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UCM Awards 2016 Valencourt Scholarships to Local High School Graduates



Photo is attached to email for media distribution. File name: 06-24-16_UCM_Valencourt_Photo.jpg

PHOTO CAPTION:

Pictured at the June 6 ceremony to announce UCM's 2016 Lois Valencourt Scholarship Fund awardees are: (from left) Angela Gallegos (Bryant Alternative High School), Harry Wood, executor for Ms. Valencourt's estate, Shanae Witherspoon (Bryant Alternative High School), and Fernando Acosta (West Potomac High School). Not pictured: Tenesha Green (West Potomac High School).

United Community Ministries (UCM) has announced its Valencourt Scholarship Fund awards for 2016. Thanks to a generous bequest from her estate in 2014, the Lois Valencourt Scholarship Fund at UCM enables students who have graduated from high schools in the Mount Vernon area to pursue training and career advancement after high school graduation.

Ms. Valencourt was interested in increasing access to post-graduate education for low- and moderate-income students in the Mount Vernon area. The scholarship program is for first-generation college students who are recent graduates of local public high schools: Bryant Alternative High, Mount Vernon High, and West Potomac High -- and who plan to attend DC

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metro area schools for post-graduate education.

At the awards ceremony on June 6, Deputy Executive Director told the students: “We congratulate you and your families. You have worked so hard, and we are all so proud of you. As you embark on your educational paths, we wish you continued success with your academics and careers.”

Each of the students received a \$1,500 scholarship that is renewable next year. Three of the four recipients are participants in UCM programs. The 2016 Valencourt Scholarship Fund awardees are:

- **Fernando Acosta** – West Potomac High School
Fernando has been accepted to George Mason University, where he will pursue a degree in Civil Engineering. His family came to UCM a few years ago for assistance, and have since become UCM volunteers who give back to our community. Fernando has been a UCM volunteer throughout high school. He was captain of the boys’ soccer team as well as has mentored students at Belle View Elementary School. He graduated with a 3.8 GPA.
- **Angela Gallegos** – Bryant Alternative High School
Angela was dual-enrolled at Bryant Alternative High School and Northern Virginia Community College, pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Development. She is a student in the Project Opportunity program for teen mothers. Angela is a single parent and full-time student. She served as the head of the Student Leadership Program at the high school, where she participated in the Project Opportunity program for teen mothers.
- **Tenesha Green** - West Potomac High School
Tenesha plans to pursue a degree in Mass Communications at Marymount University, where she has also received a partial basketball scholarship. She was captain of the girls’ varsity basketball team at West Potomac and graduates with a 3.8 GPA. She makes her community a better place by making sandwiches at her church for homeless people.
- **Shanae Witherspoon** - Bryant Alternative High School
Shanae has been accepted at Northern Virginia Community College to pursue a degree in Nursing. Graduating with a 3.3 GPA, Shanae is a single-parent and full-time student. She has volunteered in the community by talking to youth about the harmful effects of drugs.

“Mrs. Valencourt was particularly interested in helping students of Hispanic descent, in part due to many happy years spent living in South America with her husband,” says Harry Wood, executor for her estate. “When she returned to the US and settled in this area, she became involved in and supported many local organizations. UCM and its work with low-income families were particularly dear to her. She would be more than 100 years old, if she were still alive today. On her behalf, I congratulate each of you receiving a scholarship and encourage you to be all that you can be.”

UCM’s scholarship programs focus on keeping vulnerable youth and families moving forward to achieve self-reliance. “Scholarship programs are just one component of UCM’s comprehensive set of services for people in need,” says Mitchem. “Our education programs and services are a key connector to financial independence: from kindergarten readiness at our UCM Early Learning Center, to after-school leadership skills and enrichment activities at our neighborhood community centers, to adult literacy and citizenship classes at our Progreso Center – all of our programs work in tandem to improve the quality of life for children, youth, and families in our community.”

United Community Ministries (UCM) mobilizes the power of community to equip, educate, and empower people to measurably improve their lives. For the past 46 years, UCM has

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provided a vital connection between people in need and the people committed to helping them thrive. Services include:

- **Immediate Help.** For families and individuals in crisis, UCM provides counseling, food, financial aid, and referrals to other resources.
- **Children's Programs.** UCM provides the next generation with essential education and enriching experiences, including full-day early care and learning, new parent education, and after-school programs for youth leadership development and computer access.
- **Employability.** To increase their employability, UCM counsels adults with referrals and with ESL and citizenship classes.

In Fiscal Year 2015, thanks to generous community support, UCM provided life-changing assistance to 10,200 individuals in 4,000 families in the Alexandria portion of Fairfax County. This included 5,000 children – more than any other private nonprofit agency in the Huntington-Mount Vernon area.

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