

Anna Beresford Wins Inner Light Writing Scholarship - Donates Entire \$10,000 Prize to Charity



New Britain, Connecticut Oct 30, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Nineteen-year-old Anna Beresford, a college sophomore, published author, and mental health advocate, has been named the winner of the prestigious Inner Light Writing Scholarship—an exclusive, invite-only national competition that honors exceptional young writers with extraordinary heart.

The scholarship is extended only to a small, hand-selected group of young writers each year, and applicants must be nominated to receive an invitation. Anna was nominated following the release of her second book, a deeply personal collection of essays and poems that caught the attention of the selection committee.

Anna's award-winning essay, "I Want You to Know, I'm a Mirrorball," earned her the top prize of \$10,000. Inspired to use the moment to create even more impact, she chose to donate the entire award to support mental health research and domestic violence prevention efforts—two causes close to her heart. Judges were deeply moved by her emotional depth, authenticity, and compassion.

"From the moment I read Anna's essay, I knew she was someone extraordinary," said Karen Ellison, Executive Director of the Inner Light Scholarship Foundation. "Then I had the pleasure of speaking with her for an interview, and I couldn't be more confident in our decision. Anna is a true ray of light in a world that desperately needs more of it. Her optimism, compassion, and selflessness are who she is at her core. She's unstoppable—and she has a heart of gold."

Another finalist judge added:

"There's something undeniably special about her. She has a beautiful soul, and from the second she smiled, the entire room felt warmer. Her words, her presence, her kindness—it all feels genuine. I knew she was the winner the moment I read her work, but after speaking with her, I knew we made the right choice."

Anna's winning essay explores themes of vulnerability, healing, and self-worth. She reflects on the pressure she once felt to shrink herself to make others more comfortable—and how she's since learned that "we don't have to dim our light for others to shine. We can all shine: equally, beautifully, and in our own way."

When asked why she chose to donate her prize money, Anna replied,

"Because someone else needs it more. If we want to see change, we have to be willing to be the start of it."

Initially, Anna requested that her donation remain anonymous.

"I didn't want it to be about me," she explained. "God has given me more than enough, and I wanted to give back quietly."

After encouragement from the foundation, she agreed to share her story publicly in hopes of inspiring others to lead with kindness and purpose.

Anna is currently double majoring in early childhood education and journalism. She is a published author of two books, founder of Anna's Awareness Initiative (a mental health and kindness-based platform), and currently holds the title of Miss Connecticut United Crown of America, preparing to compete at nationals later this year.

She was named Miss Congeniality at the 2025 Miss Connecticut Teen USA competition and previously placed in the Top 5 at the 2023 state pageant.

As for what drives her, Anna says it's simple:

"I try to be extra kind to people because it might be the only kindness they've received that day," she shared. "You never know what someone's going through. A smile or a gentle word can make all the difference."

Through her writing, advocacy, and everyday actions, Anna Beresford continues to show that true leadership comes not from titles or trophies, but from character.

"She's the kind of person who makes you believe the world is still full of good," said Ellison. "Anna reminds us that you don't have to be loud to be heard. She proves that real beauty, real power, and real leadership come from within. We're honored to be part of her journey."

Read the full essay: [expand the images to read full essay](#)



"I Want You to Know, I'm a Mismatch"

I want you to know, I'm a mismatch. I shine in every direction, not because I want to be the center of the room, but because I've spent my whole life just hoping someone might notice I was even in it. I run, but I've never been the most sure. I've always been the girl in the corner with the polite smile and the too-soft heart, the one people tend to overlook until they need something real. Sometimes I feel like I'm stuck between being too much and not enough. Eventually, I learned how to dim my light. It wasn't because I didn't want to shine, but because I thought that if I made myself smaller, quieter, and easier to handle, maybe people would stay. Over time, I realized we don't have to shrink for others to shine. We can all shine: equally, beautifully, and in our own way. I don't want to hide anymore. I don't always know how to say what I'm feeling, but I find everything. That's how I move through the world: carefully, deeply, and with intention. It's both a blessing and a curse to feel this much and to carry things so quietly. I've been hurt in ways I rarely speak about. They left wounds that taught me silence, not softness. So I write, because vulnerability has never come easily to me, not one word. I'm scared that if people really saw me, with all my big feelings, they might walk away. Instead, I pour those feelings into pages, simple poems, short letters, and metaphors that carry the weight of what I'm too afraid to say aloud. In writing, I found something special: a voice that doesn't need to be heard to be heard.

I've never been a natural, and writing about my journey has been effortless. I'm not someone who counts on others to listen. I've worked for every inch of growth. I play six instruments, and I'm self-taught in most of them, because music spoke when I couldn't. I've written and published two books, not because I had all the answers, but because writing gave me

a home for the parts of me I didn't know how to carry. I'm double majoring, not because I want a packed schedule, but because I refuse to settle for being ordinary. I want to be more. I am more. Even when the world tries to quiet me, I keep trying. Trying is what I do best: in friendships, in love, and in how I show up for both strangers and friends. It's in the way I smile even when I have a heavy heart, hoping it might make someone else's day lighter. It's in the way I keep being kind to people, even when they haven't always been kind to me. I talk too much sometimes, mostly to hide how little I share about what's really going on. I care deeply and never stop caring. I love working with kids—their honesty, their wonder, the way they remind me what really matters. I say quiet prayers when ambulances pass by. I remember birthdays most people forget. I hold on to memories longer than I probably should, because I believe everything means something.

I give too much, not out of weakness, but out of hope. Hope that someone will see how deeply I love and choose to love me just as fully as I return. My heart has always been the most beautiful thing about me. It remembers and stays soft, and even when it breaks, it keeps giving. I've given so much to people who didn't stay—friends who only showed up when it was convenient, relationships that made me question my worth, and connections that made me feel small, like I was either too much or not enough. When the love wasn't returned, I didn't demand answers. I just grew quieter, softer, and smaller. I stayed longer than I should have because I didn't believe I deserved more. Now I know that I do. I deserve people who don't make me wonder. People who see my heart and choose it, every time.

In 2023, something shifted. I earned my first pageant. I stood on stage not to perform, but to speak from the heart. I spoke about mental health, the importance of kindness, and what it really means to be beautiful from the inside out. Through I didn't win that night, I placed in the

top five. For once, the applause wasn't for trying, it was for being. Two years later, I returned. I didn't take home the crown, but I won Miss Congeniality, voted on by the girls backstage, the ones who saw me when no one was watching. That meant more to me than any title, because it reminded me that your heart matters. Who you are when the lights are off is enough. And I'm still on that stage. Still spinning like a mismatch. Still trying. Still hoping. Not out of desperation anymore, but out of belief. Belief that I'm worth looking at. Not because I shine the brightest, but because my light is real. Because real beauty isn't found in a gown or in the applause. It's found in how you love, how you treat people, how you stay soft in a world that tells you to harden, and how you keep showing up, even when no one claps for you. So yes, I'm a mismatch, and maybe I always will be. But I don't give for attention anymore. I give because I finally know I don't have to dim to make others feel bright. There's room for all of us to glow, and this time, I'm not dimming to be seen. I'm shining because I already am.

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