



For Immediate Release  
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Contact: Bob Smither  
LRC Scholarship Committee  
Phone: 713-443-0134  
E-Mail: bob@smither.net

### **BENJAMIN STROPE Awarded 2016 Laura Smither Scholarship**

The Laura Recovery Center proudly announces that Friendswood High School senior **Benjamin Strope** is the 19<sup>th</sup> recipient of the Laura Smither Scholarship. This annual \$3,000 scholarship honors the memory of *Laura Kate Smither*, who was abducted and murdered in Friendswood on April 3, 1997.

Benjamin has accomplished a lot during his high school career. Last summer he applied to Methodist Hospital as a patient care volunteer, but was selected to work directly with the research staff at the Methodist Research Institute. He discovered that he had a knack and a love for research work, contributing to the work of the lab in the area of cardiac regeneration. This summer Benjamin will be back in the lab at M. D. Anderson, working with staff to study new ways to fight cancer.

Benjamin has contributed to his community by volunteering in many areas. After participating in the Friendswood Summer Day Camp program, Ben worked as a volunteer for 3 years where he enjoyed the interactions with 60 to 70 younger campers. He is in the Math and Science club through which he volunteers to tutor younger students in the Friendswood schools. Ben is president of the National Honor Society at Friendswood High School and volunteers with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Camp Periwinkle, Space Center Futbol Club special needs camp, and has received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award. In addition to all this, Ben found time to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout, maintain a 4.0 GPA, was on the debate team, and played basketball for 3 years!

Benjamin will study biochemistry at the University of Texas this fall, then go on to medical school and hopes to combine medical research and practice.

Laura's parents, Bob and Gay Smither, are so proud of all past scholarship recipients and the many accomplishments they have made in their lives. The Smithers and the Laura Smither Scholarship Committee have no doubt that Benjamin will represent the scholarship and the memory of Laura well.

The Laura Smither Scholarship is a merit based scholarship open to all the children of Friendswood. Application forms can be found on line at [www.LRCF.org](http://www.LRCF.org). The deadline for the scholarship is March 31<sup>st</sup> annually.

Tax exempt donations to the Laura Smither Scholarship Endowment Fund will be gratefully received at Wells Fargo Bank in Friendswood or by check mailed to the Laura Recovery Center at 2600 Ware Dairy Road, Friendswood, Texas 77546 designating the Laura Smither Scholarship.

Former Recipients of the Laura Smither Scholarship are:

- 1998 Kathryn Klima (Duke University, NC)
- 1999 Laura Byrne (Wheaton College, IL)
- 2000 Jared Bourgeois (Brigham Young University, UT)
- 2001 Tiffany Eppelheimer (Georgetown University, DC)
- 2002 Rachel Kyle (Rice University, TX)
- 2003 Olivia Bartlett (Rice University, TX)
- 2004 Michael Giordano (University of Houston, TX)
- 2005 Jennifer Robicheaux (Trinity University, TX)
- 2006 Trudy Taylor (Pepperdine University, CA)
- 2007 Veronica Arnold (Texas A&M University at Galveston, TX)
- 2008 Erin Ellis (University of Notre Dame)
- 2009 Lena Silva (Rice University)
- 2010 Elizabeth Conger (North Western University)
- 2011 Cody Westphal (Texas Christian University)
- 2012 Ellen Zhou (Princeton University)
- 2013 Ryan Bynum (Auburn University)
- 2014 Carolyn Landon (University of Pennsylvania)
- 2015 Molly Chen (Duke University)

*"Remember Laura"*