



# Avril D. Woodhead, DSc

## Grit Scholarship

## NYWEA

### Scholarship Overview

Grit is the ability of an individual to overcome challenges, maintain effort and engage interest despite failure (Duckworth et al., 2007). Resilience has been described as the ability of the individual “to bounce back” and to remain optimistic in difficult situations (Wicks, 2010). Dr. Angela Duckworth, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and Ted Talk presenter noted that “grit” predicts success more reliably than talent or IQ, and that anyone, at any age, can learn to cultivate grit through experience, focus and hope.

This scholarship was created in Dr. Avril D. Woodhead’s name, as she exemplified the characteristics of grit in both her personal and professional life. Born in 1930 and growing up during WWII, Avril caught rheumatic fever twice leaving her unable to walk. But, with the love of her mother and countless hours of gritty effort she regained her mobility. She went on to have a highly successful life beginning with her early work collaborating with Dr. Alex Comfort on cell aging, to later publishing in the Journal *Nature* and being featured in the NY Times science section (Dec 20, 1989) for her breakthrough work on malignant melanoma. Dr. Woodhead retired shortly after her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday and lived until she was 90!

In her personal life she was a domestic violence survivor and raised her two children while working fulltime with a large compliment of friends and peers cheering her on. Upon joining Brookhaven National Laboratory, she pushed for the *first* federally supported childcare facility at a national research laboratory and helped to create, and later lead, the Women in Science organization (4<sup>th</sup> woman lower left) that still exists today as she understood that for women to be successful, sometimes more than just funding was needed to be able to maintain a long term goal.



Based on her life experiences, and personal beliefs, Dr. Woodhead wanted to create a scholarship that would enable women, or those who identify as women, to have the support they need to access critical opportunities and take risks, despite the obstacles that remain in their way. The Avril

Woodhead Scholarship Committee is seeking applicants who have demonstrated grit in pursuit of their goals and dreams and could benefit from such additional support.

## Desired Uses for Scholarship

This Scholarship is worth \$2,500 and will be granted on a one-time, lump sum basis, to one individual annually, and can be used for expenses or activities that would move the applicant closer to achieving their stated goal in a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) field. Uses of this funding may include, but are not limited to:

- Paying for child-care to support an applicant attending a class or conference
- Funding GRE achievement
- Conference or training costs
- The purchase of educational materials such as books, test preparation manuals or a computer
- Transportation costs and fees to attend conferences, trainings, or classes
- Materials needed to enter a new STEM field
- Tutoring or assistance to prepare for advanced tests or classes
- Professional development efforts
- Certification or licensing cost

For the successful candidate, 12 months of free coaching will also be provided (if desired) by Claire R. Baldwin, DPS, the scholarship creator, and daughter of Avril Woodhead. Dr Baldwin has over 30 years in STEM, and routinely provides coaching for individuals progressing through their career to help them maximize outcomes. The pace and focus of this coaching will be of the successful candidates choosing and is not related to how this funding is spent, but rather the candidate's interests and challenges in their chosen field.

## Eligible Candidates

Desired recipients of this scholarship would be persons who identify as female, or are nonbinary, and have demonstrated grit as shown through maintaining effort and interest despite setbacks as they work towards their goals, and are interested in, or already participating in, a STEM field. This can include, but is not limited to: operators, engineers, field staff, accountants, HR, administrators, scientists or other organizational functions that advance the protection of our environment. Candidates should be 17 years or older.

## Proposed Application

### Application Format

#### Essay (Written or Video)

Interested applicants should submit a 2-to-3-page essay (2,000-3,000 words; 12 point type) that describes the following:

1. What is the goal(s) they are working towards?
2. How long have they been working towards this goal(s)?
3. How have they demonstrated grit in their journey toward their goal?
4. How would this money take them closer to achieving their goal(s)?
5. Finally, how would the achieving the goal contribute to the STEM industry or benefit the environment?

For applicants that are limited in their ability to undertake an essay, a video application is encouraged and can be recorded on whatever media (cell phone, zoom, etc.) is most accessible. Videos should not exceed 5-10 minutes in length.

**Letters of Recommendation**

All submissions should be supported by two (2) recommendations by individuals (professional or personal such as a teacher, mentor, or co-worker) that speak to the candidate's focus and determination.

Deadline: February 28<sup>th</sup>