



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 20, 2019

Contact: Erin McCall  
Communications and Program Associate  
805-543-2323 or [erin@cfsloco.org](mailto:erin@cfsloco.org)

**The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County announces Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship Recipient**

*Local ballet dancer honored with scholarship*

San Luis Obispo, CA — The Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship, held at The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County, has announced this year’s recipient: Grace Shirley, age 15, who is an honors student at Templeton Independent Study High School. The \$2,500 scholarship will provide support for Grace to attend a summer intensive ballet training program.

Templeton resident, Grace Shirley, studies ballet at SLO Movement Arts Center in San Luis Obispo and hopes to become a professional dancer. Although she has applied a few times for the scholarship in the past, studio owner Ryan Lawrence encouraged her to apply again. The evaluation committee appreciated the growth in Grace’s dancing from year to year and her perseverance to improve her skills. “I am very grateful to have been chosen for this year’s scholarship recipient” expressed Grace. “I appreciate that they have recognized my growth over the years and thank them for helping me achieve my goals.” This scholarship will allow her to attend the Alonzo King Lines Ballet in San Francisco from July 8 through August 2.

Bill Thoma spoke of his family’s interest in establishing the annual scholarship as a means of keeping his wife Jennifer’s passion for the art of ballet alive. “My wife devoted herself to dance in so many ways,” said Bill. “She attended hundreds of performances, served on dance organization boards of directors, drove our daughter to rehearsals, accompanied her to special training programs, sewed costumes, raised funds and in her spare time, did a little dancing herself. She would be so proud that her dream became reality and honored such deserving young [dancers.]”

“We are honored to partner with Bill Thoma through the Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship to support our local youth as they reach to achieve their dreams and ambitions,” said Heidi McPherson, CEO of The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County.

###

### **About the Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship**

The scholarship is named after Jennifer Thoma, a longtime San Luis Obispo resident who passed away from cancer in 2012. After her death, her husband, Bill Thoma of Thoma Electric, and their two children, Jeff and Jessica, established the scholarship in Jennifer's name to honor her passion for dance. Friends and peers of Jennifer were on the judging committee. The scholarship has been awarded to nine dancers since 2012. Additional information about the Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship is available online at The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County website, [www.cfsloco.org](http://www.cfsloco.org) or by contacting Senior Scholarship Program Associate, Angela Hollander, at 805-543-2323.

### **About The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County**

The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County is a grantmaking and education foundation supporting charitable work across our county. Since 1998, The Community Foundation has supported our county with grants and scholarships totaling almost \$35 million. The Community Foundation's charitable assets under management have grown to nearly \$60 million and provide support to all aspects of our community in perpetuity. For more information or to donate to any fund or establish a new fund, visit [www.cfsloco.org](http://www.cfsloco.org) or call 805-543-2323.