



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE FROM BERKSHIRE BANK *\$36,000 to be Awarded to Students Committed to Community Service*

PITTSFIELD, MASS, January 17, 2011 – In an effort to help students pursue their goals of a higher education, Berkshire Bank announces the third year of its scholarship opportunity for high school seniors in communities served by Berkshire Bank in western Massachusetts, northeastern New York and southern Vermont. Berkshire Bank Foundation will be granting \$36,000 in scholarships to students who have demonstrated community service through their volunteer efforts, have been successful academically and have a financial need. The program is consistent with the Foundation's support for education and the Bank's commitment to employee volunteerism in the community.

"Berkshire Bank Foundation is pleased to offer these scholarships to deserving high school seniors again this year." said Foundation Executive Director Peter J. Lafayette. "This is the largest bank-sponsored scholarship program in the region and once again demonstrates Berkshire Bank's commitment to education and investment in our youth. We have been extremely impressed with the high quality of previous scholarship winners and the life obstacles that many have overcome to achieve their success. We expect to receive a similar quality of applicants this year."

Under the program, 18 (eighteen) \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors who will be attending a two or four year college in the fall. Applicants must have a GPA of at least 3.0 and a financial need (total family income under \$75,000). In addition, applicants must have a record of community service through volunteerism. Students must apply through their school and have the endorsement of their school guidance office. Only five applications per school will be accepted. An independent panel of bank employee volunteers will review all applications and select this year's winners.

Scholarships will be given out in the regions where Berkshire Bank branches are located, with six to be awarded in Berkshire County, six in the Pioneer Valley, three in southern Vermont and three in the Albany region. Applications can be downloaded on the Bank's website at www.berkshirebank.com/scholarships. Applications must be received in the Foundation's Pittsfield's office by March 25, 2011. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the Berkshire Bank Foundation, Inc. at scholarshipinfo@berkshirebank.com.

BACKGROUND

Berkshire Bank Foundation, the charitable arm of Berkshire Bank, [America's Most Exciting BankSM](http://www.berkshirebank.com), is a leader in philanthropy and community involvement. The Foundation's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Berkshire Bank's service areas by providing priority funding to education and community development projects. It also funds programs dedicated to the arts, education, and human services. Since its foundation in 2000, it has awarded more than \$14 million to non-profit organizations in its service area. For more information, visit

www.berkshirebank.com/foundation, "Like" them on www.facebook.com/BerkshireBank or call Peter J. Lafayette, Executive Director.

Berkshire Hills Bancorp is the parent of Berkshire Bank - [America's Most Exciting BankSM](#). The Company has \$2.8 billion in assets and 41 full service financial centers in Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. Berkshire Bank provides 100% deposit insurance protection for all deposit accounts, regardless of amount, based on a combination of FDIC insurance and the [Depositors Insurance Fund](#) (DIF). For more information, visit www.berkshirebank.com or call 800-773-5601.

Media Contacts:

Elizabeth Mach
Berkshire Bank, AVP Marketing
emach@berkshirebank.com
413-445-8390

Peter J. Lafayette
Foundation Executive Director
plafayette@berkshirebank.com
(413) 281-3126(c)