AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students, supported by AACAP’s Life Members Fund

The AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grants for Medical Students provides the opportunity for medical students to receive a formal overview of child and adolescent psychiatry, establish mentor relationships with child and adolescent psychiatrists, and experience the AACAP Annual Meeting. Established in 2011 and supported by AACAP’s Life Members Fund, recipients also engage with AACAP Life Members by attending the Life Members Clinical Perspectives and the Life Members Reception and Dinner. Recipients receive up to $1,000 of financial assistance to attend AACAP’s Annual Meeting.

Pooja R. Amin, MS—Des Moines University
Sandra A. Appiah, BA—University of Colorado School of Medicine
Heidi M. Banh, MS—University of California, San Diego
Jared Boyce, MS—University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
Andrew R. Chang, MMSc—Harvard Medical School
Rishab Chawla, BS—Medical College of Georgia
Benjamin Fleet, BS—Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University
Veronica Gandara, BS—California Northstate University College of Medicine
Amanda N. Leon, BA—University of California, San Francisco
Laura J. Levy, BS—Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine
Christina M. Miranda, BA—Stanford University
Alexandra E. Moore, BS—University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Apoorva Polavarapu, MS—Saint Georges University School of Medicine
Ananya Roy, BSA, BA—Dell Medical School, The University of Texas at Austin
Christopher P. Zazueta, BA—Eastern Virginia Medical School
Dear Life Members Committee,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your generous support in funding my attendance at the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Annual Conference in New York City this year. Your contribution has provided me with a unique and invaluable opportunity to expand my knowledge, connect with experts in the field, and contribute to the advancement of child and adolescent psychiatry.

Attending the AACAP Annual Conference is a significant milestone in my professional development. The insights gained from the diverse sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities will undoubtedly enhance my skills and contribute to my effectiveness as a mental health professional.

Your commitment to supporting individuals in the field is truly commendable. It is because of thoughtful and generous individuals like you that aspiring professionals like myself can access resources and experiences that would otherwise be challenging to attain.

I am eager to bring back the knowledge and inspiration gained from the conference to my work and community. Your belief in the importance of continuous learning and professional development has not only benefited me but will have a positive ripple effect on the individuals and families I serve.

Once again, thank you for making this opportunity possible. Your generosity has not only supported my educational journey but has also reaffirmed my commitment to making a meaningful impact in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Pooja Amin
November 10, 2023

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Dr. Benoit and Dr. Sholevar,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for your unwavering support and encouragement that have enabled me to attend the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). Your generosity has provided me with a unique and wonderful opportunity to learn, grow, and connect with some of the greatest advocates for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. During the conference, I took part in a wide range of events, including lectures, workshops, and networking sessions, where I had the chance to meet and interact with professionals, researchers, and students from diverse backgrounds. These experiences were truly invaluable, as they allowed me to gain new insights into the field and to learn about the latest research and developments in the area of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. In addition, thanks to the grant, I was able to produce my first research poster and present it at the conference. This was a great experience that helped me to connect with other professionals, get feedback on my work, and further explore my interests and passions in this field. I am truly grateful for your exceptional guidance and support, which have been instrumental in helping me to pursue my dreams and aspirations. Your generosity has paved the way for students like myself to learn in diverse and culturally responsive atmospheres that will hopefully lead to rewarding careers in patient populations who are often marginalized. Once again, thank you so much for your kindness, encouragement, and generosity. I am looking forward to attending AACAP in the future and continuing on this great journey!

All my best wishes,

Sandra Anaa Appiah
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in this incredible Life Members Mentorship Grant Program at this year’s AACAP annual meeting in New York - my very first in-person one and definitely not my last! As a fourth year medical student currently applying into psychiatry, the events organized fueled my passions and excitement for this field. It introduced me to so many amazing people within the CAP community who welcomed us with open arms. I cannot wait to continue learning and growing with this wonderful community.

On a personal note, I had recently gone through a rough family loss a few weeks prior, and coming to the AACAP conference was my first big step in my healing. This loss came up unexpectedly in a conversation with a Life Member, and the wisdom and perspective about grief and healing I received was such a meaningful moment of connection. I am grateful for how this program propelled my professional growth within CAP forward, but I will never forget how the genuine connections made came at a time I needed them most. Thank you for all the ways your community uplifts the next generation of CAPs!

With endless gratitude,

*Heidi Banh*

MD Candidate, Class of 2024
UC San Diego School of Medicine
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Drs. Benoit and Sholevar,

My name is Jared Boyce and I am one of the recipients of the AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grant this year. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and sincerely thank you for making it possible for me to attend the 2023 Meeting. I am a second-year MD-PhD student in the Medical Scientist Training Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. I am interested in becoming a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist or Triple Boarding. My research interests lie at the nexus of molecular neurobiology and social determinants of health. I’m interested in studying the underlying neurobiological mechanisms involved in early life trauma and comorbidities with other diseases. I also combine these with my advocacy through organizations like the American Medical Association, which recently adopted my Adverse Childhood Experiences policy, and the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights.

Attending this conference allowed me to meet new mentors, connect with other medical students and residents who share a passion for child psychiatry, and learn more about the field. It was both eye-opening and inspiring to attend this conference, especially as a second-year medical student.

Thank you so much again for supporting my grant. Please feel free to reach out if you would like to connect.

Sincerely,

Jared E. Boyce (he/him/his)
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health | Medical Scientist Training Program (MD-PhD)
Brown University | ScM in Medical Sciences 2021
Dartmouth College | AB in Neuroscience 2016
P: 631-946-0232 | E: jeboyce@wisc.edu
Website | LinkedIn | Linktree
AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program  
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Dr. Benoit and Dr. Sholevar,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my deep gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grant through the Life Members Mentorship Grant Program. This prestigious award is not only an honor but also a significant milestone in my career and personal development.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the entire AACAP Life Members Committee for their dedication and commitment to supporting young professionals in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry. This grant represents not only financial assistance but also invaluable recognition of my aspirations and potential in this vital field of medicine.

Your support will enable me to pursue mentorship opportunities that will enhance my skills, expand my knowledge, and ultimately contribute to the well-being of children and adolescents. I am excited about the doors this grant will open for me and the positive impact it will have on my professional journey.

Rest assured that I will make the most of this opportunity and use the knowledge and experience gained through this mentorship to make a meaningful difference in the lives of young individuals in need.

Once again, thank you for this incredible honor.

Sincerely,
Andrew R. Chang
Harvard Medical School
Dear AACAP Life Members:

Thank you immensely for generously funding my first time in-person attendance AACAP 2023 in New York. I had a lovely time attending numerous scientific sessions and networking events while using my spare time to explore the city and build lasting connections with peers. At the conference, I solidified CAP as my future career path while further developing my interests in refugee mental health and infant & early childhood development.

My goal for this conference was to not only learn from the didactic content of the sessions, but to feel the passion and energy from likeminded individuals and learn what inspires them – it was a resounding success. Through the previous virtual mentorship events and in-person mentorship at AACAP, I have appreciated greatly the wealth of wisdom that Life Members offer to trainees; I hope to pay it forward by mentoring others as I progress further in my training.

Sincerely,

Rishab Chawla (he/him)
MS4, Medical College of Georgia Class of 2024
rchawla@augusta.edu
November 6, 2023

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

To the Life Members of AACAP Leadership Drs. Ellen Sholevar & Marilyn Benoit,

I wanted to write to express my sincere gratitude for giving me the opportunity to attend the AACAP National Meeting through the financial support of the Life Members Mentorship Grant. This conference was the first in my career as a future psychiatrist, and it would not have been possible for me to attend without the generous financial support of the Life Members Committee, so once again I would like to express my gratitude for selecting me for the grant.

Some of my highlights from the conference included networking with peers and residents, listening to great and inspiring talks on topics in psychiatry, and meeting with Life Members. I think that Thursday was my favorite day in the conference. On this day, I attended the Life Members presentation on the various faces of leadership, attended the Life Members Dinner, and socialized with new friends. The presentation on leadership was of great benefit to me as I begin to imagine my career path as a child & adolescent psychiatrist. I particularly appreciated Dr. Peter Cohen’s presentation, as his approach to leadership really resonated with my values. I was excited to tell him this at the dinner later that evening, and he and I had a wonderful conversation on living in the Midwest and the value of “being the last person to speak in a room.” I shared a table with amazing trainees and physicians (including Dr. Sholevar!), and I got to reconnect with an alumni of my medical school. I left the event that night with both a full heart and full stomach. The next morning at the Young Leaders Breakfast, I was able to introduce myself to former AACAP president Dr. Warren Y.K. Ng and discuss poetry. It was an incredible way to end my week in New York City.

The 70th Annual Meeting was an amazing introduction to the child & adolescent psychiatrist community. As stated, I learned so much about the field, but I was also able to learn so much more about myself by attending this conference. I wanted to provide thanks one last time for supporting me financially to attend this conference. I also wanted to thank you for supporting me as a mentee and as a future child & adolescent psychiatrist.

Warmest regards,

Benjamin Fleet
he/him/his
Sidney Kimmel Medical College - MS4
AmeriCorps Alumnus ’20
Indiana University - B.S. Psychology, B.S. Neuroscience ‘19
To the AACAP Life Members Committee,

I would like to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to attend the annual AACAP conference in New York City this year. I had an interest in psychiatry for years before matriculating into medical school. However, it was not until my second year of medical school when I discovered child and adolescent psychiatry, and I was immediately drawn to the idea of pursuing this subspecialty.

I attend a newer school in California, and therefore have not had the opportunity to connect with mentors in the field. Attending the annual conference allowed me to connect with mentors who shared valuable insights and advice. I also gained new friendships with fellow students that share my interest in child and adolescent psychiatry, diversity and inclusion, and personal wellbeing, and I found both support and new opportunities from these connections.

The week I spend at the conference was one of the most transformational experiences I have had during my medical education. It created mentorship and opportunities that I would have never had otherwise. I truly believe that this experience changed the trajectory of the rest of my education by opening up doors that I was not aware existed. Thank you for everything, and I look forward to attending the annual AACAP conference next year in Seattle.

Sincerely,

Veronica Gandara, MS3
California Northstate University, College of Medicine
Veronica.Gandara8842@cnsu.edu
(858) 815-2785 - Cell
November 6, 2023

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

To the Life Members Committee,

My sincere thanks for your sponsorship, without which, I would not have been able to afford to attend this year’s AACAP conference.

Reflecting on my experience, I am struck by how informative and welcoming I found the conference programming and attendants. I greatly enjoyed the variety of topics covered by conference offerings. I am excited to return to my home institution with what I have learned about collaborative care models, caring for gender diverse youth, and the effects of climate change on pediatric mental health, to name a few.

Additionally, the mentorship I received at AACAP’s conference was remarkable. I left the week with all my CAP questions answered as well as several new professional contacts. I especially look forward to connecting with members of the Latinx caucus and SOGI Committee.

My thanks again for an excellent week in New York, and I sincerely look forward to attending future AACAP events.

Sincerely,
Amanda León

PRIME-US Scholar
UCSF School of Medicine
Class of 2025
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I would like to thank you for your generous award that allowed me to attend this year’s annual AACAP meeting. Without your Mentorship Grant Program, I would not have been able to afford the trip to NYC! I had a wonderful time at this year’s meeting. I was able to meet so many fantastic like-minded trainees and attend thought-provoking symposiums. Obviously, my favorite opportunities was meeting the Life Members during mentorship events, as well as the delicious dinner I was invited to! I truly appreciate this opportunity and all the wisdom I received during this experience. The perspective of Life Members is so valuable and this opportunity was immensely rewarding.

Thank you for all that you do!!

Best wishes,

Laura Levy
MD/MPH student, class of 2024
Oregon Health & Science University
To the AACAP Life Members Committee:

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Christina Miranda and I am a second year medical student at Stanford University, and recipient of the Life Members Mentorship Grant Program.

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generous sponsorship of this year's program and your steadfast support for the continuation of the Life Members Mentorship Grants. Your commitment to nurturing the next generation of child psychiatrists is truly commendable and deeply appreciated.

I am immensely honored and privileged to have been a beneficiary of the Life Members Mentorship Grant. Your support has enabled me to pursue my passion for child and adolescent psychiatry with a renewed sense of purpose and dedication. The mentorship and guidance I have received through this grant and attending the annual meeting have been invaluable in shaping my career and enhancing my skills in the field. I am inspired by the unwavering commitment of the AACAP Life Members Committee to fostering the development of aspiring child psychiatrists like myself.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunities the grant has provided me to learn from experienced mentors, engage in meaningful research, and contribute to the well-being of young minds. Specifically, this grant enabled me to attend the AACAP conference to present my research on eating disorder prevention programming in public schools. This project is the work that initially encouraged me to go to medical school and pursue child psychiatry. Moreover, the mentorship experience provided through this award has not only enriched my knowledge but has also instilled in me a sense of responsibility to give back to the community and support others in their journey towards becoming competent and compassionate mental health practitioners.

Your belief in the power of mentorship and your investment in the future of child and adolescent psychiatry have a lasting impact, not only on individual lives but also on the broader landscape of mental health care. I am confident that the knowledge and skills I have gained through this mentorship program will continue to positively influence the lives of the children and adolescents I work with, as well as their families and communities.

Once again, thank you for your generosity, vision, and unwavering support. Your dedication to the field of child and adolescent psychiatry is an inspiration to us all. I am committed to making the most of this opportunity and to contributing meaningfully to the field, thanks to your belief in my potential.

I look forward to staying connected with the AACAP community and, hopefully, one day being in a position to support aspiring professionals, just as you have supported me.

With warmest regards and deepest gratitude,

Christina Miranda
M.D. Candidate at Stanford University School of Medicine
cmirand@stanford.edu
Christina Miranda  
25 Hilltop Rd  
Milford, NJ  
08848  
cmirand@stanford.edu

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program  
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016

Photos from AACAP:

Warren Ng and Christina Miranda  
Christina Miranda, presenting research on Body Empowerment Project  
Christina Miranda and Dr. Jose Vito
November 10, 2023

Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I am writing to express my deepest thanks for the honor of receiving the Life Members Mentorship Grant for Medical Students that supported my travel and participation in the AACAP 70th annual meeting in New York City this year. Your support provided me with the opportunity to learn from speakers during different programs and meet phenomenal mentors, other students, and residents. I also had the privilege of presenting my research at the conference.

It was an honor to have been chosen to receive this award, and the experience and knowledge I gained from attending the conference will have a lasting impact on my development as a student and future psychiatrist.

Thank you again for your generosity and support.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Moore
Medical Student
November 3, 2023

AACAP Life Members Committee - Life Members Mentorship Grant Program
Attn: Marilyn B. Benoit, MD and Ellen H. Sholevar, MD
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

To whom it may concern,

My name is Apoorva Polavarapu and I am a St George's University School of Medicine fourth year medical student. I am writing to you to thank you for the AACAP Life Members Grant for Medical Students.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to attend AACAP 2023 through your support. Not only did the grant help me financially, but also gave me the confidence that even as a medical student I should attend AACAP. I made the most out of the opportunity by attending every mentorship session available and learning about mentors’ varied trajectories through the field of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. It provided me with great insight and reassurance that I too can forge my own path in this field. This award also helped me understand the expanse of AACAP's wonderful community. By attending Life Member events I got a glimpse into these lasting connections and accomplishments that motivate me to contribute towards our community as well.

Next year, I am applying for Psychiatry residency while I complete a Masters in Public Health. AACAP helped me find various opportunities in the intersection of technology and psychiatry that I hope to explore in this gap year and through my MPH.

Thank you again so much for your support to attend!
Best,
Apoorva
Dear AACAP Life Members Committee,

I am grateful for the generous Life Members Mentorship Grant that allowed me to attend AACAP 2023 in New York City this year. As a medical student, attending the conference was a valuable experience, and the financial assistance provided through this grant was instrumental in enabling me to participate in the conference this year.

Attending AACAP this year allowed me to meet many potential mentors in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry and gain exposure to novel research and innovation. I connected with fellow medical students, residents, program directors, life members, and numerous individuals, learned about the diversity within CAP, and made many new contacts and potential collaborators.

In particular, I loved attending the session titled *Life Members Wisdom Clinical Perspectives: The Many Faces of Leadership in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* and learning from giants in the field through their vignettes and experiences. It was inspiring to hear their stories.

I am very thankful that your travel grant allowed me to take advantage of this career development and networking opportunity. It would not have been feasible without your support. Thank you again for investing in my growth as a scholar. I look forward to attending more AACAP conferences in the future as a resident and beyond.

Thank you again,
Ananya Roy
MS4, University of Texas at Austin
Dear Members of the AACAP Life Members Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my profound gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the Life Members Mentorship Grant through the AACAP Life Members Mentorship Grant Program.

This grant represents far more than just financial assistance to me. It is a symbol of your belief in the potential of young medical professionals and your commitment to their growth. I am deeply honored to have been chosen for this grant, and I am fully aware of the privilege it bestows.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Marilyn B. Benoit and Dr. Ellen H. Sholevar for their leadership and dedication in overseeing this program. Their commitment to mentoring the next generation of healthcare providers is truly commendable.

The mentorship aspect of this grant is particularly meaningful to me. The opportunity to learn from experienced professionals is invaluable, and I am excited to absorb the knowledge and insights they have to offer. I am dedicated to making the most of this mentorship to further my medical education and personal growth.

Once again, thank you for this incredible opportunity. Your generosity and support are inspiring, and I am committed to using this grant to its fullest potential.

Sincerely,

Christopher Zazueta, MS4