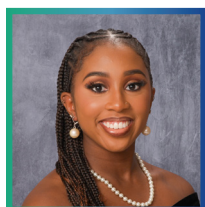


## 2025 Scholarship Recipients

Continuing our commitment to supporting local students in their academic pursuits, FOCUS Broadband has awarded \$2,000 scholarships to ten outstanding high school seniors. With over 65 applications submitted from across our service areas, recipients were chosen based on academic excellence, community and school involvement, and their performance during the interview process.

### 2025 FOCUS Broadband Scholarship Recipients:



Sereniti Branch  
Pender Early College



Ella Bellamy,  
West Brunswick High



Lizzy Cruz,  
South Columbus High



Miguel Dominguez,  
East Columbus High



Kinslee Martin,  
Lumberton High



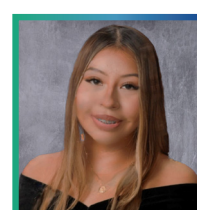
Jamaurie Perry,  
John A. Holmes High



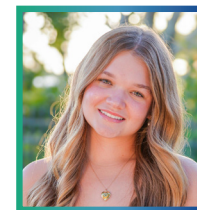
Haley Parker,  
East Columbus High



Emmy Russ,  
Brunswick Early College



Jessica Juarez-Santiago  
Pender Early College



Aley Williams,  
West Brunswick High

FOCUS Broadband's Board of Directors awarded an additional \$1,000 Rylee Brinson Scholarship to South Columbus High School's (SCHS) Lizzy Cruz who will be attending Cape Fear Community College in the fall to study sonography. This scholarship was created to honor the memory of Rylee Brinson, a former SCHS student, and his dedication to academic excellence.

"These recipients have demonstrated outstanding dedication to both their education and community," said Keith Holden, FOCUS Broadband CEO. "We are honored to invest in their futures." Since its inception in 2002, the FOCUS Broadband Scholarship Program has awarded over \$173,000 to 106 students. High school seniors interested in applying for next year's scholarships can do so when the application window reopens in October.

## FOCUS Broadband Voted Best in Customer Service

For the 17th year, FOCUS Broadband has been recognized for its outstanding commitment to customer service, earning the title of "Best in Customer Service" through the *Brunswick Beacon* Readers' Choice Awards!

"We are incredibly proud to receive this award for the 17th year," states Keith Holden, FOCUS Broadband CEO. "Putting our customers first is at the core of our mission, and this honor is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team."

We are deeply grateful to our loyal customers for their continued trust and support. Thank you Brunswick County for voting for FOCUS Broadband!



# Celebrating 70 Years of Connectivity:

## Chatting with FOCUS Broadband's Longest Standing Business Customer

For 70 years, FOCUS Broadband has been committed to providing services that help residents and businesses in our community thrive. From the early days of basic telephone service to today's cutting-edge fiber-optic broadband, we are proud to support businesses like Coastal Insurance.

Founded in 1948, Coastal Insurance became a FOCUS Broadband customer in 1957. Over the decades, they have experienced remarkable growth—not only within their own industry but also through the advancements in communications technology that have revolutionized the way businesses operate.

Owner Don Evans has seen firsthand how business connectivity has evolved over the years. “When we first became customers, telephone service was our primary way of connecting with clients,” says Evans. “Over the years, we’ve watched FOCUS Broadband grow, providing new technologies that have helped us stay competitive and serve our customers more efficiently.”



## Call 811 Before You Start Your Spring Projects



Spring is the perfect time to start outdoor projects, but before you dig, there's one crucial step you can't afford to skip—calling 811.

No matter the size of your project, digging without checking for underground utility lines can be dangerous. Gas, electric, water, and broadband lines are often buried just below the surface. Accidentally hitting one can lead to service outages, costly repairs, or even serious injuries.

- Call 811 or visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) at least three business days before digging.
- Local utility companies will mark underground lines on your property for free.
- Once your lines are marked, you can dig safely.

Take a few minutes to make the call and prevent costly accidents to help keep your community connected and safe.

## How the Universal Service Fund Affects Us

The Universal Service Fund (USF) has played a vital role in expanding telecommunication services for decades, ensuring that communities across the country stay connected. Created under the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the USF makes internet and phone service more affordable and accessible for schools, libraries, healthcare facilities, and low income households. It also helps keep service rates in rural areas comparable to those in urban areas.

A July 2024 Circuit Court ruling challenged how the USF is funded and operated, putting its future and programs in jeopardy. The U.S. Supreme Court will soon decide whether it can continue. Losing USF funding could directly impact broadband access, especially in rural communities.

It's more important now than ever to support policies that keep communities connected. As the conversation about USF and its future continues, FOCUS Broadband will continue to advocate for fair broadband access and keep you informed on any developments. For more information on the USF visit [focusbroadband.com/news](http://focusbroadband.com/news) and look for our article under *FOCUS Bits*.