

Charles Vernon Stewart III Community College/Trade School Scholarship 2026

The Charles Stewart III Scholarship: Empowering Futures in Skilled Trades

This scholarship is dedicated to supporting the educational aspirations of Black graduating seniors in Washington County pursuing careers in skilled trades. We honor the legacy of Charles Vernon Stewart III, a pioneering electrician and advocate, believing in the potential of our youth to become the next generation of skilled professionals and community contributors.

Honoring Charles Vernon Stewart III:

Charles Vernon Stewart III (August 7, 1910 – February 13, 2006) was a trailblazing electrician and organizer whose life exemplifies perseverance and the pursuit of equality in the trades. Born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and raised in Omaha and Chicago, Stewart's journey began with a determination to learn electrical work, a field historically closed to Black individuals.

Despite facing racial barriers, Stewart, at the age of eleven, collaborated with his stepfather, Sam Taylor, to establish an underground educational initiative. They enlisted the help of a Greek friend to obtain electrical home study materials, as publishers refused to serve Black customers. Through diligent study and practice, Stewart and Taylor mastered the trade, working alongside other Black electricians in Chicago.

In 1922, Stewart helped establish the Taylor Electric Company. He went on to graduate from Greer College in 1927, becoming its first Black graduate. However, he and other Black electricians were denied membership in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 134.

Facing discrimination and vandalism from competing white electricians, Stewart organized twenty Black electricians and successfully lobbied for a charter to legally practice, contract for jobs, and protect their work. This led to the formation of the first Black electrical union in the United States.

In 1943, government intervention forced Local Union 134 to desegregate. Stewart and his stepfather joined the integrated union, leaving their Black union which was restricted from bidding on major contracts.

Stewart's career at Berry Electric, starting in 1942, saw him rise to become the first Black foreman for a major electrical contractor in Chicago. He led racially integrated teams on significant projects, including the Jewell Grand Bazaar and the River Oaks Shopping Mall. He retired after thirty-seven years, leaving a legacy of breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity in the electrical trade.

Applicant Academic Focus:

- This scholarship specifically encourages applications from students pursuing education in trade schools, community colleges (2-year programs), or other forms of vocational and technical training.
- We recognize the value of skilled trades and community college education in building strong communities and providing fulfilling career paths.

Eligibility and Application:

- This scholarship is open to graduating seniors from Washington County School District high schools in 2026.
- Applicants must culturally identify as Black/African American/African/Afro-Latino or hold other cultural identities from the African Diaspora.
- Scholarships will be awarded based on the strength of the completed application.
- Students with a minimum 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale are encouraged to apply.
- Scholarship values will range from \$1000 to \$5000.
- Applicants must demonstrate practical experience to qualify for this scholarship. This can be achieved through paid or unpaid work experience, including positions that may not directly align with their chosen trade. Applicants need to provide one letter of recommendation from a community member familiar with their character in this service role. This can be a supervisor, a volunteer coordinator, a faith leader, an organization leader, a supervising teacher/counselor etc.
- Applications must be submitted by Sunday, April 26th, 2026.

Award and Recognition:

- Scholarship recipients will be announced at the Umoja Rights of Passage
- Recipients may also be featured on the Beaverton Black People's Union website.
- Scholarship funds will be sent directly to the educational institution identified in the application.
- If an educational institution has not been identified at the time of the award, funds will be held for up to one year before they are donated back into the scholarship fund.

Questions:

- For any questions regarding the submission process, please email scholarship@beavertonblackparentunion.org.

Form:

First Name

Last Name

Email (non-school district)

Home Mailing Address

School:

High School GPA [upload pdf copy of transcript]

Academic Plans in 2026-2027 (anticipated school and field of study)

Submission: [to be uploaded] Please respond to one of the following questions through either a 1 page essay (~500 words) or a visual representation (video, slide-deck, graphic brochure, etc) of your response. All submissions should indicate the question being responded to. Visual

1. How does the story of Charles Stewart III resonate with your own life and aspirations? What aspects of his life are inspiring to you and why?
2. How has your work/volunteer experience changed you? What have you learned in these experiences, and how will you apply it to your life after graduation?
3. What are your future plans to contribute back to your community? How will your next academic step prepare you for this role?