2026 Awards & Scholarships

Saturday, September 5, 2026
Awards Presented On Stage

Preliminary Lifestyle and Fitness in Swimsuit - $100
Sponsored by Sculpt Fitness

Preliminary Evening Gown - $100
Sponsored by Anderson Funeral Home

Saturday, September 5, 2026
Awards Presented On Stage

Pat Musk Non-Finalist Talent Award - $100
Sponsored by Tony Nation- Actor's Connection

Pat Musk was our talented and inspiring organist who played for the National Sweetheart Pageant for over 40 years prior to her passing in 2009. In her honor, the Hoopeston Jaycees elected to name a non-finalist talent award the "Pat Must Talent Award". This award is presented to the non-finalist contestant whose talent the judges found the most entertaining. The winner of this award will not only receieve a cash award during our awards presentation but will also perform on Sunday night.

People's Choice - 50/50 Split

Online voting for favorite contestant will take place through Sunday evening at 7:00 pm. The money collected will be split 50/50, half of the proceeds will be going to the Hoopeston Jaycees for special community projects and the other half will be awarded to the contestant who brought in the most donations.

Finalist Awards
Fourth Runner Up
Third Runner Up
First Runner Up
Miss National Sweetheart

Miss Congeniality Award - $200
Sponsored by J. Moskal, Robin & Brian Lawson, and Autumn Fields

Miss Congeniality is an award given to the friendliest contestant as determined by a vote among the Sweetheart contestants. Other qualities in Miss Congeniality includes helpfullness, genuiness, and outgoing personality. Miss Congeniality should pay more attention to others than herself.

Bonnie Berglund Parade Wear Award - $300

The Grand Parade has been a longstanding tradition for both the National Sweetcorn Festival and the National Sweetheart Pageant, with many contestants portraying their states in unique ways over the years. In 2016, parade wear became a judged category, thus formally encouraging contestants to be creative in representing their home state. This award is given to the contestant scoring highest in this area of competition. Bonnie Berglund was a well known area seamstress, creating and altering hundreds of gowns while having owned a bridal store. She has volunteered her skills for numerous Halloween and musical costumes over the years. Sadly, Bonnie Berglund passed away in 2022.

Sunday, September 6, 2026
Awards Presented During the Awards Ceremony

Clifford Crabtree Memorial Community Service Award - $100

Sponsored by The Crabtree Family

Cliff was a self-employed carpenter, owning his own firm. Cliff was a former firefighter and chief of the Hoopeston Fire Department, earning Outstanding Fireman of the Year in 2014. Cliff was also very active in the Hoopeston Jaycees and the National Sweetcorn Festival. He served as the 51st National Sweetcorn Festival chairman, received the Hoopeston Jaycees Distinguished Service Award in 2001 and also earned Jaycee of the Year. Cliff was awarded the Jaycee International Senatorship #57251 and the Jaycees Associate of the Year award in 2019. He served as Co-Executive Director of the National Sweetheart Pageant alongside his wife Michelle. Cliff was a vital presence at the pageant and was respected by all that knew him. This scholarship is awarded to the sweetheart who shows profound purpose and commitment to service to humanity.

STEM Scholarship - $300

Sponsored by Katarina Fielding & Victoria Humphrey

Our STEM Scholarship was established in 2017 and funded by our 2016 Miss National Sweetheart Victoria Humphrey and former Sweetheart contestant Katarine Fielding. This scholarship is awarded to a contestant who study and want to work in the fields of science, technology, engineering, or math.

Director's Award - $50

Sponsored by Kate Moore & Dana Kuntz

The Director's Award is given to a contestant who, in the director's opinion, has been punctual, prepared and focused during rehearsals. This recipent has also shown initiative throughout the week and appears competent, compassionate, cooperative and displays consideration of other.

Erica Hemphill Memorial Scholarship - $100

Sponsored by Darren and Natalie Duncan

We all knew Erica as Miss Maine Class of 2015 and 2016, Miss International 2015, and our Miss Maine Sweetheart in 2016. Words do not being to describe this dynamic soul. Erica lost her life very suddenly due to an undiagnosed glioblastoma. She was a strong advocate for the National Sweetheart Pageant. Erica was from a small city in northern Maine where almost everyone was a farmer, so with that background, she enjoyed her time in Hoopeston and felt right at home. In honor of Erica, her host family, Natalie and Darren Duncan, decided to establish an award in her memory. We are grateful to play a small part of life's journey for Erica, and she would be proud to know that her legacy lives on through this award.

Misti Runge Memorial Scholarship - $100

Sponsored by Katie & Dana Kuntz

Misti Runge was the former Head Chaperone and housing coordinator for the National Sweetheart Pageant. After her passing from cancer, 2014 Miss North Dakota Sweetheart Faye Stromberg began raising money for a scholarship in her memory. Two young women will be chosen, selected by the chaperones of the pageant. The criteria by while these Sweethearts will be selected will reflect Misti's devotion to the system, positive attitude, sense of humor, strength, and fun loving spirit.

Overall Interview Scholarship - $100

Sponsored by Gibson Area Hospital and Health Services

Overall Talent Scholarship - $100

Sponsored by Tony Nation - Actor's Connection

Sunday, September 6, 2026
Awards Presented During the Awards Ceremony

Eva Leanza Cornett Memorial Scholarship
Awarded to Miss National Sweetheart

The Eva Leanza Cornett supported the National Sweetheart Pageat at a time many turned their backs. She loved the midwest hospitality, enjoyed not only being crowned 1991 Miss National Sweetheart but we had the distinct honor to have her return as a judge in 2016. When Leanza took the stage, she was incredible to watch. She won the Miss Jacksonville pageant at the age of 18, went on to win Miss Jacksonsville University, Miss Winter Park, Miss National Sweetheart, Miss Florida, and ultimately Miss America 1993. Leanza sadly lost her life in 2020 after a fall in her home. This scholarship is awarded to the Miss National Sweetheart.

The Spririt of Hoopeston Award - $100
Sponsored by Callie Lankford and Lauren Linares

The Spirit of Hoopeston Award is sponsored by past Miss Hoopestons and past festival chairpersons who have served in both positions: Callie (Huffman) Lankford Miss Hoopeston 2009 & 73rd Festival Chairperson and Lauren Linares Miss Hoopeston 2019 and 78th Festival Chairperson. The award recipient will be selected by the reigninig Miss Hoopeston, and is presented to a contestant that throughout the week in the Hoopeston community has shown enthusiasm for the National Sweetcorn Festival and the National Sweetheart Pageant and exhibits kindness to those around them.

Social Media Ambassador Scholarship - $250
Sponsored by Becky Kurucz, Molly Casey, Terri Karch, Barry Sublett, and Kevin McCall

Judge's Legacy Scholarship - $250
Sponsored by Becky Kurucz, Molly Casey, Terri Karch, Barry Sublett, and Kevin McCall

Miss Hospitality Scholarship - $150
Sponsored by Caroline Shea

Heart of Service and Leadership Award - $100
Sponsored by The Ehrhart Family

The Heart of Service & Leadership Award is awarded to the contestant who best exemplifies "service above self" through their actions, character, and leadership outside of pageantry and platform work. The recipient may be a finalist or non-finalist. The focus should be on the impact of their service, the consistency of their commitment, and the heart behind it. Ultimately, this award recognizes someone who gives of themselves to others without seeking recognition or personal gain. The question at the heart of this award is: Who among these women demonstrates a genuine heart for serving others, not because she has a title or platform, but because serving others is simply who she is?

Miss Hoopeston Community Impact Award - $250
Sponsored by Megan West

The Miss Hoopeston Community Impact Award is granted to a young woman whose dedication to service and leadership inspires those around her. It is intended for an individual who embodies the values of the Miss Hoopeston program, demonstrates exceptional initiative, compassion, and commitment to making a difference; and serves as a catalyst for unity, progress, and kindness within her community. This award celebrates the belief that true leadership is measured by the lives we touch and the communities we strengthen.

In-Kind Scholarship

The Actors Connection of New York is offering these in-kind scholarships to our 2026 National Sweetheart Pageant top 5 finalists. They offer free online acting classes and more. Contestants are responsible for their own expenses and transportation to New York for these services in person. Winner - $3000, 1st Runner Up - $1500, 2nd Runner Up - $1000, 3rd Runner Up - $750, 4th Runner Up - $500.

List of Awards

Miss National Sweetheart

Hoopeston Jaycees.....$1200
Russell Leigh & Associates.....$400
Treasured Roots.....Flower Bouquet
Pink Poodle: Lisa Breymeyer.....Bracelet
Hoopeston Sport's Boosters: Teri Huchel.....Plush Jerky
Actor's Connection: Tony Nation*.....In-Kind $3000
Tim & Angie Totheroh.....Beauty Product
Leanza Cornett Memorial: Sarajayne Howland.....$150
Hoopeston Jaycees.....Crown
Traveling Miss: Cari Anne Cashon.....Crown Box

First Runner Up

Hoopeston Jaycees.....$600
Russell Leigh & Associates.....$200
Pink Poodle: Lisa Breymeyer.....Bracelet
Actor's Connection: Tony Nation*.....In-Kind $1500
Tim & Angie Totheroh.....Beauty Product
Silgan Containers.....$300
J. Moskal.....$75

Second Runner Up

Hoopeston Jaycees.....$675
Russell Leigh & Associates.....$100
Pink Poodle: Lisa Breymeyer.....Bracelet
Actor's Connection: Tony Nation*.....In-Kind $1000
Tim & Angie Totheroh.....Beauty Product
J. Moskal.....$50

Third Runner Up

Hoopeston Jaycees.....$375
Russell Leigh & Associates.....$75
Pink Poodle: Lisa Breymeyer.....Bracelet
Actor's Connection: Tony Nation*.....In-Kind $750
Tim & Angie Totheroh.....Beauty Product
J. Moskal.....$25
Anonymous.....$50

Fourth Runner Up

Hoopeston Jaycees.....$225
Russell Leigh & Associates.....$50
Pink Poodle: Lisa Breymeyer.....Bracelet
Actor's Connection: Tony Nation*.....In-Kind $500
Tim & Angie Totheroh.....Beauty Product
J. Moskal.....$25
Anonymous.....$25
Gibson Area Hospital and Health Services.....$25
Mr. B's Cafe: Robin Lawson.....$25

Congeniality

J. Moskal.....$25
Burger Bank: Robin Lawson.....$25
Autumn Fields: Aly Jackson.....$150

Evening Gown

M2 Prom.....$100

Lifestyle & Fitness

Sculpt Fitness: Kasey Moore.....$100

Overall Interview

Gibson Area Hospital and Health Services.....$100

Overall Talent

Actor's Connection: Tony Nation.....$100

Pat Musk Non-Finalist Talent

Actor's Connection: Tony Nation.....$100

Misti Runge Memorial Scholarship

Katie & Dana Kuntz.....$50 Group A, $50 Group B

Miss Hospitality Scholarship

Caroline Shea.....$150

Cliff Crabtree Memorial Community Service Award

Michelle Crabtree.....$100

STEM Scholarship

Katarina Fielding and Victoria Humphrey.....$300

Bonnie Berglund Parade Wear Award

In Memory of Bonnie Berglund.....$300

Director's Award

Kate Moore & Dana Kuntz.....$50

Erica Hemphill Memorial Scholarship

Darren & Natalie Duncan.....$100

Miss Hoopeston Community Impact Award

Megan West.....$250

The Spirit of Hoopeston Award

Callie Lankford and Lauren Linares.....$100

Heart of Service and Leadership Award

Ehrhart Family.....$100

Social Media Ambassador Scholarship

Becky Kurucz, Molly Casey, Terri Karch, Barry Sublett, Kevin McCall.$250

The Judge's Legacy Scholarship

Becky Kurucz, Molly Casey, Terri Karch, Barry Sublett, Kevin McCall.$250

Peoples Choice Award

50/50 Split

*Recipients of Actor's Connection of New York in-kind scholarship are responsible for all expesnes for New York City trip.