

[Buckland student named National Merit Scholarship Program semi-finalist](#)
[By MADISON SCHOFIELD Staff Writer](#) Published: 09-27-2024 2:24 PM

BUCKLAND — A Mohawk Trail Regional School senior has been recognized as one of the top-scoring PSAT takers across the nation and named as a National Merit Scholarship Program semi-finalist.

Eliza Crowell, a senior from Buckland, took the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) last October, and received one of the top scores of 1.3 million students nationwide. She was one of five students in western Massachusetts to be named one of this year's 16,000 National Merit Scholarship Program semi-finalists who are competing for a \$2,500 scholarship.

“Semi-finalists represent less than 1% of the nation's high school graduating seniors,” a statement from Mohawk Trail Regional School reads. “The competition is very rigorous; scholarship winners are chosen based on their abilities, skills, extracurricular accomplishments, and potential for success in college and beyond.”

Crowell said she was surprised she did so well on the PSAT, especially because she wasn't rigorously studying for it.

“It's a little surprising. I'm still not sure how to handle it,” Crowell said. “It was a low-stakes thing for me. I didn't realize there were scholarships attached to it.”

Crowell noted she has already taken the SAT now twice, and has scored better each time.

Crowell said she found the math sections of the exam were more difficult, and the reading and writing sections were a breeze. At Mohawk Trail, her interests are similar. While her preferred subjects have changed over the years, lately she has been drawn to English and history, and she prefers more creative tasks and assignments.

Crowell said her excellent test scores can be attributed to her teachers.

“Mohawk Trail has really great teachers. That's part of why I like it there so much,” Crowell said.

Overall, Mohawk Trail has been a great place to be, she added. She's been involved in sports, theater and music at the school, noting it has “something for everyone.”

Crowell is interested in studying either music, political science or history in college. She's been taking a political science course at Greenfield Community College to explore her interest, but she also has musical aspirations and plays guitar in a band.

“Music is a really big part of my life,” Crowell said. “It’s something I love to do.”

Crowell will move forward in the merit scholar competition, but to become a finalist she will need more than just a good test score.

“To become a finalist, the semi-finalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about the semi-finalist’s academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received,” according to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. “A semi-finalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the student’s earlier performance on the qualifying test.”

Crowell hopes to be named a finalist, and eventually win the scholarship. Her teachers feel confident she will.

“In working with Eliza, I appreciate that she demonstrates absolute and authentic joy for the opportunity to be creative and shape a learning experience,” English teacher Erik Sussbauer said in a statement. “Any task or idea is met with sparkle and positive energy.”

Finalists will be announced in February and the winners of the scholarships will be announced in April.

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