

2026 Community Leadership Award Individual Honorees:

Gil & Liz Blankespoor

Reston Scholarship Fund



The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is proud to recognize **Gil and Liz Blankespoor** as the 2026 Individual Community Leadership Award Honorees. Gil and Liz are longtime Northern Virginia residents whose shared commitment to service, education, and community has left a lasting mark on the region.

Gil Blankespoor began his career in public service, working in research and policy at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. His work focused on housing affordability, policy analysis for Congress, and housing issues affecting low-income families and Native American communities. His early career reflected a deep concern for equity, opportunity, and the systems that shape community well-being.

In 1986, Gil shifted paths but not purpose—entering entrepreneurship as a restaurateur and helping to create some of Northern Virginia’s most beloved local establishments, including Tuscarora Mill, South Street Under, FireWorks Pizza, and Magnolias at the Mill. These businesses became more than dining destinations; they became gathering places that strengthened community connection and local economies.

Liz Blankespoor’s path has been equally shaped by connection and service. After spending more than a decade living and working in Innsbruck, Austria—supporting international business, trade, and cultural exchange—Liz returned to the United States and earned a Master of Social Work. She went on to volunteer locally, including with Fairfax County’s ADAPT Program and as a leader of English as a Second Language groups at the Reston Regional Library.

In 2016, Gil and Liz co-founded the **Reston Scholarship Fund** in partnership with the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia. What began as a shared vision has grown into a powerful force for opportunity—awarding more than **\$780,000 in scholarships to over 90 local students** with financial need. Their work directly invests in the region’s future workforce, leaders, and changemakers.

For Gil and Liz, the heart of the work has always been the people. Their leadership is defined not only by generosity, but by deep relationships, mentorship, and a long-term commitment to strengthening Northern Virginia for future generations. Together, they embody the values of collaboration, integrity, and community impact that the Community Leadership Award represents.