

Van Merchant Agriculture Grant Program

The purpose of this grant is to open opportunities to high school graduates up through the age of 25 for further education geared toward improving agriculture in rural communities. This grant applies only for programs directly related to farming/agriculture. Requirements are that the person is regarded as a good citizen within their community, a hard-working, honest individual, and one that is likely to aid those who are struggling.

The grant may be used for trade schools, 2 and 4 year colleges, internships, apprenticeships, etc. High schools with active agriculture programs may apply to fund special projects or to expand their programs.

We plan to give out at least \$15,000 annually. It may go to 1 person/entity or several, depending on the applications received. In order to apply you must fill out the application form and submit it by March 15, 2026. The handwritten portion is required for consideration.

Applications may be emailed to bddietz@outlook.com and must have Merchant grant in the subject box, or they may be mailed to Deb Dietz 13416 W. Pinhook Rd. Lena, IL 61048.

Van Merchant Agriculture Grant Application

Deadline for submission: March 15, 2026

This grant is offered by the family in memory of Van Merchant. Van was a lifelong farmer. He farmed from childhood and took over the family farm when his father Harold Merchant passed in Van's early 20's. He asked to have this program set up to encourage young people to gain the skills to enhance farming and associated services in rural area communities.

Please complete this form and return to bddietz@outlook.com on or before the above deadline, put Merchant Grant in the subject line. By mail, send your grant request to: Van Merchant Grant, 13416 W. Pinhook Rd. Lena IL. 61048. DO NOT drop off at the home, as it may be overlooked.

The goal of this program is to grant \$15,000 total per year to the following school districts/students of these school districts/ young graduates living within these school districts: Eastland, Pearl City, Stockton, Lena, Orangeville, Pecatonica, Scales Mound, Warren River Ridge, Dakota, Durand, Forrester, Milledgeville, West Carroll, and Winnebago. The grant is open for 2- and 4-year colleges, trade school, apprenticeships, and schools offering new agriculture programs. We are open to looking at types of educational opportunities that are often overlooked.

This year, the grants will focus strictly on ag-centered careers and financial need. This award is not just for straight A students; all who are passionate about their future career in agriculture are encouraged to apply.

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Full name of applicant _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name of Parent if under 18 _____

School Name _____

School Contact/Title _____

School Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Van Merchant Rural & Agricultural Grant Application

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please list School Activities and Special Awards:

Please list areas of Community Service:

Please inform us of the educational pursuit and name of the school/educational facility.

Please give us 1 or 2 personal references. Good choices are a Pastor, teacher, high school employer, etc. Relatives are not accepted as reference:

Name, address, phone #

Please attach a short hand written essay telling us of your plans for the life you have ahead of you. Do not write what you think we want to hear, tell us what you road you hope to travel to a good life in rural America!

TIP: Authenticity matters more than polish/perfection. Typed essays will not be accepted.

I will reply to all submissions. If you do not get a confirmation, please call or text me at 815-291-2849.