



IN PRESS RELEASES

TAGS NAA SAA TOP WINNER

MATTHEW GUBERMAN-PFEFFER WINS LEARNING ALLY NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Stratford resident proves blindness is no obstacle to educational success

PRINCETON, NJ – Learning Ally, a 66-year-old nonprofit serving individuals with learning and visual disabilities, has bestowed its highest award to [Matthew Guberman-Pfeffer](#) of Stratford, Connecticut. Guberman-Pfeffer is one of six students from across the U.S. who will receive cash awards and travel with their families to be honored at Learning Ally's National Gala celebration in Washington, DC next April.

Guberman-Pfeffer graduated from Fairfield University this past spring with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a 3.98 GPA. He is currently flourishing as a grad student in the University of Connecticut's chemistry graduate program, on the most competitive and prestigious scholarship offered. He is also severely visually impaired.

While at Fairfield, one of Guberman-Pfeffer's professors told him, "I wish I could encourage you to major in English instead of chemistry." She recognized how a visual impairment could make an already challenging subject even more difficult to master. She then said, "But I can't. You're too darned good at chemistry."

Rather than be discouraged by his visual impairment, Guberman-Pfeffer has always felt it was simply a challenge to overcome as he pursued his passion for science. “I came to see chemistry as an exciting opportunity to transcend physical blindness by improving the acuity of my mind’s eye,” he says.

“When Matthew came with his interest in organic and physical chemistry. . . we recognized that his intellect and gifts were so profound, that we were very careful not to rule anything out,” says Amy Howell, professor and head of the Chemistry Department at UConn. “In your lifetime as a professor, you have a few truly gifted students, and Matthew is one of those students.”

One resource that has allowed Guberman-Pfeffer to excel in chemistry is Learning Ally’s library of human-narrated audio textbooks and literature titles. “Books in audio format have given me unprecedented access to visual technical material, empowering me to compete with my sighted peers on equal terms,” he says. “Assistive technology will remain an invaluable tool for me as I further my education, and I hope to continue changing public perceptions about the abilities of blind students.”

About the National Achievement Awards

Since 1959, Learning Ally has honored exceptional students who are blind or visually impaired through its privately endowed Mary P. Oenslager Scholastic Achievement Awards (SAA) for college seniors and beyond. Hundreds of students apply for these prestigious awards each year and are selected by committees of Learning Ally volunteers, board members, parents, educators, donors and staff. Students are recognized for their academic excellence, leadership, and service to others; each award winner has a long list of honors and accomplishments, and has graduated with a GPA above 3.0, with most near the 4.0 mark; and they have thrived on their education paths thanks in part to their use of accessible educational content and assistive technology provided by Learning Ally. **For information about applying for Learning Ally’s National Achievement awards, visit <http://NAA.LearningAlly.org/apply>.**

About Learning Ally

Founded in 1948, Learning Ally helps K-12, college and graduate students, veterans and lifelong learners – all of whom read and learn differently due to blindness, visual impairment, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities. Through its support programs and audiobooks, Learning Ally enables families and teachers to help students thrive and succeed. The organization provides support to parents and students through events, webinars, personal consultations and other tools; and integrated learning management systems and professional development for teachers. In addition, Learning Ally’s collection of more than 80,000 human-narrated audio textbooks and literature titles can be downloaded on mainstream smartphones and tablets, and is the largest of its kind in the world. Several thousand volunteers help to produce the educational materials, which students rely on to achieve academic and professional success. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Learning Ally is partially funded by grants from state and local education programs, and the generous contributions of individuals, foundations and corporations. For more information, visit <http://LearningAlly.org>.