



IAM Union District 142

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From Scholarship to Success: Maria DiToppa's Journey from IAM District 142 Scholarship Winner to Penn State Graduate

In 2021, Maria DiToppa won first place from IAM District 142 in its annual scholarship essay competition, a recognition that would become a meaningful milestone on her journey through higher education. This spring, Maria graduated from Penn State University with a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Science and Business, with a human health concentration. She was inducted into the honors society, made the Dean's List, and was even a member of the cheer team, all while juggling a rigorous course load each term. Her next chapter begins this fall at the University at Buffalo, where she'll pursue a STEM MBA focused on healthcare.

A deep, personal connection to the labor movement has shaped Maria's path to academic success. Her father, Paul DiToppa, an IAM member and Crew Chief AMT for American Airlines based in Pittsburgh, played a vital role in helping Maria understand how union values such as solidarity, fairness, and worker dignity have shaped not just his life, but hers as well.

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Maria. She is a delightful young woman whose love for her family, knowledge, and appreciation of the role the IAM has played in her life were evident as we discussed her dad's involvement with the union and how she came to understand at an early age how important that involvement was.



"Attending union meetings with my dad during high school helped me really see what unions do for working people," Maria reflected during our conversation. "It made me realize that being part of a union is not just a job benefit, it's a community and a support system."

Maria also noted a rising wave of union interest among her generation, pointing to Starbucks workers and others who are organizing for better wages and working conditions. "There's a definite shift happening. Young people are realizing they deserve a voice in the workplace, and unions are how they get it."

When we discussed how important the scholarship from District 142 was to her college success, Maria was quick to encourage other students with union family ties to apply for IAM scholarships and not be afraid to share their personal stories. "Authenticity stands out. Writing from the heart, especially about what your family's union background means to you, can make all the difference."

Maria's story is not just a celebration of academic achievement; it's a testament to the legacy of union families. IAM District 142 is proud to recognize Maria and to honor the support and guidance of her parents, Paul and Marti DiToppa, whose pride in their daughter's success is shared by all of us in the IAM family.

We have just announced this year's District 142 scholarship winners. The next application cycle will open in the Spring of 2026, and we strongly encourage all eligible students to apply. Your story matters, and just like Maria's, it could be the key to unlocking your future.

Todd Day
Director of Communications

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