow exponentially.

With Greatest Gratitude,



Barrett Mancini

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Blake Martini and I am a junior at Cohasset Highschool in Massachusetts. For the last six months I have been a member of the Brain Health Initiative led by Dr. Peabody and Dr. Carson of Harvard. I applied to be a Brain Health scholar as I have suffered from various Brain injuries since my 4th grade year of elementary school. Since then I have been very interested in Brain health and helping to limit Brain illness.

I would like to thank you for supporting the Brain Health Initiative and giving us the opportunity to become Brain Health scholars.

I have learned so much in the past six months and hope to learn more in the next couple months. We can say that there is a way of preventing brain illness and there are many ways to do so. First, we should all limit screen time and make sure we have many hours of fresh air each day. Furthermore, while on a screen we must continue to move around and take breaks so that we are sedentary for too long, for example standing up and doing screen work. Next we have learned how to limit stress and how to deal with it in a healthy way. In order to keep our brains fresh and young we must have human interactions and keep it stimulated, such as reading and learning. There is a crisis surrounding brian health but together we can spread awareness and try to maintain healthy brains for longer periods of time.

For my own life, it is hard to limit screen tines in times such as right now as COVID 19 is keeping us inside for school and homework. However, while I am on my devices I will try to keep my brain stimulated and stand up from time to time. Furthermore, I am trying to limit my screen time after school is out as I know it can lead to depressing feelings. Finally, I try to go outside and see friends many times a week, keeping my body healthy and my brain happy. Again, I want to thank you for your support to keep the Brain Health Initiative going and eventually spread awareness around the world.

Sincerely,



Blake Martini-Cohasset High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Jaquin Miele and I attend Manatee High School. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Brain Health Initiative Scholar Program. I applied for the program because I did not know much about my brain and thought this would be so interesting and terrific for me to learn about.

The BHI Scholar program taught me new information about brain health. I didn't know that everything you do has an effect on your brain. There is a lot more to your brain than I thought. I also learned how to collect data from the surveys and make data charts and while getting the data it was interesting to see how other people think about brain health in my area.

It was such a privilege to be a part of this program and I will be continuing with the program this semester. I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program.

With appreciation and gratitude,



Jaquin Miele

Manatee High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is William Moragne and I attend Sarasota High School where I'm currently a junior. I am a Brain Health Scholar and I applied to this program because I want a future in the medical field. Joining a medical program for high school students was a way to step into the medical field. I wanted to explore the medical field to get to know the ropes.

I really appreciated the opportunity that I was granted to be a part of such an amazing program. I enjoyed meeting other teens within my community who have the same interest in the field of medicine. I saw different viewpoints on the same subject and it opened my eyes. With all these perspectives, I can use it to improve my own brain health. I can also use the knowledge gained through the program to help others around me. Once again, I would like to express my gratitude for allowing me to be a part of this program.

Sincerely,



William Moragne

Sarasota High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Erick Morales Oyola, and I am a Brain Health Scholar that attends Pine View School. I applied to be a part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program due to my passion for neuroscience, brain health, and making changes to benefit the health of my community.

I, as with all of the other scholars, am incredibly grateful for your support for the Brain Health Initiative, and I appreciate your contribution that allowed me to be a Brain Health Scholar in the first place.

In our many Brain Health Scholar meetings, I have increased my knowledge about brain health immensely, ranging from what I can do to improve it and how I can protect it, as well as the importance of doing so.

I plan to use the knowledge that I have gained from the Brain Health Scholar program to improve my own brain health and to spread awareness about brain health to my family, friends, classmates, and community, which is already being done by the BHS program and is another reason why it should continue.

Again, thank you so much for your contribution, and your support has been very much appreciated in our endeavor.

Thank you,



Erick Morales Oyola

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Zeke Mori-Gomez and I am a senior at Booker High School. I'm a brain health scholar and I applied to be in this program because I believe it can help me be a better firefighter/paramedic and look for signs of brain damage in all forms.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students.

The program taught me so much about brain health and that I am in charge of my own brain health. I also learned about the importance of this opportunity for the Suncoast area, that the brain is our most important organ, and that Brain Health is all part of physical function, cognitive function, and emotional function, and wellbeing.

I was more than happy to be a part of this program, and I hope that other students will have the opportunity to participate in this program. Learning about brain health can also lead to a bright future.

With appreciation and thanks,



Ezequiel Mori  
Booker High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Jonah Patterson. I am currently a sophomore at Braden River High School in Bradenton, Florida. I am a BHI scholar and was a part of the inaugural class. I wanted to become a BHI scholar as I wanted to know more about brain health as it is a seldomly talked about subject.

I greatly appreciate your support to empower and educate students on brain health via the first of many Brain Health Initiative seminars. Especially in a time like this, students need to be aware of the risks associated with brain illness and need to know how to improve brain health.

I learned so many aspects regarding brain health that I would not have learned without the experience that the Brain Health Initiative offered. I learned how our health often overlooks the health of the brain, but our brain health is the most important thing for us to function as human beings. I learned how brain health is made up of factors like sleep, emotional well-being, physical activity, and our stress resilience.

It was an honor to be a part of the BHI inaugural class. I look forward to staying involved with the program, which of course, would not have been possible without your support. I took away plenty of positive experiences from the program and I hope to encourage people, friends and family, to participate in the Brain Health Initiative program.

Sincerely,



Jonah Patterson

Braden River High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hello, my name is Ashley Pelton and I am a senior at Pine View School in Sarasota. I plan on pursuing a neuroscience-based education at the undergraduate level next year, piquing my interest in the Brain Health Organization. This past year, I completed my role as a Youth Research Assistant as a part of the BHI Youth Scholars Program through a remote format. I found that this opportunity reinforced my interest in the field of neuroscience, while introducing a more mental health-focused approach that I will carry into my studies and career aspirations.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for Sarasota County students such as myself to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. Without your support, this experience would not have been possible. The program taught me multiple important aspects that go into maintaining one's brain health, as well as the extent to which brain illness is present in society today - more so now than ever before. It was a privilege to participate in the inaugural class for this program, and I will be sure to introduce my peers to this incredible opportunity.

Very Respectfully,



Ashley Pelton

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Annabel Peterson. I am a master's candidate in the mental health counseling and behavioral medicine program at Boston University School of Medicine.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create a unique and exciting opportunity for students both local and out of state. Although I currently live in Massachusetts, I was born in Florida and visit family there yearly, so it was very meaningful to be able to support the Florida Suncoast community from afar.

The program taught me about brain health and how the choices I make, such as nutrition, exercise, or use of substances, can affect my brain health. I learned about the risk factors and protective factors of brain health, and some of the challenges that youth and adults are facing that could impact brain health such as the COVID-19 pandemic. I also learned that the research process does not happen right away. A survey takes a lot of planning and needs to be tested before it is ready for the general public. It was an honor to be able to test out the survey and give feedback to make it even stronger and ready for distribution.

I am really pleased I could be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate to not only learn more about the mental health field but also contribute to better understanding of brain health and improving the brain health of our communities.

Thank you,



Annabel Peterson

Boston University

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hello! My name is Julianne (Jules) Pung, and I'm currently a senior at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton. Although I haven't been part of the program for long, it has made an incredible impact on not only how I see the welfare of my community, but also how I perceive my own well-being. As someone who has struggled frequently with bouts of anxiety and overwhelming stress over the past two years, the Brain Health Scholar Program has given me the chance to learn how to put my mental health first and foremost—something that I need now more than ever as I prepare to enter college. I want to sincerely thank you for supporting this opportunity.

Over the past few months, I have come to realize just how many factors make up brain health—from how well we sleep and eat to our relationships at school and at home. I know now that brain health is about the health of the whole individual, not merely isolated to the brain itself. Thus, my brain health depends upon the small but important choices I make on a daily basis. I have also learned how to collect and analyze real-world data, collaborate as part of a team, and avoid factors that could potentially put my brain health at risk.

I feel incredibly lucky to have been a part of this program, and I hope that many other students will take advantage of this opportunity in the future. I am confident that members of the Brain Health Initiative and the Brain Health Scholar Program are helping to change our community for the better.

Sincerely,



Jules Pung

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

I am Tony Rappold from Bradenton, Florida, and a proud member of the Brain Health Initiative Program. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the first Brain Health Initiative Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students.

The program taught me so much about brain health and how important the choices I make today and every day affect my brain health. I am so happy that I got to be a part of the research and distribution of Brain Health knowledge through the Tampa Bay Area. I also learned about collecting data, surveys, working with a team, the pillars of brain health, and risk factors and protective factors of brain health. It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. We can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to contribute.

With appreciation and thanks,



Tony Rappold

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Fiorella, and I'm a Brain Health Scholar from Braden River High School. After being recommended this opportunity by an advisor in Teen Court, I found the prospect interesting as I had always been intrigued by the brain and believed in the importance of mental health. Right now, I'm glad I applied as I've learned several elements of brain health that I hadn't known before and gotten a firsthand glimpse at the scientific process.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program! With your support, the Brain Health Initiative made and executed an amazing opportunity for local students to work as a group with the common goal of contributing to brain health.

I have learned so much about brain health itself and how it extends to the biological aspects of the brain. Brain healthy choices can really help in aiding my overall health throughout my life, so I'm grateful. Through data collection and working with a team, I also played a role in the scientific process.

I feel privileged to have been part of this program and hope that many others like me will be able to participate in this same program and learn the same topics that I have learned through it. I also hope to see further efforts to improve brain health in the Suncoast region, and am thrilled to have been a part of it.

With much regards and appreciation,



Fiorella Recchioni

Braden River High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hi my name is Jhons Richard Costa, I attend Sarasota Military Academy. I'm part of the Brain Health Scholar Program, and I applied to join this program so as to my interest in neuroscience and how the brain works.

I am very thankful that this opportunity was presented to me. Without your support, I would not have been able to experience and learn what I have this semester. It was really impactful for me to see how brain health is affected in our time, and how we can take charge and improve it by making small adjustments. During one exercise we split into groups and worked on looking up information on one of the health pillars, and it was a fun experience to work with my teammates as a unit to complete the task, while also learning a lot from what we found. The information I have learned so far in this program will be really useful to improving my mental health as I head off to college during these stressful times. Thank you so much again for your support.

With appreciation and gratitude,



Jhons Richard Costa

Sarasota Military Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Kaylen Rivers, and I am currently a senior attending The Out-of-Door Academy in Lakewood Ranch. Over the past semester, I have had the privilege of being a Brain Health Scholar. I applied because I have always been curious about the way things function, and the brain is a faucet of that.

Without your support, this opportunity would not have been possible. This program has taught me how to gather data, and utilize that data to make connections and draw conclusions, which I have learned is now my favorite part of science.

This organization is an essential part of the changes that will occur in the Lakewood Ranch community. Improving brain health here will impact many generations, making them happier and healthier. I hope to disseminate my new knowledge to other people so hopefully, they can make brain healthy choices.

Again, thank you for your support. The Brain Health Initiative has changed my perspective and thinking processes pertaining to the brain.

Sincerely,



Kaylen Rivers

Out-of-Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Hillary Rouse and I am a Ph.D. student in the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida. I have been involved in the Brain Health Scholar program due to my interests in research examining how lifestyle can reduce the risk for age-related cognitive decline and dementia.

Thank you for supporting the Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. This program has given me and other students the opportunity to learn more about brain health. The program reinforced the information I have previously learned on how lifestyle can affect the brain, and expanded my thinking on this very important topic. My dissertation will be examining how lifestyle will mitigate risk for dementia, and these different seminars helped to provide me with different perspectives on this topic, which will guide me as I complete this project.

The research ongoing at the Brain Health Initiative will be very important to our understanding of how different factors relate to risk for age-related decline and different neurological diseases. I believe that this research will only enhance quality of life for many adults across the world, especially as people continue to live into older ages.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. Providing students with accurate information will only continue to help younger generations be more self-aware and will promote healthy choices. Being a part of this program was exciting.

With appreciation and thanks,



Hillary Rouse  
University of South Florida

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Diana Rudel and I am a junior at Pine View School and Brain Health Scholar. I applied to extend my knowledge about brain health and share it as although I do not plan to go into a field involving neuroscience, I find information on brain health to be essential for anyone.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students in Sarasota and Manatee Counties.

The program taught me so much about brain health and how important the choices I make today and every day affect my brain health. I also learned about collecting data, surveys, working with a team, the pillars of brain health, risk factors and protective factors of brain health, and that lifespan DOES NOT equal brain-span. I plan to apply the knowledge I've learned to help spread information about Brain Health to the citizens (especially seniors as I currently serve on the Senior Advisory Council) of Sarasota as well as carry on research in college!

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. Together, we can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this! :-)

With appreciation and thanks,



Diana Rudel

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Joshua Segebre, a junior at North Port High School. I wanted to reach out and express my gratitude for your support of the Brain Health Initiative. The support has opened the opportunity for me to explore my interest in health by becoming a Brain Health Scholar.

During each session, I was able to recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy brain. While our brains are not necessarily keeping up with our average lifespans, it is vital to prevent each pillar (Ex. Sleep, Nutrition, Emotional Wellbeing, etc) from falling apart.

In the near future, I am going to reapply to the Brain Health Initiative to support the research. I have taught my family about brain health and illnesses related to this global health crisis. When I start University, I would like to seek an internship related to brain health.

I hope others can participate in the program in the future! It has been an honor to be part of this program.

Once again, without your support, I would have not developed this special interest. Thank you so much!

Best Regards,



Joshua Segebre

North Port High School

Class of 2022

Dear Generous Supporters,

Hello! My name is Gabby Sgro, I'm in 11th grade at Southeast High School enrolled in the IB program. I've been lucky enough to participate in the Brain Health Initiative as a scholar to help conduct the study of the Suncoast Region. I joined this program because I still am unsure of what subject I'd like to study in the future, and the subject of science has always been interesting for me. I love learning, and I wanted to see the process of a real scientific study and watch real research be conducted and analyzed. So far, this program has exceeded my expectations and I have learned so many interesting facts about brain health.

Thank you so much for allowing this opportunity to happen! With your support, many local students are able to get experience that will be useful for their future careers in the fields of medicine/science.

This program has opened my eyes to many things that contribute to brain health, even if you don't realize it. I was able to learn how social media, physical exercise, and even the foods you eat can affect the way your brain grows throughout your lifetime. I also achieved my goal of learning how the professional scientific method works and how research is conducted. It has been wonderful to meet so many other students from my area that are interested in the same topics I am!

Since joining the program, I have been making choices that benefit my brain health. It is much easier than it seems, and I can only hope that through the actions of the Brain Health Initiative, we can spread this information throughout the Suncoast Region and improve public health! This is such an important program, and it's a privilege to be a part of its inaugural class. I'm so excited to see what we do next. Thank you for helping this program to happen!

Sincerely,



Gabby Sgro

Southeast High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Edward Shen, and I'm a junior at Pine View High School in Osprey, FL. I am a Brain Health Scholar with BHI. I first applied to the program in hopes of bettering my community's health and wellbeing.

BHI has taught me a great deal about the importance of brain health. One of my most important takeaways from the first semester has been that "brain health" *is* health of ourselves, and should not be treated as an inaccessible, specialized area. My newly acquired knowledge about the prevalence of brain health issues and risk factors has spurred me to move forward with BHI to improve the brain health of the general community.

It has been an honor to be a part of this program. We can change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this.

With appreciation and thanks,



Edward Shen

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Olivia Sherry and I attend the Out of Door Academy in Sarasota, Florida. I became a member of the BHS program because of my deep interest and concern for mental health.

Thank you so much for giving me the chance to participate in the Brain Health Scholar Program for the inaugural Brain Health Program. The Brain Health Project has been able to build and implement an outstanding platform for local students with your support.. This program has helped me to learn so much about mental health, and how important my brain health is influenced by the decisions I make today and every day. As someone whose dream is to work in psychology and make a change in my community's mental health, this was amazing for me. I have had the chance to learn about data collection, polls, teamwork, brain function foundations, risk factors, and protective brain health factors.

The information I have taken in is knowledge I will be able to hold with me for the rest of my life. Being part of this program was a privilege, and I can't wait to witness the future of such an amazing program. The future of brain wellbeing can and will be improved, and I am more than proud to be a part of it.

Sincerely,



Olivia Sherry

The Out of Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Supawadee Surattanont and I currently attend the Out-of-Door Academy.

I first want to thank you for providing me with the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholars Program. With your support, I have been able to receive such an incredible opportunity to not only expand my knowledge about brain health and illness, but also to help educate about the issue.

One of the main skills I hoped to gain from this program was how to conduct a research project. This program expanded my knowledge about what types of experiments and how to correctly collect and analyze scientific data. The program has also greatly expanded my knowledge about brain health and illness; using this knowledge I can now identify brain risk and health factors and what brain health is: cognitive function, emotional function and well being.

Through this program I gained so much knowledge about brain health and have made so many connections that can help me in the future. It was a privilege to be a part of this program, as I have learned so much and hope that many more students participate.

With appreciation and thanks,



Supawadee Surattanont

The Out-of-Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Victoria Thompson and I attend Bradenton Christian School in Bradenton, Florida.

Due to the fact that I plan on pursuing an occupation in the research, I wanted to know everything I could about how scientific research is conducted. This fascination, coupled with my interest in biology, lead me to seek my interest outside of the limitations of my high school's available courses. Therefore, I applied to the Brain Health Scholar program.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program and I am extremely grateful for your support of the Brain Health Initiative. Through this program I have learned how the brain is our most important organ and that Brain Health is physical function, cognitive function, and emotional function and wellbeing. Additionally, I learned how steps can be taken to prevent brain illness, not just treat it. I plan to use the knowledge that I have gained to not only improve my own health but the health of those around me.

With appreciation and thanks,



Victoria Thompson

Bradenton Christian School

Dear Generous Supporters,

I am Megan Touchstone, a Brain Health Scholar. I attend State College of Florida Collegiate School Venice, where I will be graduating with an A.A and high school diploma. I applied to be part of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program because brain health is a topic that interests me greatly. I have also noticed in my area there is a brain health crisis, and I can help solve that crisis in my community through my participation in the program. I also felt the Brain Health Scholar Program would be a great experience for my future career as a child psychologist.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. I was so excited to get to work with Harvard psychologists and neuropsychologists to help solve a crisis I am passionate about while gaining amazing experience that will help me on my path to becoming a child psychologist. This opportunity to participate in such an impactful program would not have been possible without your support. Because of your support, students like me can gain experience that can help their community and themselves.

Through the Brain Health Scholar Program, I learned a lot of information I can use to help others and myself. One fact that really caught my attention was the fact our lifespan does not equal our brain span. Through science we have been able to increase the humane life span, however our brain span is lagging behind. However, through science, we can now use “brain illness” and “prevention” in the same sentence! By educating the community, we can help prevent brain illness! I also learned that I am in charge of my own brain health, and with this knowledge I can help other people in my community realize that too.

It was such a privilege to be a part of the Brain Health Scholar Program. Not only will the information I learned help me in my future career, but it will also help me now in my personal life. I can also help others in my community live a brain healthy lifestyle. Through this program, I can play a role in changing the future of brain health. I hope many more students get this amazing opportunity to participate in the Brain Health Scholar Program.

With appreciation and thanks,



Megan Touchstone

State College of Florida Collegiate School Venice

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Liam Tvenstrup. I am currently a member of the junior class at Braden River High School in Bradenton, Florida. I am a member of the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholars at the Brain Health Initiative. I am an aspiring Biomedical Engineer. Throughout my time in high school, I have been trying to find the best way to gain experiences that will assist with my future career endeavors. When I discovered the Brain Health Initiative online, I thought it was a great opportunity for me to get involved in the medical community at a young age. I was especially excited to see that they were offering the Brain Health Scholars program to high schoolers in the area, since I am in high school and have been searching for an internship-like experience.

I wanted to thank you very much for your support of the Brain Health Initiative. Your contributions have allowed me and other students to get a glimpse of the functional healthcare and medical community. You have allowed us to see how medical research is performed and applied to a community such as Lakewood Ranch to benefit all of humanity with its findings. But most importantly, your contributions have set the foundation for a well-established and longitudinal effort to fight brain illness. With sponsors like you, the Brain Health Initiative can make a difference in the lives of our community, while also having a much larger impact on society through its findings.

Over the course of the past few months, the Brain Health Initiative has taught me that there is a clear and distinctive connection between mental health, emotional wellbeing, and physical health. In our lectures, we discussed the physical causes for some mental or cognitive deficiencies, such as the shrinking of the brain. I was also given the new idea that brain health is important for not only present well-being, but future well-being as well. We discussed how choices that affect brain health now can lead to future ramifications as age increases. This helps motivate me to make the right choices for my current brain health. On a research-oriented perspective, I was able to learn the concept and goal behind a longitudinal study and the execution of that goal in the form of surveying and the scientific method. The Brain Health Initiative and BHS program must continue if these goals are to be brought to fruition and a difference is to be made in the community. Since the BHI / BHS is sponsoring a longitudinal study, it is imperative that the program last long enough to collect the proper data over long stretches of time.

Once again, I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to you. I am excited to continue with the Brain Health Initiative in their quest to begin a longitudinal study and fight brain health. I hope that many more students are just as fortunate as me by joining this program and being a part of a larger picture. Your contributions matter greatly, and with your continued support, we can continue to recruit students and medical professionals that will help bring about our goals, thus creating a healthier world.

With gratitude,



Liam Tvenstrup  
Braden River High School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Reece Whatmore, and I am a senior in high school currently attending The Out-of-Door Academy in Sarasota, Florida. This past semester, I have been a Brain Health Scholar, and have had the amazing opportunity to advance both my scientific knowledge/skills and community impact. Next year, I will be attending Carnegie Mellon University where I will study engineering and be on the varsity swim team.

I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. This has been an incredible opportunity that has taught me much beyond brain health and helped prepare me for my future.

As far as brain health goes, it has been an honor to learn from the most amazing professors on such a critical topic. Learning that brain health is health has been a key lesson that has transformed the way I think about our minds. Beyond the basics, I also learned about collecting data, surveys, working with a team, the pillars of brain health, and risk factors and protective factors of brain health.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students have the opportunity to participate in such an important program. Having the opportunity to help change our local community for the better has truly been an honor and I can't wait to see the impact we as Brain Health Scholars continue to make in the future.

Thank you so much!

Sincerely,



Reece Whatmore

The Out-of-Door Academy

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Nathan Widjaja. I am a 16-year-old sophomore from Pine View School in Osprey. Last summer, I made the decision to enroll in the inaugural class of the Brain Health Scholar Program. I absolutely adore science, so the program was right up my alley. I was a little bit hesitant though, given that I have never taken a psychology class or anything neuroscience related. But I soon found that my hesitations were unnecessary, as I felt myself becoming more and more confident with the topic of brain health.

By participating in the program, I not only grew my own knowledge, but also taught what I learned to others around me. My friends and family were on the receiving end of me sharing what I learned through the zoom lectures. I continually found myself stressing the importance of brain health, as it ultimately transcends all aspects of personal well-being. The more I learned, the more I realized how pertinent brain health is to my own community. My own neighborhood is composed of roughly 80% residents aged 65 and above, so I have witnessed the consequences (both good, and bad) of brain health first-hand. I found that drawing the parallel between my own community and my passion for the sciences to be one of the many rewarding aspects of becoming a Brain Health Scholar. And for that, I thank you immensely.

In retrospect, I'm now realizing the critical nature of students learning about brain health. That reason alone, upon completing my first semester with the program, makes me want all students to have the same educational experience that I had. The lessons that I learned regarding scientific data collection, physiological factors of brain health, and preventative techniques—are all invaluable—and should surely be taught to more students.

I feel incredibly honored and privileged to have participated in the inaugural class. With my participation, I feel confident that I have equipped with knowledge to help me expand my own passions. I feel hopeful for the future of the prioritization of brain health now that I have been a part of the program.

Again, I can't thank you enough for providing this incredible opportunity to me. I gained so much from my experience, and I couldn't be happier to participate in such a ground-breaking program.

Sincerely,



Jonathan (Nathan) Widjaja

Pine View School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Ary Wolfe-Herman and I am a Brain Health Scholar! I graduated this past year from Sarasota High School and am currently attending Tufts University. I originally applied to this program because I have always had an interest in brain/mental health and was also interested in seeing how this pandemic has impacted my community. Through this program I was hoping to gain a greater understanding and closer relationship with both.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, the Brain Health Initiative was able to create and execute an incredible opportunity for local students, such as myself and my peers.

This program has greatly improved my understanding of brain health and the impacts that both the individual and community at large can have on it. I feel much more empowered and informed to keep up my own brain health and make it a priority in my life. This opportunity is incredibly exciting for not only myself but for the entire Suncoast region. Through the usage of longitudinal studies and the promotion of the pillars of brain health, I have hope that my community will be able to truly thrive.

It was a privilege to be a part of this program, and I hope that many more students will have the opportunity to participate in such an important part of part of this region's (and hopefully the greater world's) future. We have the ability to change the future of brain health, and I am so excited to be a part of this.

With appreciation and thanks,



Ary Wolfe-Herman (she/her/hers)

Tufts University

Dear Generous Supporters,

I'm Danny Zhang and I'm a senior at Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton, Florida. I applied to the brain health program because of my interest in cognitive science, and also because I would like to learn about brain health since I know many who suffer from brain illnesses.

I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Brain Health Initiative Brain Health Scholar Program. With your support, our Brain Health Initiative program was able to create this amazing opportunity for local students.

Brain health program taught me a lot, specifically that brain health is indeed health and brain illnesses are just like any other illnesses. I also learned about collecting data and surveys, where I could understand the factors that affect brain health in a real world scenario.

It was a privilege to participate in this program. I sincerely wish more students can join in the program and understand an important health issue, brain health, which affect so many of us. We can take a role in making the future brighter for brain health. I'm honored to be part of the program.

With appreciation and thanks,



Danny Zhang

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School

Dear Generous Supporters,

My name is Alexa and I am a junior at Riverview High School and a member of the inaugural Brain Health Scholar Program. As an intellectually curious student, I have always gravitated towards scientific research as a potential career pathway. When I found out I had the opportunity to assist in the conducting of significant research in my own community, I was ecstatic. I applied to the Brain Health Scholar Program and am so honored to be a part of such an impactful initiative.

I am so grateful for your support of the Brain Health Initiative, which has provided the rare opportunity to be an integral part of their research efforts.

The Brain Health Scholar Program has allowed me to work in a supportive, collaborative environment and learn about the importance of addressing brain health even at a young age. I have learned a lot about the pillars of brain health, such as stress resilience, cognitive stimulation, and social interaction.

I am humbled to be a member of this program as well as an advocate for brain health in my community. I will continue to spread awareness of the work the Brain Health Initiative has done and the knowledge they have shared with me.

Many thanks,



Alexa Ziff

Riverview High School