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# WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

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## Bellin College Senior Finds Her Passion, Values in Nursing

As Lily Derenne, a Bachelor of Science student in the nursing program at Bellin College, started thinking about her future, she sought a career that could combine the different aspects

of her personality and values. She found this in the Bellin College nursing program.

Now a senior, Lily plans to graduate in May 2026. "Nurses live a life surrounded by love. I realized I could use my empathetic qualities and love for science as a nurse," says Lily, of Luxemburg. "Additionally, nursing is an ever-changing field with endless things to learn."

When she started at Bellin College, Lily dove

headfirst into getting as much out of the experience as she could. She felt right at home among her peers and quickly made a name for herself as someone others could turn to.

"The second I stepped foot onto campus I morphed into the person I always wanted to become," she adds. "My nerdy and rather witty personality quickly became well-known with my peers. For the first time in my life, it felt cool to prioritize school. By popular request, I now make study guides to send to my entire cohort, all fifty-nine individuals."

Along with making study guides, Lily consistently goes out of her way to build and support her community. She participates as a Peer Academic Advisor (PAC) in Bellin College's student resource center, the Center for Academic Success, Teaching, and Learning Excellence (CASTLE). She also serves with the Bellin Student Nursing



**Lily Derenne**

*"Without scholarships, the Wisconsin Grant, and other grant opportunities, there would be no journey. I would have lived a completely different life."*

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## Salon Chair to Sonography, Via Edgewood University

Born and raised in Russia, Yana Zink's journey to Edgewood University is rooted in resilience and a lifelong love of learning. Before her first trip to the United States in 2010, she had already earned a degree in social work while learning both English and Chinese. What started as an exciting opportunity to visit her cousin evolved into a much bigger dream. Yana fell in love with Wisconsin, became a U.S. citizen in 2015, and knew she wanted to build her future here.

She explored cosmetology, eventually earning her license and working at two different salons. Yana loved this work and built a loyal clientele. She also realized one of her professional dreams, to open her own salon. After marrying, Yana and her husband moved to Madison. Together, they made her dream into reality.

But when COVID-19 forced her to close her business, she revisited a different dream. "It was a blessing and a curse. Closing my salon was heartbreaking, but it gave me the push to finally pursue what I had always wanted, a career in healthcare."



**Yana Zink**

*"The Wisconsin Grant Program has given me access to an excellent and affordable education, so I can focus more on learning and worry less."*

In what she calls a twist of "hair chair therapy," it was one of her clients who first introduced Yana to the field of sonography. She was immediately drawn to the diagnostic side of healthcare, something that wasn't possible in her native country, as physicians conducted

their own diagnostics.

Yana entrusted Edgewood University with her next chapter and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in health sciences with a concentration in sonography. After

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## The Wisconsin Grant Program

Our private, nonprofit colleges and universities operate without direct taxpayer support, but provide invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 52,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.

Since 1965, the Wisconsin Grant has helped qualified Wisconsin citizens succeed. Wisconsin Achievers share success stories of Wisconsinites at WAICU-member campuses for whom the Wisconsin Grant Program has made a significant difference.

## Lily Derenne

Association (BSNA) as the legislative director.

Lily approaches her education with determination and purpose. She credits her scholarship and grant opportunities, specifically the Wisconsin Grant Program, as a key component to helping her reach where she is now.

"Without scholarships, the Wisconsin Grant, and other grant opportunities, there would be no journey. I would have lived a completely different life," Lily explains. "On the surface, many people have the misconception that scholarships and grants are just money. To me, they have allowed me the gift to fully immerse myself in my studies. Instead of going to school or work because I must, I now am following my dream. The adjective 'blessed' is an understatement."

Lily is excited to continue her educational journey with Bellin College and has a variety of post-graduation plans.

"I am a woman of many dreams, most of which revolve around education," she says. "After graduation, I aspire to be an ICU nurse, and I would like to work at Bellin Hospital until retirement. My dream job would be to become a nurse anesthetist and eventually teach at Bellin College."

## Yana Zink

exploring the different facets of sonography through the Edgewood program, Yana discovered that cardiac sonography was the perfect fit for her skills and professional goals.

As a mother of two daughters, she is balancing rigorous academic demands while drawing strength from her family's support. Currently in the clinical phase of her program, Yana plans to graduate in May 2026. "As an adult student, my journey doesn't look like the traditional path," she says.

"But I still face the same challenges many college students experience, especially the cost. It's not only about determination. It's also about affordability. The Wisconsin Grant Program has given me access to an excellent and affordable education, so I can focus more on learning and worry less."

Yana's commitment to both education and healthcare is deeply personal. Her grandmother served in a senior role with the Department of Education and her grandfather was a respected medical professor who always hoped someone in the family would follow in his footsteps.

"They helped raise me, and it feels like I'm carrying on their legacy," she says. "I'm also proud to show my daughters that no matter where life takes you, it's never too late to pursue the passions of your heart."

## FACT OF THE MONTH

**An estimated 92 percent of the class of 2023 graduates from private colleges were employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation**

Source: NACE's First Destination Survey, 2024.