

Farm Table Mission Prize in Ecology

in honor of

Robert J. Bursik

Ecology is the study of organisms and their relationships, particularly in regard to their physical environment. The origin of the word *Ecology* comes from the Greek word “*oikos*”, which means home. The Earth is our home, and every upright creature, living thing and cell depends upon relationships and a suitable environment in order to exist and maintain its critical role for this planet’s healthy functioning.

Farm Table’s Mission is to protect, enhance and clarify these relationships in regard to soil, farming, food and natural habitat — all for the purpose of sustaining healthy communities. Wisconsin, with its many farms and diverse natural habitats, flourishes to the extent that humans understand how their activities and interventions affect Nature’s relationships, from the tiniest bacterial arrangements in tilled soil, to the impact of very large disturbances, like mining minerals from deep underground.

Rob Bursik was an Amery businessman and biology professor who strove to understand Nature’s relationships. He brought to life plants rooted in healthy soil for the public to purchase. He designed planted environments that served to clean water, buffer chemicals and beautify urban landscapes. His love of learning, people and biology compelled him to teach students how to see, understand, and work with Nature in a responsible way. From potting soil to pollination, photosynthesis to fertility, Rob elucidated how biology reflects a resilient life-generating web from which all draw sustenance, connection and a sense of purpose.

Farm Table Foundation seeks to identify and reward students within Polk County who show particular promise/achievement in the study or application of ecology — whether in academic pursuits like biology, chemistry or physics, or in applied pursuits like farming, habitat restoration or wilderness/environmental advocacy. It may also include students, who, through commerce, employment or civic action, have demonstrated unusual initiative in bringing to the public important products, service or testimony that bear directly on Farm Table’s Mission as stated above. From farming to Boy Scouts, working at a non-profit to joining 4-H, wilderness camping to volunteer work, Farm Table seeks those individuals whose time and effort show a commitment to understanding/enhancing/safe-guarding Nature’s ecological web in a way that credits the life of Rob Bursik.

Application Process:

1. Submit academic transcripts from grades 9 through 12.
2. Submit recommendations from two outside individuals who are familiar with the applicant’s achievements.
3. Submit an essay of between 2 and 5 pages elucidating who you are, what values you espouse, and how you arrived at a place of greater understanding about the natural world and its relationships. Highlight achievements or pursuits which demonstrate how your convictions/interest/passion have been made manifest in the world.

4. Submit a one-page statement of future intent in regard to your education, career or experiential pursuits which will serve to feed and inform your passion for ecology and for which scholarship funds are needed.

The top five candidates will be identified globally by the Farm Table Selection Committee and the four elements will be rank ordered with reverse numbers assigned to each position in the ranking, e.g., finishing #1 on "Essay" totals 5 points, finishing #5 on "Essay" totals 1 point. The scholarship recipient is selected based on the highest numerical score from rank ordering the four elements.

Send all these materials via US Post to:

Farm Table Bursik Scholarship
Farm Table Foundation
110 North Keller Avenue
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

All applications are due by March 15th

Award Dinner:

The winner of the Farm Table Mission Prize in Honor of Rob Bursik will be invited to dinner at Farm Table (at Farm Table's expense), along with their immediate family, to accept the award and make a presentation based on their submissions.

Total award for 2019:

\$5,000 to an accredited institution of higher learning. Or, to an alternative experience/training/internship that is approved — in advance — by the selection committee. Please send appropriate invoices/billings to the Scholarship Guarantor at:

Trust Point
C/O Christine Schmidt
43 Main Street S.E.
Suite 214
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Please call Peter Henry with questions at 715-268-6893.