

News Release

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Franchot, Maryland Retailers Association Announce Winners of Tax-Free Week Scholarship Contest

*MICA, USM Foundation match scholarship prizes for
winning students; first place award is \$2,000, runner up
gets \$1,000*

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (October 16, 2020) - Comptroller Peter Franchot today joined Maryland Retailers Association President Cailey Locklair to announce the winners of this year's Shop Maryland Tax-Free Week scholarship contest, which this year asked Maryland students to explain how they helped a business during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mirian Fuentes Romero, a junior at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, received the \$1,000 top prize for supporting two family businesses and her church using her graphic design skills and hands-on contributions.

Kyle Fritschi, a junior at the University of Maryland, College Park, was selected for the \$500 runner-up scholarship award for his continued dedication as an employee at Brooke Grove Retirement Village in Sandy Spring. A childhood cancer survivor who is immunocompromised, Fritschi took on extra shifts when there was an outbreak of COVID-19 among residents and staff.

"I'm blown away by the hard work and dedication of not just Mirian and Kyle, but all the students who have stepped up to support businesses, while juggling their own virtual course load, during these incredibly challenging times," Comptroller Franchot said. "Small businesses are the beating heart of our state's economy and this pandemic has shown how much they depend on our young people to keep the lights on."

De Rodrick Jonkins, associate vice president for financial aid at MICA, and Bonnie

Stein, chair of the University System of Maryland Foundation Board of Directors, announced that the prizes for both winning students would be matched, bringing the total scholarship amounts to \$2,000 for Ms. Romero and \$1,000 for Mr. Fritschi.

The Maryland Retailers Association provided the initial scholarships through their Educational Foundation, which has provided more than 100 scholarships to Maryland residents pursuing higher education at in-state colleges, universities and trade schools.

MRA has partnered with the Maryland Comptroller's Office for many years to promote the annual tax-free week in mid-August. This is the fourth year that a scholarship contest has been held. Previous grand prize winners have attended Anne Arundel Community College, Cecil College and Salisbury University.

"This year has been especially challenging for small businesses, but it is so inspiring to see how many young people are selflessly helping their communities," said MRA President Cailey Locklair. "Having received so many wonderful nominations, this was a difficult selection, but Mirian and Kyle stood out for their diligence and commitment. Congratulations to them and all of the students who submitted entries. We are extremely grateful for everything you are doing to support Maryland businesses."

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