

# Dorothy L. Bernhard Scholarship

## What is the Dorothy L. Bernhard Scholarship?

This scholarship is in honor and memory of Dorothy L. Bernhard a civic leader and philanthropist who was a staunch and tireless supporter of children in need. This scholarship will be given to a student who is dedicated to child welfare. One scholarship will be awarded.

## Who was Dorothy L. Bernhard?

**Dorothy Lehman Bernhard** (1903-1969) was a civic leader and philanthropist who was a staunch and tireless supporter of children in need. With roots in two of New York's most prestigious German Jewish families, she dedicated her time, energy, and family wealth to over thirty human service, public welfare, cultural, and social organizations. Her contributions were widely recognized, including receiving the Child Welfare League of America's first Child Welfare Award from Eleanor Roosevelt in 1962.

The oldest child of Arthur and Adele Lehman, Mrs. Bernhard grew up in a tightly knit extended family that lived, worked, socialized, and vacationed together. Although they were not particularly religious, the entire family proudly embraced Jewish values and identified very strongly with Jewish traditions of helping those in need. With models like her parents, uncles Herbert and Irving Lehman (governor and chief justice of the Court of Appeals in New York State, respectively), and grandfathers Mayer Lehman and Adolph Lewisohn (major business magnates and philanthropists), Mrs. Bernhard absorbed a deep commitment to helping others and addressing social needs.

She graduated from the Horace Mann School in 1920, attended Wellesley College for one year, and married investment banker Richard Jaques Bernhard in 1923. In the late 1930s in response to the rise of Hitler and the persecution of the Jews, the Lehman family established a fund to aid distant relatives in Germany to emigrate, and Mrs. Bernhard managed these efforts, including providing direct assistance in resettlement, job finding, and addressing other social needs upon the refugees' arrival.

Although she did not have any formal training in social work, Mrs. Bernhard became deeply involved in both the provision of services and giving support and direction for the field. She was a moving force in child welfare, devoting thirty years to the Child Welfare League of America, holding the role of president from 1957 to 1962 and vice president for various terms totaling thirteen years. She served on the board of the Citizen's Committee for Children of New York City for over twenty years and was active in the Jewish Child Care Association where she was vice president (1940–1942) and chaired their Foster Home Bureau. Not only was she a vocal

advocate for the deinstitutionalization of foster care, she also exhibited a deep personal commitment serving as a foster parent herself.

In the field of social work, she was a board member and chair of the Hunter College School of Social Work Advisory Committee and served on national and international councils of social work. Mrs. Bernhard's contributions to these fields were also recognized through public appointments. She was a member of the New York State Board of Social Welfare from 1942 to 1947, was appointed to the New York City Advisory Board on Public Welfare by Mayor Robert F. Wagner in 1960, and served on other city and state committees.

Dorothy Lehman Bernhard was a leader in the field of social welfare in New York City. While her actions were rooted in Jewish values, they transcended religious and ethnic barriers. Following her death from cancer on March 6, 1969, her dedication, leadership, and unfailing concern for others, particularly children, were widely lauded.

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