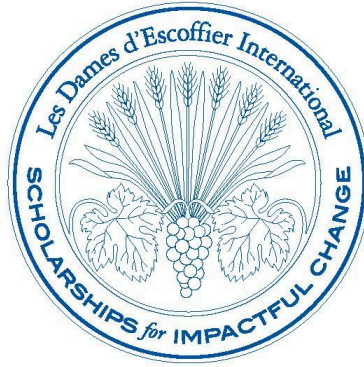


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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## **LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOUR WOMEN WITH SCHOLARSHIPS FOR IMPACTFUL CHANGE**

*Tuition Funds Support Women in Food, Beverage, and Hospitality*

New York, NY (July 1, 2025) – [Les Dames d'Escoffier International](#) (LDEI) is pleased to announce the four 2025 Scholarships for Impactful Change winners. Recognizing the vital impact of diverse leadership in driving impactful change within nonprofits and NGOs, these scholarships award funds to applicants who demonstrate leadership skills, a commitment to influencing systems and communities, civic engagement, and a passion for social justice and positive change. The four winning recipients, Kaya Kurtz, Fiona Nakabuye, Margaret Thompson, and Jill Zimorski, will be awarded \$5,000 each.

“Les Dames d’Escoffier International is honored to work with The Wine Group to support these remarkable women as they lead with purpose and create lasting, positive change within their communities and industries,” said Stephanie Jaeger, President of LDEI. “Their vision, courage, and dedication embody the values of this scholarship and our organization.”

The scholarships are presented in collaboration with [The Wine Group](#), one of the world's largest and most respected wine producers. Since its beginning over 40 years ago, The Wine Group has prioritized the stewardship of the environment, people, and communities. The collaboration between The Wine Group and Les Dames presents a meaningful and significant opportunity for students.



2025 Winners Clockwise from L: Kaya Kurtz, Fiona Nakabuye, Margaret Thompson, and Jill Zimorski

“We believe in the power of education and leadership to drive meaningful and lasting change,” said Helen Kurtz, Chief Marketing Officer at The Wine Group. “We’re proud to partner with Les Dames d’Escoffier International for the fourth year in a row to support these inspiring women as they shape the future of food, beverage, and hospitality. Their commitment to social impact, equity, and community uplift perfectly aligns with our values, and we’re honored to play a role in their journeys.”

**About the recipients:**

**Kaya Kurtz**

A passionate advocate for food justice and sustainable agriculture, Kaya will use the scholarship to further her work supporting farmers, developing food access programs, and preserving culturally significant crops like heirloom seeds. Through her leadership roles in campus pantries and community farms, Kaya aims to build stronger, more equitable food systems that empower vulnerable communities.

**Fiona Nakabuye**

A first-generation hospitality student and community service leader, Fiona plans to apply the scholarship toward her graduate studies. She envisions opening a *pay-what-you-can café*, breaking down financial barriers to food access, and creating a welcoming, inclusive space that uplifts marginalized voices and fosters meaningful community connections.

**Margaret Thompson**

Dedicated to advancing sustainable practices within the hospitality industry, Margaret will use the scholarship to complete her final semester of graduate school. Her goal is to champion environmentally responsible initiatives and advocate for community-focused programs that make the industry more inclusive and socially conscious.

“Receiving this scholarship is an immense help in covering the cost of pursuing my graduate studies at NYU and I am so appreciative of LDEI in helping alleviate some of this financial burden,” said Margaret Thompson. “I am excited to get involved with LDEI and meet others who are also passionate about creating positive change through this industry! I look forward to giving back to this community which has been so generous to me.”

**Jill Zimorski**

A driven hospitality professional committed to mentoring others and creating pathways for underrepresented talent in the beverage and hospitality fields, Jill will use the funds to pursue continued education and leadership development opportunities aimed at fostering diversity and equity within the industry.

**2025 Scholarship for Impactful Change Recipients:**

Kaya Kurtz  
Jill Zimorski

Fiona Nakabuye  
Margaret Thompson

**About Les Dames d'Escoffier International**

Les Dames is an international organization of women leaders who create a supportive culture in their communities to achieve excellence in the fields of food, beverage, and hospitality. The organization's 2,800 members in 40 chapters in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Italy provide leadership, educational opportunities, and philanthropy. Since its founding in 1985, Les Dames chapters have raised and donated more than \$10 million to educational, community non-profits, and philanthropic organizations. For more information, visit [www.ldei.org](http://www.ldei.org) and follow Les Dames on Instagram @lesdamesintl and Facebook @Les Dames d'Escoffier Int'l.