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2013-2014 HIGH BRIDGE SCHOLARS NAMED



Erica Fuentes

Arnasha Jones

Earica Parrish

Mercedes Young

Vong Truong

Five outstanding students, selected on the basis of their academic achievement, community service, leadership potential, and demonstrated hardship which included financial need and adverse personal or family circumstances, will receive the first High Bridge Foundation, Inc. scholarships at an awards brunch on Saturday, June 15 at 10:00 in the morning at the Peikoff Alumni House (“Ole Jim”) at the Gallaudet University Campus in Washington, D.C. The awards provide \$1,000 in scholarship funds for each recipient to help pay for college tuition and expenses. According to President Mayumi Escalante, the Foundation received more than 130 applications for these five scholarship awards. The volunteers on the Scholarship Selection Committee have been impressed and overwhelmed by the caliber and volume of applications received during the Foundation's first year.

Erica Fuentes graduated from Albert Einstein High School in Kensington, MD with a weighted GPA of 4.50, placing her in the top 5 percent of her class. She was named as an “AP Scholar with Distinction” by the College Board. All these, while immersing herself in community service that included tutoring and mentoring immigrant students and advocating for the Maryland Dream Act. Erica’s parents did not attend college, so she deeply appreciates what a college education would mean to her and her family. She will attend the University of Maryland at College Park, where she will study international affairs and history.

Arnasha Jones graduated from McKinley Technical High School in Washington, DC, where she was ranked number one among her peers, while tackling advanced placement courses in Language Arts, Literature, Calculus, and Engineering. She volunteers for the DC Food Bank and tutors students at McKinley High School. Throughout high school, Arnasha worked part-time to help with family expenses. Arnasha will be the first in her family to attend college. She will attend North Carolina State University and will major in Economics.

Earica Parrish is a graduate from Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School in Washington, DC, where she earned a 4.25 GPA and the number one rank in her senior class. She managed two sports teams for her school and was active in the drama club. Earica is part of *The Washington Post's* Press Pass Mentors Program, which pairs professional journalists with inner-city high school students to kindle a passion for writing and help them succeed in college. While her mother was unable to help take care of their family, and after her father's death due to congestive heart failure, Earica kept her family together and made sure that her younger siblings were well cared for. She will attend Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications to pursue her dream of becoming a newspaper and online journalist.

Mercedes Young is a graduate of McKinley Technology High School in Washington, D.C., where she was a consistent member of the school's honor roll and National Honor Society. Her hard work and dedication earned her the coveted position of captain and lead dancer of the Lady Gems Dance Team, the dance ensemble for the Eastern High School Marching Band. She served as a mentor for the DC Campaign Teenage Pregnancy and Prevention Program and as a youth leader for the Mayor's Leadership Institute. Mercedes used her life's adversities as a jumping board for her success. She will attend North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where she plans to major in engineering.

Vong Truong graduated from Northwest High School in Germantown, MD with a cumulative weighted GPA of 4.17 and earned distinctions in Physics and Mathematics. He led the school's team to a first place finish during the 20th Annual Central Maryland Physics Olympics. Vong has logged more than 200 community service hours volunteering as a tutor at the George B. Thomas Learning Academy and as a teacher at the Hoai Huong Vietnamese School. Vong was raised by a single mother in Vietnam and was sent to live with relatives in the U.S. in 2010. In that short time, he has successfully and independently navigated his way through American culture and maintained an unshakeable positive outlook in life. Vong will attend The University of Texas at Austin, where he will major in Accounting.

The High Bridge Foundation Scholarship Program is a project of High Bridge Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization established by Ernest and Mencie Hairston last year. Dr. and Mrs. Hairston are life-long supporters of programs that benefit underserved populations of young people especially those with disabilities and life challenges, and who are in need of financial help to pursue higher education.

As recipients of scholarships during their student days, Dr. and Mrs. Hairston believe that scholarships are a donor's financial investment in a student's potential to succeed, to give back to the community, and to embody the donor's core values. It is also an investment in the student's family and in his or her community. More importantly, scholarships come with a moral mandate, as they impact not only the recipients' education, but also the way they conduct their lives after graduation, and the way they practice their professions.